# 00. Introduction

Have you ever tried to tell something as a joke and then completely forget about it? And then, one day, the thing you said comes back to you through someone else's words?

Once, I read a story about penguins. It went like this: when a male penguin likes a female penguin, he looks for the most beautiful and smoothest stone among millions of others. He chooses it to present to the female who has captured his heart. If the female accepts the stone, it means she returns his feelings, and the two remain together as a loyal couple for life.

I told this story to someone once, and after that, I completely forgot about it. Many years passed, and the same story came back to me, but through the mouth of another person. Even though it was unexpected, I felt chills realizing that this theory really exists.

The karma cycle is probably similar to this, isn’t it? Everything we do, sooner or later, comes back to us.

Now I am standing in front of a special room in a hospital. My heart beats irregularly, filled with a mix of nervousness and excitement. I don't know whether I should go in or simply walk away.

The confusion inside me is overwhelming, divided between two possibilities: how will the person who has just awakened react when they see me? Will they be happy or treat me with coldness and disdain?

But regardless of the reaction, I have to accept it. All of this happened because of me.

***Knock, knock, knock.***

I knock on the door and slowly open it. Inside the room, I see two of the patient’s relatives — probably her parents, whom I’ve never met before. I greet them politely, as is customary, before turning my gaze to the person who had just woken up after the severe car accident.

Even though she was not fully recovered, with her body covered in bandages, her arm immobilized due to a fracture, and her face still showing mild bruises, Kewalin's beauty remained intact. Nothing seemed capable of hiding her natural glow.

Her stunning face, which always mesmerized everyone around her, was now turned toward me. Her light brown eyes reflected the room's light, locking my gaze and immobilizing me as if she were enchanting me.

"How are you, Kew?"

That was the first sentence I managed to say, after everything that had happened. I had so many things to talk about, but the words got stuck. All I could ask was about how she was.

Silence filled the room. It seemed to spread like a dense mist, enveloping all of us. Even her parents, who were there, noticed the weight of the situation. We stood staring at each other, restless, as we waited for a response that didn’t come.

Her expression was indecipherable. I couldn’t tell if it was...

She wasn’t angry?

Or was she?

She didn’t hate me?

Or... did she?

But the answer that came was even more shocking than any reaction I could have imagined. Instead of telling me where she felt pain or how she was feeling, Kewalin asked me:

"Who are you?"

"..."

"Do we know each other?"

So, is this what they call guilt?

And this deep, crushing pain I feel in my chest right now, what is it?

I... Anna. The same woman who came to visit "Kewalin", who was in a car accident three days ago. I am still completely confused about why Kewalin cannot remember me. I even searched the internet about amnesia, Alzheimer’s, and even watched *One Day,* where Mew Nittha plays someone who forgets everything in a day. But none of it makes sense or connects to what is happening with Kewalin.

She remembers everyone... except me.

Me, who is her **"girlfriend"**!

After thinking carefully, observing her behavior, and reflecting on that day in the hospital, when our eyes met, there was no falseness in her gaze while looking at me. During our brief conversation, I saw no signs of anger, hatred, or any trace of emotional connection.

There was nothing. Absolutely nothing.

According to psychology, when we want to forget something on purpose, the brain simply "turns off" that memory until there is nothing left...

But would my story be that shocking to her?

The more I think about it, the more curious I become. Ever since Kewalin said she didn't remember me, I've been visiting her in the hospital every day, never telling her who I really am. I just introduce myself as "Anna." I thought that name might mean something to her, but again, nothing... just emptiness.

*"I'm really sorry. I can't remember... Were we that close?"*

And because Kewalin could no longer remember me, I finally began to understand how much this delicate-faced girl meant to me. Before, I never knew. I always thought Kewalin was "my object," someone I could do whatever I wanted with without consequences.

I never realized how much I loved her.

"We were girlfriends."

**"What's this joke? Women don't date each other! I like men."**

hiIt was as if a piece of wood had hit me straight in the head and broken it into pieces.

Not only does she not remember me, she doesn't even remember that she was in a relationship with a woman!

Oh my God... now the situation has become even more difficult for me!

For me, everything is completely dark now, as if I am lost without direction. Men or women who try to flirt with me these days are immediately kicked out of my life. My head is full of thoughts about Kewalin, and only about her.

The sweet-faced girl can't remember me. The sweet-faced girl only likes men.

Why, when memories disappear, do feelings have to disappear too? This is unbearable!

Kewalin's only mistake in life was meeting Anna! Me!

*'I curse you to find someone like yourself, so you know what it's like.'*

Those were the last words Kewalin said before she impulsively drove off, losing control and crashing onto the shoulder of the road, overturning the car. I never imagined those words would come true.

My heart is racing...

My hands are shaking...

I just can't stand the fact that Kewalin doesn't remember me. I feel like the sweet-faced girl is about to slip away from me, and that I'll never get the chance to love her again.

Will a bad person like me still have a chance? A chance to experience the pure and true love that Kewalin gave to me, and only me?

It's okay if she doesn't remember me... as long as Kewalin loves me like before again, that's all I need. New memories can be created. I'll create a chance for myself again.

**I'm going to conquer Kewalin... my girlfriend!**

***Note***:

**Book title: 4P**

**by : CHAO PLA NOY**

# 01. Kewalin

**« 6 months earlier »**

There are many people in the world who can't do anything alone, like "Pupe," my high school friend. Whenever she went to the bathroom, she had to drag me or Ma Miew along, as if our bladders were connected. If she had to eat alone, she’d feel out of place and afraid of being judged. Watching a movie alone? That was too weird for her too.

But that’s how most people are... I, on the other hand, love doing things alone. I enjoy going places by myself.

I love eating alone because I can listen to music without being distracted by small talk. I prefer everyone to go to the bathroom on their own; after all, we don’t even use the same stall.

I like shopping alone because I don’t have to wait for anyone. I even enjoy watching movies alone. Doing everything by myself, because honestly... we’re born alone, and we die alone.

Call me a loner or someone who values independence. This includes traveling solo to another province just to take photos and capture the atmosphere. Later, I sell these pictures online, even though most people only post them without buying.

But it makes me happy.

The reason I’m talking so much about doing things alone is because right now, I’m sitting on a bus, waiting to depart for Trat, a famous province, especially for Koh Chang (Elephant Island). But I’m not planning to go to that island. I’m a little unconventional.

If I do visit an island, it’ll be a small, less touristy one. I prefer simplicity and authenticity because it makes my photos unique and different from other photographers.

While I was thinking about how I’d get around once I arrived, a scent that made my heart race filled the air. I stopped everything I was doing and looked up at the owner of that perfume who had just taken a seat by the window across the aisle.

She was a woman with a sweet face and light brown hair. Even from a glance, her appearance was charming. The perfume... that scents.

Maybe because I stared at her too long the owner of the perfume turned, and our eyes met. At that moment, time seemed to stop.

‘1...’

‘2...’

‘3...’

‘4...’

‘5...’

‘6...’

"Excuse me, dear, can I sit by the window? I get sick if I don’t sit there."

An elderly lady’s voice interrupted the six seconds that our eyes had been connected. My heart was pounding so hard it almost skipped a beat. I quickly looked away, pretending to fiddle with my mirrorless camera, even though the memory card had no photos on it.

Why was I like this? Why was my heart beating so fast?

***Ding!***

The sound of a notification from my messaging app gave me something to focus on. I grabbed my phone to read the message, even though I’d been annoyed with it all day because of the constant notifications. Especially from a guy named "Tham," who kept asking where I was going, what I was doing, and why I hadn’t invited him along.

**Tham:**

I’m going to find you, Ann. Where are you going?

**Anna**:

No need to follow me. I like traveling alone.

**Tham**:

It’s dangerous for a woman to travel alone. I’m worried.

**Anna**:

Before I met you, I’ve always done everything alone. Please don’t annoy me.

After reading my message, he seemed to lose the courage to keep talking. I returned to scrolling through my phone aimlessly, all while feeling that the scent of cherry blossoms, the one that made my heart race, was getting closer. Now, only the bus aisle separated us.

Suddenly, as if Facebook could read my thoughts, a friend shared a post on my timeline that said:

*"If two people look into each other's eyes for eight seconds, they can fall in love with each other."*

My face turned red instantly.

Was this for real? Did it have to be about looking into someone’s eyes? I’d never paid attention to such silly content before because most people who approached me only needed three seconds of eye contact before asking a friend to get my number or trying to strike up a conversation.

Sometimes, when I was interested in someone, I’d go directly to them.

Why make such a big deal about eye contact?

Still, for some reason, I decided to read the post. It turned out to be just a simple scientific experiment.

Falling in love by looking into someone’s eyes? I believe in love, but the idea of falling for someone just by looking at them felt exaggerated.

Thinking about it, I wanted to challenge the idea. I turned to look at her again, and to my surprise, she turned as well, and our eyes met again.

No smiles.

But no signs of annoyance either.

‘1...’

‘2...’

‘3...’

‘4...’

‘5...’

‘6...’

‘7...’

Then she looked away first, putting on sunglasses and reclining her seat to sleep. I let out a sigh of relief. There was nothing to it, just my heart racing... It wasn’t like I was falling in love. Or was it because the full eight seconds hadn’t passed? Ugh, how ridiculous, testing something like this!

The 300 kilometers from Bangkok made me drift in and out of sleep, feeling the bus sway. Despite the dizziness, there was something comforting about the rawness of the journey. After all, the destination isn’t always more important than the journey.

Wow, that’s deep. Where did I come up with that? At least I got to enjoy the perfume I loved for the entire trip. It was a mix of citrus and sweetness, with a strong orange peel note at first but mellowing out into something soft and delicate. I resisted the urge to turn and look at the person beside me, wanting to keep my composure. Usually, if I was interested in someone, I’d just strike up a conversation.

But this woman was different...

Even from the corner of my eye, I could sense an air of elegance radiating from her. Her long, smooth hair fell lightly over her shoulders, perfectly complementing her rosy, clear skin, as if meticulously cared for. She wore a white, long-sleeved shirt rolled up to her elbows and light blue jeans. It was such a simple outfit, yet on her, it looked effortlessly sophisticated.

Was I just glancing, or had I turned into an airport body scanner?

Three hours into the trip, I still couldn’t stop thinking about the woman next to me. What was happening to me?

Finally, the bus reached its destination: Trat Province. To my surprise, the woman with the cherry blossom perfume and I got off at the same stop. It was as if we had coordinated. She seemed to be traveling alone too, judging by her practical backpack and small camera hanging around her neck.

We exchanged a brief glance again, but still said nothing, as if caught in a stalemate. This wasn’t like me. Usually, if I wanted to know someone, I’d go right up and talk to them. Simple. But with this woman, I felt strangely nervous.

From being outgoing and friendly, someone who could connect with anyone, I turned into someone who seemed aloof, a personality I never thought I could have. I wanted to look at her, but I pretended not to. I wanted to talk to her, but I acted like I wasn’t interested.

Who am I? Hello? Who is this person taking over my body?

Fate kept conspiring. We ended up boarding the same public transport, a "songthaew" (a shared pickup truck), heading toward our next stop. And once again, purely by chance, we found ourselves at the same pier, waiting for the boat.

This was becoming ridiculous. Yet, we still hadn’t exchanged a single word. The pier was crowded with people lining up to board a small boat with signs indicating which island each one was heading to. The island I chose was a small fishing village, not very popular. Maybe because it was Chinese New Year, the place was full of people carrying offerings for the gods.

I watched older people carrying fruits and other items for rituals, their hands full of things. Judging by the condition of the boat and the number of passengers, it seemed unlikely everyone would fit. By the time everyone else had boarded, only the two of us were left. The boatman, clearly annoyed, shouted at us.

"Are you getting on or not? This is the last boat!"

The boatman’s impatience echoed in the air.

The two of us glanced at each other, a little hesitant, before quickly looking away, almost shy. Maybe it was the tension hanging between us or the boatman’s persistence, but we ended up boarding. We joined a crowd of elderly people clutching their offerings, squeezed into the small space.

On the bus, a corridor had separated us. Now, we were side by side, so close our bodies were nearly touching. I can’t describe exactly how I felt—it was a mix of discomfort and nervousness, all at once.

And to make things worse, my phone wouldn’t stop buzzing with notifications.

"Can you swim?"

Her sweet voice broke the silence, making me turn my head slightly to look at her.

I almost smiled, realizing she’d started the conversation, but I held back and responded as naturally as I could:

"Yes, I can swim."

"That’s good."

"Why do you ask that all of a sudden?"

"It just feels... kind of scary."

She replied calmly, but her face betrayed her fear.

I could empathize with her scared expression. I decided to ask:

"You can't swim, right?"

Hearing my question, she immediately straightened up. She seemed torn between smiling to hide her fear and staying serious. In the end, she settled on a somewhat awkward smile—a nervous grin, which I found adorable. "Don’t worry. I’ll help you put on a life jacket, okay?"

"..."

‘1...’

‘2...’

‘3...’

‘4...’

‘5...’

The boat began to move, making everyone onboard sway backward. We’d already exchanged three glances, but we never made it to eight seconds, which I found amusing. Why was I counting? As if I wanted to prove something... as if I wanted to fall in love. Oh, please! Someone like me falling for someone like her?

Ridiculous.

"Haha..."

"What is it?"

She asked, looking at me curiously.

"Oh, it’s nothing."

I ended up laughing as if I were mocking myself. The fragrant person turned to look at me with interest, but I averted my gaze to the waves, feeling that my own heart wasn’t pure.

The waves were scary today... so high that the boat rocked violently from side to side.

The sound of screams and laughter from a group of teenagers came from the back of the boat. They were enjoying themselves, treating the situation like a roller coaster at an amusement park, while some of the older passengers shifted uneasily.

I, who hadn’t thought much of it before, began feeling nauseous from the boat’s motion. But then my thoughts were interrupted by the small hand of the fragrant person lightly touching my arm.

*"Can I hold your hand?"*

I smiled at her and sat up straighter. It seemed like the person next to me was beginning to feel afraid, which made me think I should start a conversation.

"Why are you going to this island? Do you have family there?"

"I’m backpacking."

She replied.

I raised an eyebrow, surprised. Does someone else do that too, just like me?

"Why did you choose this island? It’s not very famous."

"I wanted to go somewhere less crowded. The famous islands already have beautiful photos everywhere."

Her answer made me smile spontaneously, even laugh a little. The fragrant person looked at me, confused.

"What’s funny?"

"I thought the same thing! I came backpacking for the same reason. This island isn’t famous, and the popular islands already have stunning photos all over."

I used the word "I" in a more informal tone, but she didn’t seem to respond much. She seemed very cautious. Maybe her parents taught her not to talk to strangers.

She’s adorable.

While I observed the fragrant person, who had lowered her head and was visibly scared, the boat swayed even more. But this time, a deep voice from an older man began to echo, causing everyone on the boat to panic, myself included:

"The boat is breaking apart! Water has entered the boat!"

If this were the Titanic, people would be running for safety. But this was just a small passenger boat with long benches arranged side by side. Most of the passengers were elderly people and children. All we could do was scream.

The fragrant person was trembling in fear and clinging to my arm like a baby bird, so I squeezed her hand for comfort. I began looking around, trying to find a life jacket, but it seemed like the remaining ones had already been taken.

Certainly! I’ll continue the translation from where I left off and complete the story.

"Turn left! There are rocks over there that will help ground the boat!"

Shouted the man to the pilot. But the only response he got was the sound of a splash! The man steering the boat jumped into the water and swam away as if the island we were headed to was close by. The confusion escalated as the pilot disappeared and water began flooding the boat, which was now on the verge of sinking. The man who seemed most aware of the situation ran to the back of the boat and grabbed the steering wheel, trying to control the direction.

"Ahhhhhh!"

The passengers’ screams created a wave of collective panic. Some people jumped into the water and began swimming. Others, still more composed, ordered everyone to throw their belongings into the sea to lighten the load. Thankfully, the man managed to steer the boat toward the large rocks, but in the end, everyone had to jump into the water as the boat was about to go under.

"Everyone, jump into the water!"

"I can’t swim."

The fragrant person looked like she was about to cry and kept shaking her head, repeating over and over.

"I’m going to die for sure."

"Hold onto me. I’ll be your life jacket."

I said.

"But..."

"Look into my eyes."

‘1...’

‘2...’

‘3...’

‘4...’

‘5...’

‘6...’

‘7...’

‘8...’

"Alright."

The eight seconds during which the boat was about to sink felt like an eternity, and they made my heart beat faster. I knew I had to help the woman in front of me. The fragrant person gripped my hand tightly and prepared to jump, but then she stopped for a moment.

"My name is Kewalin."

Ah, so she finally opened up...

I smiled at the fragrant person and gripped her hand even tighter.

"What a beautiful name. My name is Anna. Hold onto me tightly."

"We’re not going to die, right?"

"I promise you won’t die, Kewalin."

"You can call me Lin."

The fragrant person introduced herself at the most inappropriate moment.

"Even though we just met, why would you save me?"

I didn’t say anything and just invited her to jump into the water because... well, this wasn’t the time to tell her that... I had already fallen for her in those eight seconds.

# 02.Questions

At this moment, more than thirty passengers were clinging to the sides of the boat, trying to keep their bodies out of the water. Some were wearing life jackets, while the children and elderly were placed on the roof of the boat, which was now almost level with the water.

There really was a dangerous reef, just as the older man had mentioned, but no one seemed to recognize his warning as a merit. Instead, everyone was busy reverently praying to sacred entities, like the Goddess Guanyin, who stood facing them, one hand raised in a blessing gesture and the other holding a jar of sacred water on a nearby island.

"It must have been the power of the Goddess that saved us and protected us!"

An older woman said, tears streaming down her face. Surviving a shipwreck at sea wasn’t an easy feat, it could even be called a miracle. Hearing this, I couldn’t help but murmur quietly:

"Then why didn’t she fix the broken boat from the start?"

"Shhh!"

Kewalin, who was clinging to the boat beside me, shushed me sharply when she clearly heard what I said.

"Don’t criticize other people’s beliefs."

"Do you really think we survived because of the Goddess?"

"I think it might have helped."

Said the fragrant girl, whose soft cherry blossom scent still lingered in the air.

"But actually, I survived because of you."

When I heard this, I couldn’t help but smile. I forgot my annoyance with the crying woman thanking the Goddess Guanyin. To hide how I was feeling, I picked up an orange floating in the water and handed it to Kewalin.

"Here, eat this to regain your strength to swim."

"Why do you call me Kew?"

I was surprised for a moment and then laughed, as if justifying myself.

"I like the name Kew; it sounds more unique. There are already so many people called Lin. Besides… I want to call you that. This way, you’ll remember that there’s only one person in the world who calls you that."

The fragrant girl looked away, as if embarrassed. I, who was already in the habit of flirting, cleared my throat and put on an animated voice as I spotted a fishing boat approaching.

"Look, a boat is coming to help us!"

Kewalin turned around again, displaying a radiant smile of joy that I had never seen before. It made my heart race in a mix of surprise and enchantment.

"It’s true, we’re saved! … What's wrong, An?"

"Huh… what?"

"Why do you look so strange?"

"Ah… nothing, I’m just happy!"

The fragrant girl squinted her eyes, tilting her head as if suspicious of me.

The way her face began to show such a warm familiarity made me feel good, as if we were already friends.

"You’re happy but you're making that shocked face? You know… pretty people can make anything look good, even by making that face."

"Are you saying I’m pretty?"

"Smile."

"You’re beautiful too, Kew."

"What’s that?"

Kewalin shrugged her shoulders, speaking in a shy tone, almost inaudible because of the noise of the approaching boat engine. I, on the other hand, began to feel a kind of awkwardness that I had never experienced before.

"Yeah… what’s going on here?"

. .

Finally, we arrived at our destination island. The people there were surprised to see the survivors walking in a line, like ants forming a trail. Some clapped to encourage us. Kewalin and I exchanged proud smiles, happy that we had survived the vast, deep ocean.

Ah, about the boat captain who had jumped into the water to save himself before everyone else, he ended up cramping in the middle of the sea. Fortunately, someone rescued him. When I saw him being pulled out of the water, hanging by his arms, I didn’t know whether to pity him or think he deserved it for abandoning us.

Now, aside from our life, all we had left were the belongings floating in the sea, which the fishermen were gathering to return.

All of our belongings were intact. Kewalin and I each retrieved our backpacks and began checking what was inside. Our wallets and cameras were still there, though some clothes had absorbed water and were covered in salt. But the most concerning thing was the cameras.

"An, does your camera still work?"

I took my camera out of the bag and snapped a photo of Kewalin as a test. The camera’s click confirmed that it was still working.

"What about yours, Kew?"

"Mine broke."

Despite her response, Kewalin didn’t seem too upset. But from her tone of voice, I could tell she was disappointed. I looked at her and smiled, trying to comfort her.

"It’s okay. I’ll take pictures of you while we’re on the island."

"Why does that sound so... weird and embrassing?"

"Weird? It’s just taking pictures."

Kewalin smiled lightly, which made her seem even more adorable. At first, she had seemed aloof, but now, getting to know her better, I realized she was quite shy.

"It feels like we’re already friends now, doesn’t it?"

When she said that, we both fell silent. Well… just because we had gone through a lot together didn’t mean we were truly friends yet. And on top of that, I had offered to take her pictures.

"It’s… I mean, I didn’t mean it in a bad way. It’s just… I found it curious. I’ve never made friends with someone this quickly."

"I noticed that. You’re very reserved, ever since the bus."

"I was taught that maintaining composure makes those beneath us see us as arrogant, but those who are equal or above see us as valuable. That applies to both friendships and romantic relationships."

"That’s a good philosophy."

I said, looking at Kewalin, impressed. To be honest, I had never thought she seemed arrogant from the start. Did that mean we were equals? Wow… I even wanted to toss my hair to look confident and show her I was the person she deserved.

"When you first saw me, did you think I was arrogant like others do?"

"I thought you seemed proud, but it wasn’t something I really criticized or complained about. I was more distracted by your perfume."

"Perfume?"

"The Cherry Blossom one you use."

"You know it? It smells nice, doesn’t it?"

"Yes, it does. I don’t meet many people who use that body spray. When I smelled it on you, I got curious."

"Curious in what way?"

Silence…

Kewalin's question left me torn, wondering whether or not I should answer. If I acted flirtatiously like I do with others, would she back away from me?

"Where are you guys going to stay?"

The uncle, who was the hero while we were on the boat, came to us, all wet, as if he was in the same situation.

"I don't recognize your faces. You must be from Bangkok, right? Your skin looks so good, like you've never seen the sun."

Uncle's local accent, along with the smile and fearless attitude he displayed on the boat, made me smile in a friendly way.

"I was thinking about looking for a place to stay around here. I haven't prepared anything, so do you have any suggestions? A guest house would be great."

"There's nothing like that here."

Kewalin and I sat up straight immediately upon hearing this. It seemed that not even Kew had prepared for this, which meant that I was living this moment completely improvised, like always.

"You look like you've seen a ghost. I saw you two from the port and thought you had some friends here, so I asked where you were staying. But in the end, there's nothing?"

"Yeah, we have nothing. We're backpackers... I mean, we're tourists."

I said, looking discreetly at Kewalin.

"We pay for the accommodation, okay?"

The uncle made a thoughtful expression, looking up as if he was reflecting.

"Yes, but I need to ask my aunt if she'll accept you. Let's see if she'll agree."

"We just need a place to shelter from the sun and rain, it's fine like this." I replied, trying not to sound demanding.

The house that the uncle was talking about was a simple wooden building with a single empty room upstairs. There were no doors or windows, nothing but the stairs to climb. The owner of the house, a lady of about 60 years old, lived alone in a very small house.

Kewalin and I exchanged knowing looks. When he said "there's nothing," he really meant NOTHING.

Oh yes... there was a large clay pot under the house, used for bathing.

"Auntie charges a hundred baht a day for accommodation. Do you think you'll be able to sleep here? But the house really has nothing."

Uncle looked at us with a look of pity, as if he knew how difficult it was for people from Bangkok, who were used to everything, to suddenly find themselves in such a simple house, with just a roof and a pot.

"Kew, can you stay here?"

"I can."

Kewalin’s calm tone surprised me. She seemed to be much more uncomplicated than I had imagined, which made me admire her even more.

I was already really impressed with her.

"So, I'll ask my uncle to bring you a blanket. My aunt's house is very simple. Oh, and if you want to take a bath, use a cloth and bathe in the pot. And if you have a stomachache..."

Uncle hesitated, looking at us.

"You'll need to dig a hole."

Now, I couldn't hold back my laughter when I saw Kewalin's face.

Her surprised expression was hilarious. It seemed like everything she was trying to control was about to slip away at that moment.

"Where is the nearest house?"

I asked, trying to maintain my composure. Uncle looked at me with a confused expression.

"Why, what happened?"

"Take me there, please."

I am the kind of person who knows how to make deals and convince others. The house, which was about 300 meters away from the aunt's house, accepted my proposal to let us use the bathroom, charging 10 baht each time.

Fortunately, the bathroom was outside the house, so we didn't have to disturb the landlady if we needed it at night. Kewalin looked at me with an expression of admiration that I had found a solution to the problem.

"If it weren't for me, you'd be lost. You'd have to settle for digging a hole and sitting down..."

"Oh, that's too much."

"But you would, right?"

Kewalin laughed when I spoke so directly. She seemed a little surprised, but not offended. She was very polite, which impressed me even more.

"It's not hygienic, is it? If it was just a hole on the side of the road, that would be fine, but in this case it's not possible."

Kewalin shook her head, making her hair sway in a lovely, like a dog's fur. Unintentionally, I reached out and gently played with her hair, admiring its delicacy.

"Your hair is so soft, amazing." Impressed again.

"And your hair is beautiful too."

"They're both beautiful, actually. How about we go back to the lady's house? Uncle brought the bamboo bag, it's heavy."

Kewalin and I, who were immersed in our own world, stopped and laughed shyly at the uncle, not forgetting to pay for the bamboo bag rental, a total of 100 baht. The cost of everything was split between the two of us, and we felt like this trip was incredibly cheap, even though we had almost dug a hole to relieve ourselves.

After we got the bamboo bags, we helped to assemble them. From Kewalin’s thrifty manner, I could tell that she probably came from a wealthy family and had probably never done anything like this before.

"This is your first trip, right?"

I asked as I tied the ends of the bamboo bag. Kewalin nodded.

"Yes."

"Isn't it risky to travel alone, without knowing anything?"

"Life is an adventure. I wanted to get out of my comfort zone."

"And we almost drowned because of it."

I laughed, remembering how lucky we were today.

"It was a trip to remember."

"Yes, truly unforgettable."

Kewalin looked at me gratefully, and this time, I was the one who looked away, pretending to be busy, even though I had already finished tying my side. What to do now? Ah, I'll help Kewalin tie hers. While I was busy with that, Kewalin continued to chat.

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Hmm."

I leaned over to look at the person who hadn't finished tying the net yet. The smelly person didn't look me in the eye, but her voice sounded normal, nothing strange.

"It's just that there are people I observe."

"Observe means what?"

"It means I don't have a boyfriend yet, but I have options to look at, I haven't decided anything yet."

"You're a player, aren't you?"

Kaewalin’s voice, with a slightly irritated tone, caused me, who had already finished tying my side, to move to help the short person continue tying. Now, I was unconsciously hugging Kewalin, with my body behind her.

The scent of Flower of Cherry blossoms were floating from the back of her neck, and I almost lost focus. I was barely paying attention to what I was doing anymore.

I wanted to bite...

"Why do you think I'm a player?"

"Because anyone who has too many options is a player."

"Can't we choose what's best?"

"If you keep looking for the best, when will you find it?"

Kewalin lifted her face and looked me in the eyes.

"Why don't you think about looking for someone and then saying 'this is the right person'?"

"And what does the right person look like?"

"It's the one that, when you see it, you feel like you've fallen in love."

"Have you ever been in love?"

"Never."

Kewalin shrugged. We were quite close now, but it didn't seem uncomfortable.

"But I've heard that if you look into someone's eyes for eight seconds, you'll fall in love with them."

**Thump-Thum...**

My heart was beating so hard that I was afraid that Kewalin, who was so close, might hear it. The sky was now quite dark, and in the aunt's house, there were only neon lights illuminating, the rest was quiet, or if there was any sound, it was the chirping of the crickets on the island, which echoed everywhere.

Eight seconds... Did Kewalin know about this too?

"Have you ever looked into someone's eyes for more than eight seconds?"

I asked jokingly.

Kewalin was silent for a moment and replied in a calm voice:

"In yours."

"..."

"I looked into your eyes for eight seconds."

My legs almost gave out upon hearing this, but I tried my best to keep control. What kind of conversation is this?

How am I supposed to feel about talking about falling in love in eight seconds? What does Kewalin expect from me?

"Kew."

"Hmm?"

*"Have you fallen in love with me?"*

# 03. Ask Back

My direct question caused everything to plunge into silence. It wasn’t long before Kewalin’s palm landed with a loud slap on my forehead, causing my head to tilt back, stunned from not being able to react in time. What was that…? Did I just get slapped on the forehead?

"Ah! Sorry, I didn't mean to."

Kewalin raised her hands to cup my face, worried. I blinked my eyes a few times in confusion, and then looked at the perfumed girl’s face, who looked sincerely remorseful.

"You have quick reflexes, huh."

"It's just that you asked me something like that."

"If you're not in love with me, just say no, okay?"

"You idiot."

Kewalin covered her mouth with her hand, in an adorable way.

"Why is it that when I'm with you I seem so rebellious?"

"Is saying 'you idiot' being rebellious? It just means we're close."

I chuckled at the perfumed girl and, without thinking, ruffled her hair with my hand. Maybe it was an unthinking gesture or a genuine affection, but it left us both silent for a moment as we stared in surprise at my hand still resting on Kewalin's head.

It was definitely a lapse of conscience...

"Er... Let's go sleep?"

I quickly withdrew my hand and awkwardly hid it behind my back.

"That way tomorrow we can wake up early and take photos of different corners of the island."

"Uh-huh."

.

Everything on this island is so silent and dark that it's almost scary. The electricity people here use comes from a generator, and at midnight the power goes out. The only means of lighting available is candlelight.

Have I gone back in time, to the time when slavery was abolished? Taking a bath with a mug next to a ceramic jug, sleeping under a mosquito net and lighting the room with candles. Is it just me studying by reading palm leaves now?

The silence kept me from sleeping properly. Even with the sound of crickets in the background, my mind insisted that it was still silence.

Kewalin was also restless, tossing and turning in bed for a long time. Apparently, she couldn't sleep either.

So I turned sideways, towards her, waiting for the right moment when Kewalin would turn to me.

As expected, Kewalin couldn't sleep.

"Why haven't you slept yet?" I asked quietly.

"How do you know that?"

"Rolling back and forth like that, how could not know?"

We both spoke in the lowest tone possible, whispering our words, afraid of disturbing the lady sleeping in the mosquito net next door. From the sound of her snoring, she was probably in a deep sleep, but still so we tried to keep it discreet.

"I need to pee."

She whispered.

"Well, then go ahead."

"I am not going."

I smiled in the darkness, already knowing the reason. Even though Kewalin was a reserved person, I could tell from the tone of her voice that she was afraid of something.

"Are you afraid of ghosts?"

"No!"

She ended up speaking louder, but quickly shut her mouth. I laughed, and Kewalin slapped me on the arm.

"Don't laugh at me, okay?"

"Get up then. I'll go with you. Just pee, right? You don't even need to go to the bathroom."

"Ah... uh-huh."

Even with the uncertain answer, it was possible to imagine that she really wanted to go to the bathroom.

But considering the bathroom was about three hundred meters away, it was more practical to just crouch under the house.

I grabbed my small flashlight and led the way, carefully descending the stairs.

Kewalin followed behind, holding my shoulder and walking with some trepidation. When we got to the ground floor, we looked for a dark corner so she could solve the "problem". Not that it would be difficult, since it was so dark that you could barely see your own hand.

"Don't look, okay!"

Kewalin chose to relieve herself behind a ceramic jar, as it seemed to offer some protection. I chuckled softly and teased:

"Even if I wanted to look, I couldn't see. It's too dark."

"This is terrible!"

"Did you find a ghost?"

"In this darkness, don't talk about ghosts! That's not it!"

"So, what happened?"

"There's no toilet paper."

"Ah, then use the water from the jug to wash."

I said chuckling softly, finding Kewalin adorably full of herself.

"You can wash it, but it gets wet... and that... that's not at all hygienic."

"Do you want to stay dry? I have a way."

"What?"

"I can lick it for you."

***Crash!***

A crumpled steel shell flew over my head, narrowly missing me. Kewalin threw it angrily, making me laugh out loud.

"Why are you so perverted?"

After finishing what she needed to do, Kewalin came out from hiding behind the ceramic jar, walking timidly. When I shone the flashlight on her face, she was clearly sulking.

"Are you mad because I joked around just now? I'm not going to apologize."

"Why?"

She asked, her tone short and direct. I shrugged.

"Because I thought we were close enough to make those jokes."

"Idiot."

She laughed out loud and, without warning, turned off the flashlight that was still pointed at her face. Then she slapped me on the back with a sharp loud. It was the second time I got hurt because of her today. "I just thought we were close enough to fight back."

"Oh, so you want to get even, huh? You're getting bold."

"There's no way around it. When dealing with bold people, we have to retaliate accordingly."

She said, holding my arm.

"Let's go upstairs. It's too dark in here."

We walked up the stairs carefully, talking as we went to dispel the silence. You know, the sound of the crickets is just as scary as the total silence. It sounded like they were doing a Coldplay concert!

"Why weren't you surprised like other people?"

"About what?"

"When I asked if you were in love with me. Like, if it was another girl, she would have made a confused face, saying, 'Impossible! Two women falling in love? What do you mean?' But you acted as if it were the most normal thing in the world, without being surprised or surprised."

"These days, it's common for people of the same gender to date. I have a lot of gay, lesbian, tomboy and 'dee' friends. So when you asked, I just reacted naturally."

"Ahhh..."

I let out a long sound, understanding. It's not every day I meet someone who isn't surprised by these things.

"But you talk about these things so naturally. Kew, you like men, don't you?"

"I don't like."

"Huh? So you like women?"

I immediately turned to her, shining the flashlight on her face once more. "Also I don't like it."

"Huh."

"I don't like anything."

What a difficult answer to understand! I pursed my lips, trying to process it.

"But if I ever have to date someone, it would have to be a man. It's how nature made it. What else is their 'dot' for, if not to use in the 'pot'?"

What are these terms? Kewalin was so cute I had to cover my mouth to hold back my laughter.

Her comments were lovely, giving me a huge urge to pinch her cheeks. Was this really the same arrogant girl I met on the bus?

"Dot" and "pot"?

Oh, Kewalin, I love you! You're so cute, I want to bite you!

"So what's this? Are you flirting with me? Such a slut..."

Kawalin was the first to ask. I tried to keep my composure, avoiding laughing at the terms "dot" and "pot", which kept echoing in my head.

"Why do you think I'm a chicken?"

"Well, just listening to the way you talk makes me realize. Few people can talk to me as calmly as you do, and you're friendly with everyone. People like that are chickens. Besides, the sound of messages on your cell phone, always vibrating and ringing. It must be people from all over sending you messages."

"You observe quite a bit, huh?"

I smiled sideways.

"As I said, I'm not a chicken. I just like to have several options. Whoever is best, that's who I choose."

"Um, do you like men or women?"

"Why are you asking like it's a choice?"

"I feel like you're not that concerned about people's gender."

I was silent for a moment and then nodded.

"I like both men and women."

I replied, being honest.

"We're both very different, aren't we? You don't like anything, while I like everything."

"Well... If everyone was the same, it would be very boring."

She commented.

I don't know how long we talked, but we couldn't go back inside the house. We ended up sitting on the stairs so as not to make noise and disturb the aunt who was sleeping next door.

"Are you disgusted by me now that you know I like women?"

"Why would I be disgusted? Like I said, I have friends of all kinds."

"You said you don't have many friends."

"The college friends I have lunch with from time to time have their preferences, and that doesn't bother me. What matters is what they do, not what I think. Likewise, it doesn't matter who you hang out with involve, there's no reason for me to be disgusted."

"You could be disgusted by me."

"There is?"

Kewalin looked at me in surprise.

"Why?"

"Because we stared into each other's eyes for eight seconds."

"..."

"Just kidding! You looked so serious, I thought you were going to kill me for real."

Kewalin fell silent, looking tense. I quickly changed the subject to ease the tension and called her to sleep.

"Let's go to sleep. Tomorrow we'll take some pictures."

"Okay."

The night passed with her back to me, still not speaking to me. It seems that... I really did make things go a little off track. Tomorrow I need to improve the situation, try to lighten the mood. A person with a wall as high as hers is hard to understand. If I am too direct, she will end up lifting more this wall. We still have several days. I'll make it...

. .

The next morning... Kewalin woke up and went to take a shower. She was so uncomfortable with the idea of wearing a sarong[1] that I could only scratch my head in frustration, but when I tried to help her, she immediately took a step back, covering her chest with her hands, even though the sarong was almost falling.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll help you change, of course. You've been wearing the sarong for ages, and you're still not done. Are you going to take a shower today?"

"No... no need. I'll do it myself."

The surprised expression on Kewalin's beautiful face made me smile with affection. It seems that what happened last night was still going through her head. That's okay. I don't plan on apologizing. When we want to approach someone with the intention of winning them over, we need to know how to do this, don't act like you're just a friend. Those who act like this end up wasting time for nothing.

"But I'm going to be bothered. If you don't take a shower, we won't be able to go out to take the pictures. You'll miss the chance."

The serious tone of my voice made Kewalin stay silent for a long time, probably worried that it was a real problem. In the end, she ended up allowing me to help her take off her sarong, still trying to cover her body so I wouldn't see.

"Why are you so embarrassed? We have the same thing, you know. You don't have to be like this."

"Ann, you're still a stranger to me. And I've never let anyone see my body..."

"Virgin, huh?"

Kewalin turned her face away, baring her teeth in anger when she realized I was making a semi-inappropriate joke again. I just raised an eyebrow and scowled in response.

"But I'm your friend, Kewalin. Don't worry. With time, you'll get used to it and you'll see that it's normal. Today you'll only show me your shoulder, tomorrow maybe I'll see..."

"What are you going to see?"

"The little pot."

. .

Kewalin and I bathed together wearing sarongs, and the freezing water from the well made us almost freeze to death. It was as if we were experiencing what a frozen sea fish feels, trapped in ice.

"Kill me now..."

After crossing the Arctic, we finally went out to get dressed. Kewalin was rummaging through her bag with a constant noise, until she suddenly turned around with an excited voice.

"Ann, the camera is working! Look!"

She smiled widely, and I gave a shy smile, seeing how happy she was. But then, her expression suddenly darkened.

"Why did you stop smiling? Kew, your smile is beautiful."

"Stop complimenting me."

I was alert, but I couldn't help but feel a challenge rising within me. The more she tried to distance herself, the more motivated I felt. Maybe it was because I believed that Kewalin didn't reject me completely, and since we still had many days ahead of us, I could keep trying.

Then we started walking around the island, where most of the trails were sand, the result of deforestation, and the houses, for the most part, were one-story. Some of the richer ones were made of concrete.

I didn't know exactly what artistic style this was, because the houses, even when finished, were not painted and had an unfinished look.

With my camera, I tried to find a nice angle, but it was difficult. I could only see coconut trees and ordinary houses, like any other city. The landscape didn't seem to have anything interesting, and the sea water was full of oil from the transport boats. The sand looked more like mud. How would I make nature look beautiful in the photos?

"I took a lot of pictures today."

Kewalin said as we returned to the house after walking all day. The island was small, but quite spacious. I thought that tomorrow, if we went to the other side of the island, maybe we would find something beautiful near a small temple.

"I also took a lot of photos."

I said, trying not to sound inferior.

"But I think I'll take more tomorrow. Oh, I'm so tired today."

"Then go take a bath, to relax."

"Aren't you going to take a bath with me?"

"..."

Kewalin remained silent, creating an awkward tension, but that was okay. I planned to take this opportunity to get even closer. If the night got colder and darker, she would probably get scared and ask me to come with her.

When I went to take a shower, the water was freezing and the feeling of being in the countryside was even more intense, as if I were in the middle of a snowstorm. After quickly cleaning myself, I went up to my room, but when I went to get my clothes from my backpack, I saw Kewalin with her back to me, doing something. I went to take a peek silently and realized that she was fiddling with my camera and browsing through the photos.

"What are you doing?"

"Ah!"

Kewalin was startled, turned around quickly, and looked uncomfortable.

"Why are you messing with my camera?"

"It's just... I wanted to see what you photographed, but the camera only has pictures of me."

"..."

What did this mean? I was speechless. I had thought of many ways to approach her, but being caught in this kind of situation was unexpected. I didn’t know what to do and started looking around, as if searching for a way out. Then, Kewalin, with a mischievous smile, said:

"Yeah... then, I'll ask you back."

"What?"

*"Are you in love with me, Ann?"*

If a writer can describe his feelings through words, a photographer can also convey his emotions with light by pressing the shutter and capturing the model with each click.

And he can clearly express what he feels in each photo, as in Kewalin's portrait, where we see the photographer in love with the model in every spontaneous angle. I can't find excuses for myself, except...

"Hmm..."

"..."

***"I've fallen in love with you, Kew."***

**Footnote:**

[***1]. Sarong is a type of skirt worn by Malays of both sexes, consisting of a piece of cloth that wraps around the lower part of the trunk. The name means cover in Malay***

# 04. Proposal

I raised my hand to cover my forehead, protecting myself, as if I feared the person in front of me might strike me again with her palm. But, to my surprise, Kewalin stood still, her face visibly flushed. The sweet person bit her lip, like someone who didn’t know what to do, before lying down on the bed.

"Let’s sleep."

With that, Kewalin crawled into bed, and I, still wearing the sarong, quickly changed clothes and lay down as well. As I did so, I noticed that Kewalin was turned away from me. However, if I had to guess, I think the sweet person wouldn’t be able to sleep.

The adrenaline from the surprise was still flowing. I told myself, no matter what we feel, we must talk. Play the role of a good friend? Not even in another life!

"Are we done talking, Kew?"

"..."

"Don’t pretend you’re asleep. I know you haven’t fallen asleep yet because when you sleep deeply, you snore loudly."

When called out like that, the sweet person quickly turned her back, surprised, and looked at me with an expression of disbelief.

"Really? I snore? That’s not good for your health, you know?"

"Are you shocked you snore that much? If it were so dangerous, the woman in the mosquito net next door would’ve been dead by now."

I laughed.

"Just kidding, Kew. You sleep so well; you’re the best person to sleep with I’ve ever met."

"You must’ve slept with a lot of people, huh?"

Ah, trying to provoke me, huh?

"Not that many."

"You’re a player."

"Kew, are you mad at me?"

"Being a player isn’t good. Even if it’s normal in this world. If someone gets with a lot of people, it means they’re a player. Being a player is not a good thing."

Kewalin grumbled, but I managed to read her lips.

"And you still dare to tell me you’re in love after knowing me for only two days."

"Does love need time to happen?"

"It has to be studied."

"You’ve never been in love, but you know everything."

"But it’s not something that happens so quickly, like knowing someone for two days and already saying you’re in love. It doesn’t work like that."

I moved closer to Kewalin, who was lying on her back, and crossed my arms, observing her jaw with a fascinated look. Kewalin glanced at me briefly but quickly turned her head to the other side, unable to handle the charm I was trying to exude.

Yes, I admit, I was trying to seduce her. After all, I wanted it so badly. "But, did you know the theory says that if two people look into each other’s eyes for eight seconds, they end up falling in love? We’ve known each other for two days, far more than eight seconds."

"Don’t try to seduce me. Know that I hate players."

After saying that, Kewalin turned her back on me. I, who was ready to continue the seduction, suddenly stopped, not knowing what to do.

What was this?

Normally, my gaze made anyone give in, but this time, I was being ignored.

"And if I weren’t a player, Kew? Would you hate me or not?"

There was no response, just a deep silence. And that night, we lay back to back, listening to the sound of crickets around the house, waking and sleeping intermittently.

We hadn’t even had the chance to become something...

Were we already fighting?

.

.

**The Last Day on the Island**

Today is the last day we’ll be together on the island. Yesterday, we planned to go to the other side of the island, where there’s a Chinese temple at the top. Kewalin has barely spoken to me since we arrived, as if she’s upset, though for some unknown reason.

Meanwhile, I pretended not to care and just followed her, curious to see how far she could act like this.

I noticed that, at several moments, Kewalin glanced at me but pretended to turn away to take pictures, as if I wasn’t there. Today, I managed to take a few photos of the temple, and although the place was quite worn down, there were still beautiful angles.

"Look, here’s the Goddess Guan Yin, who helped us not sink the boat!"

I said with an enthusiastic voice. Kewalin, who had momentarily forgotten, ran over to me and leaned over to look.

"It’s true. But you said you didn’t believe the goddess would help us." She replied.

"The goddess didn’t save us from sinking; she just helped you run to me and talk to me."

I looked into the eyes of the person next to me, who seemed to have forgotten herself.

Kewalin made a face and seemed to want to pull away, but I held her arm before she could go.

"Are you mad at me because I said I’m in love with you?"

"Player."

"Does the fact that I’m open bother you? Hm... So, after this trip, when we separate, we won’t be friends anymore; we won’t stay in touch, is that it?"

"..."

"Okay, I won’t try to seduce you anymore. I just want to be friends with Kewalin. If you’re not comfortable, I won’t flirt with you anymore."

I walked ahead, taking photos without worrying about anything else, while Kewalin stayed silent and went to another corner to take pictures alone. To be honest, today my confidence was pretty shaken. I’ve flirted with many women before—sometimes subtly, sometimes less so—and I almost always succeeded.

But Kewalin… she wasn’t easy.

She was hard to reach, and now, more than ever, she seemed impossible. This island wasn’t anything special, but I managed to take over a hundred photos. I’d edit some in Lightroom, and for sure, the pictures would turn out amazing.

The photography time ended as the daylight faded. We returned to our lodging, but we didn’t exchange a single word.

Both of us bathed separately. It seemed Kewalin had learned her lesson from yesterday—that letting me bathe first forced her to fight her fears of the dark and imaginary ghosts.

When it was finally my turn to finish bathing, we both got into bed, lying back to back. Kewalin kept scrolling through the photos on her camera.

...

Silence.

The silence was overwhelming. Since I couldn’t sleep, I picked up my camera to review the day’s photos. Most of them were of temples and statues—ordinary—but what I wanted to convey was how the surrounding atmosphere was different.

I needed to express through the images what made this temple unique, what made it special yet calm and spiritual.

"Did you manage to take many photos today?"

Kewalin’s voice broke the silence while she was still turned to her side. I was surprised to hear that sweet voice, and without realizing it, I smiled broadly with happiness. But I didn’t turn toward her—I didn’t want to show how excited I was.

"I took quite a few."

"Let me see."

"Hm."

I handed her the camera, still lying on my side. Kewalin scrolled through the images in silence... deep silence... until I started to feel uneasy.

"How do they look? Are my photos good?"

"They’re not good."

"Oh, really? I trust my talent, you know?"

"There are no photos of me."

She said this, and I opened my eyes wide in surprise. I turned to Kewalin, who tossed her camera to me without even looking at me, continuing to scroll through the photos on the screen as naturally as possible.

I grabbed her camera, and when I saw the images, my heart raced, as if I was in the middle of a battle and had just won. In the photos... there was only me.

And this, even after an entire day where we had barely looked directly at each other.

"Why are there only pictures of me?"

"That’s what I want to know. Why are there only photos of you on my camera? And it’s frustrating that there are none of me on yours."

"....."

"You said you were in love with me, didn’t you? And just because I played hard to get, you gave up? Player."

"Then, let me show you something."

I grabbed my camera and selected the photos hidden on another memory card. Kewalin tilted her head, curious, looking at me without understanding. "These are photos of you."

"I hid them in case you took my camera again. Who said I didn’t take pictures of you? You’re more beautiful than any temple."

I gently pulled Kewalin so she would turn toward me. Now, our noses were almost touching, and the soft candlelight flickered with the breeze coming through the window.

"Player."

"You love calling me that, don’t you? I already told you, when I find the right person, I’ll stop. I’ll stay only with her."

I responded sincerely because this was something deeply rooted in me for a long time.

But... how could I make her understand this?

"But you know what? I hate players. My father was one... a player to the point where he made me believe love and affection aren’t real. Why does love need to be divided among so many people? Why can’t we love just one person?"

"I might have many options, but I’ve never truly loved anyone."

"And the options you have? Do they think like you? If all of them love you, won’t it hurt them? What you’re doing is only thinking of yourself."

Her words, so much like a scolding, made me talk about something I rarely mentioned. It was strange... I never shared my personal story with anyone I liked. But with her, it was different.

"I’ve loved someone before."

I said honestly.

"And that taught me that loyalty isn’t enough to keep someone by your side.

Loving just one person, having one heart, only brought me pain. The person who left me moved on, was happy with someone else, without ever knowing how I felt."

"But you can’t take that out on everyone, turning every relationship into a list of options. You’re acting just like my father."

Kewalin then shared her story:

"My father didn’t want to be alone. That’s why he chose to have two families, one official and one hidden. The worst part is... I’m the child of the other woman. That’s why I hate players."

"Our thoughts seem so opposite that I don’t even know if they can reconcile."

My voice came out almost as a whisper, and Kewalin nodded.

"But the fact that you’re here, talking to me, shows that you have some feelings for me."

"You like me too, don’t you?"

"Yes..."

"Then... we like each other, right?"

Kewalin asked directly, and I couldn’t help but smile.

"Yes, we like each other."

"Funny... I thought the 'dot' and the 'pot' were meant to be together, coexisting forever."

I nearly exploded with laughter. The mood was starting to get good, and then she brought up the whole "dot" and pot" story again.

"Dot and pot can also be together." I replied, joining in on the joke. "And how would that work?"

"Date me... and you’ll find out."

I leaned closer to her confidently, but Kewalin quickly raised her hand, spreading her fingers over my face and pushing me away.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I need to be sure. I like you, but it’s only been four days. There’s still time to back out."

"Back out? Why?"

"Because you’re a player."

"And what do I need to do?"

"You need to stop being a player and prove it to me."

Kewalin smiled in an irresistible way, with a look so full of charm that I almost melted like ice cream in the sun.

"Now it’s in your hands. Since we like each other, will we move forward or give up? I’ll leave the choice to you."

"Choice? Choose what?"

"If you choose me, you’ll have to abandon your player behavior for good."

"..."

"I know it’s not easy to give up all the other options you consider good and decide on me. That’s why I’m leaving the decision in your hands. You have until tomorrow... before we part ways."

"I don’t know if I’m capable of changing for someone."

I confessed, more to myself than to her.

"That’s why I’m giving you until tomorrow to think it over."

Feeling like I’d earned a small victory and had already started melting the heart of this woman with such high walls, I decided to ask for an early reward, as insurance.

"Can I give you a kiss now?"

"Why?"

"To make sure of what I really feel."

I leaned toward her, but Kewalin raised her hand again and covered my mouth with a playful smile.

"No testing the product before the final decision. You have to decide first. Only after that, anything can happen."

"Anything? What exactly could happen?"

We fell silent for a moment. She looked up, as if deep in thought, and then smiled mischievously.

*"If I don’t find a tissue... I’ll let you lick it."*

"Kew!"

I was completely shocked by the unexpected boldness of someone who had always been so reserved. I froze, my face flushed all the way to my ears. And considering I’m usually the queen of teasing—maybe even deserving a spot in the Guinness Book for it—this was a big deal.

She, however, gently pressed my head down and kissed my forehead.

"Consider this a bonus. Good night, sleep well."

**Thump-thump...**

**Thump-thump...**

That night, for the first time, the sweet-smelling girl didn’t turn her back to me.

It felt almost like a provocation, as if she wanted to tempt me, challenge me to do something.

But as much as desire burned inside me, I knew Kewalin would never give in easily.

She had awakened the beast within me, but only to leave me staring at the prey with hungry eyes, unable to do anything.

It was frustrating... and fascinating.

The more I looked at her, the more I realized Kewalin was unique. She had a peculiar charm, a perfect balance of sweetness and stubbornness that was never irritating.

She was the kind of woman who knew what she wanted and made it clear.

And she had been direct:

**"If we want to be together, you have to change. No keeping open options. It’s just me and no one else."**

The deadline? Tomorrow.

Kewalin was captivating, firm, and determined, and that only made me like her even more. Yes, I could lie, promise what she wanted to hear just to buy time.

But that wasn’t what I wanted. I liked Kewalin too much to deceive her.

She wasn’t like the others. She was unique. She made my heart race like it hadn’t in years. It felt like the thrill of first love, as if I’d gone back to being 16.

And above all... she was so tempting.

**I CAN’T BELIEVE SHE ACTUALLY SAID THAT!**

…..Ahhhhhhh, I need to sleep before I go crazy!

# 05. Lick

Every party has its end. Just as there are meetings, there are also farewells. Today is the day we part ways.

Kewalin still fears being on a boat, but if not by boat, the only other option would be swimming to the island.

"You don't know how to swim, do you? So, it has to be by boat."

During the crossing, Kewalin kept holding the hem of my shirt as if seeking reassurance. I looked at her, smiled, and said something to comfort her:

"If the boat sinks, I'll save you again. Don't worry."

"You’re so charming, aren’t you?"

"What? I'm saying this from the heart, with good intentions."

"Since I found out you’re a flirt, I can’t see you innocently anymore. You’re like one of those bad boys. I never thought I’d meet someone like that."

I laughed and held Kewalin's hand, even though she pretended to resist somewhat theatrically. In truth, she was still scared of the surrounding sea and, in part, had feelings for me.

Today is the day I have to give her an answer...

After about thirty minutes, the boat docked at the shore. Everyone disembarked one by one. Kewalin was visibly clumsy, afraid of stumbling and falling into the water.

So I had to assist her as if I were caring for a small child, gently.

"No need to be scared anymore. You're safe now, far from the sea."

I said this with a smile, and Kewalin nodded, relieved.

The passengers started heading to the collective transport that would take them to the market. But Kewalin and I stayed behind as if our story wasn’t over yet.

"Do you have something to tell me?"

"If you're talking about what we started discussing last night... yes, I do. I thought you wouldn’t ask me anymore."

"If I hadn’t asked, you wouldn’t have said anything?"

"Probably not."

"Why?"

"Because I thought you weren’t serious, and I would have let it go."

"So, besides being a flirt, you're also a coward."

Kewalin pouted, and the reproach in her voice made me feel a bit guilty.

To be honest, I am a coward. When I end things with someone, I simply disappear. I never say it directly because I'm afraid of hurting the person. Besides, I can’t handle my pride being hurt if the person I'm interested in doesn’t reciprocate my feelings.

Today, for example, if Kewalin hadn’t asked, I probably wouldn’t have had the courage to say anything, fearing rejection if she said what happened last night was a joke.

That’s how I am—I overthink everything.

"So, have you decided what you’re going to do?"

"If I stop being a flirt and stay only with you, will I regret it?"

I asked with my head down, like a child afraid of the teacher getting angry for not handing in their homework.

"Why would you regret it?"

"If I stay only with you, and one day you find someone better, someone who matches you more, and you leave me... I’m scared of getting hurt."

"I’m the one who should be scared. I’m falling for someone who flirts, with messages buzzing on their phone all the time."

We both looked into each other's eyes as if testing one another. In the end, I grabbed my phone and threw it into the sea as quickly as I could.

"Hey! What are you doing?!"

Kewalin looked at the phone I had just thrown and covered her mouth.

"That was a phone!"

"If I don’t have a phone, those people won’t message me anymore. That way, you can relax."

"....."

"Now, there’s only you for me. So, love me a lot, okay?"

The sweet-scented person still seemed to lament the phone while making a sulky face but ended up laughing, as if she no longer knew how to react. Then, she stood on tiptoes and hugged me for the first time.

"It’s strange. We’ve only known each other for a few days, and I’m already in love with you. How can I escape this? You have to love me a lot too."

"Keep your promise, okay?"

"What promise?"

"To lick."

*Pah!*

Kewalin’s palm hit my forehead again, but this time harder. She was genuinely upset, her teeth clenched. I held my sore forehead and shook my head, feeling the force of the slap.

"Is that all you think about?"

"Of course! Last night, that’s all I thought about. That’s why I threw the phone into the sea."

I licked my lips as if thinking about fresh seafood, like oysters.

"Your mind only thinks about licking, huh?"

The sweet-scented person pinched my cheek tightly, seeming to vent her anger, and walked off toward the vehicle.

"I’m not talking to you anymore."

"Hey, sorry! Don’t be mad. But, if you try it once, maybe instead of slapping me, you’ll end up asking..."

"Anna!"

"Okay, I’ll stop. I won’t say anything else."

Tsk... Promise breaker!

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On the way here, we came on the bus together, still strangers to each other. But on the way back, we were so close, sitting side by side, and ended up becoming girlfriends in such an unexpected way.

Kewalin was sitting by the window, looking outside, while I couldn’t stop looking at her, as if I were hypnotized. On the way here, I could only see the left side of her face, but on the way back, I could see the other side. It was similar, yet somehow different.

"Don’t you get tired of looking at me?"

"You noticed?"

"Yes, I saw it from the corner of my eye. What’s so interesting?"

"You have a very pretty nose. How can you be so cute? I feel like biting it."

"What? You want to bite my nose?"

Kewalin raised her hand and placed it on her own face.

"I met you five days ago, and all you think about is ‘licking’ and ‘biting’... what madness."

"Ah... soon you’ll discover even more."

"Are you really this naughty?"

"I have a lot of friends like this. Most of my friends are like that, talking about things that are a little inappropriate, but not seriously. I ended up picking up the habit. You’ll have to get used to it."

"I, on the other hand, feel guilty even for saying ‘madness.’"

"What a good girl, huh?"

I reached out and touched Kewalin’s nose with a certain privilege, but she didn’t complain, just made a face. I then held her face with both hands and began squeezing it, as if kneading something.

"Ow, that hurts!"

"Why do you have to be so cute? It’s going to drive me crazy!"

"Seriously, that much?"

"Yes, your face makes me feel so many things... like affection, desire, and even the urge to bite."

"Then stop looking at my face, I’m already feeling so many things."

Kewalin grabbed her jacket and covered her head, as if trying to protect herself. I made a dissatisfied face because, even though we were already in a relationship, she was still hiding from me. We hadn’t even done anything yet, and she was already like this.

I completely forgot about the idea of "licking" for now... I think it’s going to be difficult...

"Ann, is there something inside your jacket that you’re not telling me about?"

"Huh?"

I opened the jacket Kewalin was using to cover her head, but suddenly, she pulled me under the jacket and kissed me. She quickly moved away, afraid that the other passengers would notice what we were doing.

I wasn’t even expecting it. What just happened? Did she just provoke me or something else?

"Kew?"

"Yes?"

"I have something to tell you."

I spoke loudly on purpose, as if announcing to the other passengers that this conversation was just between us. Then, I leaned down and kissed Kewalin intensely. She didn’t respond immediately, staying as stiff as a rock.

My God... A real virgin. She didn’t even know how to kiss properly. I pulled away, left the jacket, and stayed silent for about five minutes. Kewalin then adjusted her blouse and looked at me with her face completely red before nudging me with her elbow.

"Did I do something wrong?"

"No."

"Why are you so quiet? Are you mad because I... don’t know how to kiss?" Her voice was low, which softened my heart. I smiled and responded.

"I was just thinking, you’ll be the first girlfriend I’ll do everything to not cross any boundaries. I want you to be yourself, with no rush to do anything you don’t want to."

"Why do you think like that?"

Kewalin’s insecure manner made me gently touch her hand.

"Now that I’ve found you, it feels like I’ve found a valuable treasure. I really don’t know what brought me to you..."

"But..."

"That’s enough. Let’s date purely, without pressure or temptations. I like you just the way you are, Kew. I feel good knowing you haven’t given in to anyone else until now. I’d feel awful if I hurt you in any way."

I said that from the heart. That’s what love is, isn’t it? When we love someone, we want to respect them and not make them feel hurt or ashamed.

"That’s not it."

"Kew, is there something you want to tell me?"

Kewalin looked shy and swallowed hard before hesitating. At first, it seemed like she wouldn’t speak, but finally, she made up her mind.

"I wouldn’t be mad if you wanted to do something with me."

"But I don’t want..."

"I want to have sex with you."

***Cough, cough!***

I choked and turned completely red, surprised by what I had just heard.

Kewalin, who had mustered the courage to say that, was just as red as me. Now it felt like we were in a sauna, both of us not knowing what to do or say.

"Now you think I’m a promiscuous woman, don’t you?"

"No! Of course not!"

I quickly denied it with my hands.

"It’s just that... I really wasn’t expecting to hear that. We’re so different, Kew. I’m someone who loves things... let’s say, a little bolder, and you...

you’ve never even experienced a proper kiss."

"But it’s because of you."

"Huh?"

"It’s because of you, Ann. I want this with you."

We fell into silence. Kewalin played with her hands, visibly embarrassed.

As she began to explain her feelings, I was completely at a loss for words.

"I’ve never felt this way about anyone before. Maybe it’s because you saved me, and I feel an immense gratitude. You’re beautiful, you have a unique charm, and so many other qualities that make my heart race. All of this made me want to give in."

"You’re admitting that you seduced me, huh? You’re even cuter that way."

I reached out and gently pulled Kewalin’s cheek, but this time she held my hand and pressed it to her cheek.

"I know I’m not a lesbian, I still like men, but right now, I like you."

"..."

"And besides, having sex with a woman should be just as serious as with a man... right?"

Most women think that way, and many men do, too. They never really care if a woman has had a girlfriend before, because they see relationships between women as less serious—unless one of those women takes their girlfriend away. Then it’s a different story.

"Before we get to that point... I think it’s better to take things slow."

"Slow in what way? Because on the first day you took me to pee, you already offered to lick me."

"I was joking!"

I placed my hand over my face, as if accepting the teasing. My God, it felt like I was talking about adult movies with a nun from a monastery high u in the mountain.

"Let’s take things slow; at least we’ve kissed now."

I said, and Kewalin grabbed my hand, interlocking her fingers tightly, something friends don’t do.

"Yeah, at least we’ve kissed."

"..."

"And then we can lick, right?"

"God!"

"Hehe."

I’m falling for this woman in a way I can no longer control.

What is it about her that’s so endearing? When she acts serious, she seems like the queen of a distant country, but when she’s being cute, she’s an adorable clown. Now, I really don’t know how to deal with someone like this.

Well, this is just the beginning of our relationship.

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After about four hours, we finally arrived in Bangkok. The clock showed it was already past 10 p.m. Kewalin decided to call a taxi and insisted I go with her, ignoring all my objections.

"Come with me."

"Where are we going?"

"To the mall."

"After coming back from the sea, really?"

I immediately made an expression of exhaustion, but Kewalin persisted.

"We have to go now. Without a phone, we won’t be able to communicate."

"That’s true."

I looked at Kewalin as she insisted we go to the mall to buy a new phone.

Luckily, I had the credit card my mom gave me for household purchases. Now, most of it was used up buying the new phone—all because I threw the old one into the sea to prove my sincerity to her.

I can be nice, but what a stupid thing to do, right? I could have just deleted the contacts, and the problem would’ve been solved without spending money.

The new phone wasn’t expensive; it seemed more like an excuse to keep in touch.

Kewalin saved my number in her phone while I did the same, adding our names with nicknames...

"What should I put?"

There was a certain shyness between us. Kewalin scratched her head, as if this was her first time doing something like this.

"I’ll save your name as... ‘Jum-jim.’"

"Why did you give me that name?"

"Because it’s cute. Just looking at you makes me want to squish you."

I pulled Kewalin’s cheek, stretching it like a rubber band, affectionately. Now we were both standing in front of Kewalin’s apartment.

"You live here? It looks comfortable, with air conditioning too."

"Yeah. My mom picked it out for me; she said she wanted me to have a good place to sleep."

"Wow, I want to see it! Let’s go up and take a look."

Kewalin raised her hand and pushed my face, stopping me in my tracks, as if she already knew what I was thinking.

"It's not necessary."

"What’s this? I just want to see your room."

"With someone like you, it’s not just about looking at the room. You’ll definitely want to do something with me."

"But weren’t you the one who said you wanted to have sex?"

"What happened to your promise to take it slow? Where’s the consistency?"

"We’re both so contradictory, aren’t we? Fine, I’ll leave."

"Where do you live?"

"In Rangsit."

"Wow!"

Kewalin looked surprised because we were in Samyan.

"That’s completely the other direction."

"So you wanted to invite me to sleep with you, huh?"

"No, I just wanted to wish you a safe trip home. When you get there, let me know. Save me as... ‘Jat J.’"

We really are a perfect couple, aren’t we? ‘Jat J and Jum-jim.’

"I was joking, okay? I said I wouldn’t do anything to you, so I won’t. Well, I’m leaving now. I want to sleep."

"When you get home, let me know, so I won’t worry."

"Okay."

There were still some people passing by us, so we didn’t show much affection. But as soon as it was clear there was no one around, Kewalin grabbed my hand, as if afraid of being apart.

"Suddenly, I'm missing the island."

"What are you afraid of? We’re girlfriends now."

"You’re not going to change your mind, are you?"

"I’m the one afraid you’ll change your mind... I’m really leaving.

Otherwise, I’d buy a bed to sleep with you. Now let go of my hand!"

Kewalin obediently let go of my hand. I waved and began walking away, feeling a slight twinge of longing. Now my heart was pounding, like someone feeling truly happy. I didn’t even need food to feel full; it was like butterflies were fluttering in my stomach.

I’ve never felt this way about anyone before...

"Ann!"

Kewalin’s shout made me turn, and I saw her running to hug me, tilting her neck to kiss me. Since she didn’t know how to kiss, our lips just touched, and Kewalin quickly pulled back, looking like she had no idea what to do.

"What was that? You scared me."

"I just wanted to make it clear, to be sure that... you’re not going to change your mind. But, sorry again, I don’t know how to kiss..."

I tilted my head down and softly brushed my lips against hers while she nervously spoke, then lightly licked the corner of her mouth, teasing her.

"Don’t worry, I’ll teach you step by step. You’ll learn to kiss, you’ll get good at it, and you’ll kiss only me."

"How do you know I’ll only kiss you? If I learn to kiss, I might end up kissing other people, right?"

I kissed the talkative girl on her nose with a mischievous smile, then gently bumped her forehead with mine.

"Because now we’re girlfriends."

Kewalin smiled so broadly that her face scrunched up and nodded.

"That’s right, we’re girlfriends now."

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**ootnote:**

***"Jum-jim" (***จุม~~จ~~ม~~ิ~~ ***)This Thai expression translates directly to "kiss" or***

***"to kiss." However, it can carry a deeper meaning depending on the context, often used intimately or affectionately. In some settings, it conveys feelings of passion or love, adding an emotional weight to its otherwise simple translation.***

***"Jat J" (***จด~~ั~~จ~~์~~***)This Thai term can also mean "kiss," "affection," "love," or even "darling" or "sweetheart." Depending on the context, it might serve as a nickname, a term of endearment, or even playful slang. Its significance varies, reflecting the relational or conversational dynamic between the speakers.***

# 06. Tham P (3)

I returned to my dormitory, excited, at around 11 p.m. by taxi. However, as soon as I arrived, my excitement disappeared when I saw someone sitting on the last step of the stairs, looking worried. When I looked closer, I immediately recognized him: it was "Tham," one of the men in my collection, whose number I had stored in the phone I threw into the sea.

"Why are you sitting here, exposing yourself to mosquitoes?"

As soon as my voice echoed, Tham raised his head almost immediately, as if he had heard the voice of an angel descending from heaven. Of course, if I had wings, I’d fly and look even more beautiful.

"Anna, I was so scared! I thought something had happened to you! I couldn’t contact you; your phone was off. Do you know how worried I

was? Let me check if you’re okay."

Tham had a panicked expression and turned me around, as if measuring me for a dress to wear during Fashion Week in Cannes. Sometimes he overdramatizes too much.

"Nothing happened. My phone fell into the water, so I couldn’t call you."

"Ah, you scared me! I almost filed a missing person’s report, you know? But it hadn’t been 24 hours yet."

"I heard with the new law you can file a report before 24 hours, but you don’t need to exaggerate. Look, I’m back safe and sound, so Tham, please leave now."

I spoke impatiently because I was extremely tired. I wanted to take a shower and sleep since I was all sweaty. But Tham didn’t want to leave and pulled me into a tight hug.

"I missed you."

I was going to complain, but I was so tired I just let him continue.

"How long have you been waiting?"

"Since noon."

"Huh? Since that time?"

"Yes."

I looked at Tham’s handsome face and sighed. Why was he so dedicated to waiting for me like this?

"Tham… I’m not a good enough person for you to invest this much. If you find someone better, feel free to go; you don’t have to stay with me."

"Please don’t say that. I’ve told you so many times, Anna, you are the person I’ve always waited for. You are love... my love at first sight."

"What did I do to make you think that?"

"The moment I looked into your eyes, I knew you were the only woman in the world I wanted to be with and love."

"In my eyes?"

I rolled my eyes and began to recall my first meeting with Tham at the mall. I saw that he was well-dressed, and at that time, I was with a group of friends who wanted to see me "flirting" as an example. It was a game, a joke among the girls. So, to follow my friends' request, I found a target… and Tham was the man who passed by at the right time.

He was tall, well-built, fair-skinned, dressed impeccably, and carried luxury items that showed his financial status. And he was the target…

As soon as I exchanged a smile and looked at him, Tham stopped walking and stared at me intensely. I was the first to approach him, introduce myself, and we exchanged LINE contacts. For me, that was the end of the game, nothing more. But for Tham, it wasn’t the case…

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"You are my first love."

I felt guilty for playing with someone’s feelings just for the fun of drawing attention, but I ended up trapping someone in a regrettable way.

Moreover, I didn’t have the courage to be rude enough to break up with him. As Kewalin said, I was "a coward," and Tham wasn’t a bad option compared to other guys.

He was handsome. He studied at the number one public university. He was the representative of his faculty. He was very wealthy. Talking to Tham made me look different to my friends at university, especially since he always picked me up in his expensive European car and took me to fancy restaurants.

But I never did anything wrong, as people often call "using someone." The fact is, because I came from a good family background, I kept him around just because he was the best man available to me.

Oh, and he kissed me too. But we never went further than that.

One of the charms women hold over men is not giving in easily. We create desire but don’t give them what they want. And that’s what happened with Tham; he got stuck in the net like a fish that couldn’t escape. I never told him about my sexual orientation.

I can date men, but I like women. But that’s not something I share with just anyone.

"I’m really tired today, Tham. How about we meet tomorrow? It’s almost 11 p.m. I’m sweaty from the sea breeze and exhausted from the trip. If I have to entertain you now…"

I glanced at the clock.

"Almost midnight, I’m going to pass out." "Then, take my phone so we can keep in touch."

Tham offered me his phone.

"And what will you use?"

"I’ll buy another one. I just want to be able to talk to you."

"No need. I’ll buy a new one and call you."

I crossed my arms, refusing his phone. He looked at me with a sad expression, which was starting to irritate me.

"You want me to get mad, don’t you?"

"Fine, I’ll leave… but tomorrow, can I come see you?"

"No, I have plans tomorrow."

"What plans?"

"..."

"I can take you there."

I paused for a moment to think and nodded. Today he looked so tired and miserable from waiting for me all day. If I continued to be cruel, he might see me as a bad person.

"Fine."

And with that, he finally agreed to leave.

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Tham did exactly as I said, he came to meet me, dressed in his university uniform, looking extremely elegant. When I saw him with the university emblem on his chest, I felt nervous and uneasy, unable to explain why.

I understood that the university was large, and it was unlikely he’d know Kewalin by chance, but the fact that they studied at the same university, in the same field, didn’t put me at ease.

To ensure my safety and prevent any problems, I decided to take precautions and ask him to keep his distance, intending to create a safe space.

"There’s no need, we already agreed that you’d just drop me off. I don’t need to keep repeating myself."

"But I can only spend a little time with you; I miss you."

His pleading look made me sigh. Sometimes, I feel like I’m too cruel. I shouldn’t have played with his feelings like that. "I was thinking… how about we meet in the evening?"

Immediately, his face lit up with hope.

"Really? Of course!"

"I have something important to tell you; I’ll call you later."

"But you don’t have a phone."

Ah, that’s right… I had forgotten.

"Then give me your number. When I buy a new phone, I’ll call you."

"You can take my phone, I don’t mind."

"Just the number, please."

I insisted, and Tham agreed, taking out a pen and writing down his number with impeccable handwriting.

"By the way, what are you doing around here?"

"I have some errands. In the evening, I’ll meet you right here, near the university. What do you think?"

"Hmm, you have to call me, okay?"

"Yes."

After saying goodbye to Tham, I watched the tail lights of his car until I was sure he had left. Then, I called a taxi to the Faculty of Dentistry, where Kewalin had asked me to meet her. I wasn’t very familiar with the area and felt a little frustrated that I had wasted 35 baht so foolishly, just for the taxi to make a short turn and take me to the faculty.

I was dressed simply, in a t-shirt and jeans, wearing sunglasses—not because the sun was too bright, but because… even at university, I knew many people, and it wouldn’t be good to run into Kewalin, who, in my eyes, was like an adorable child.

I waited at the faculty entrance, looking around until my eyes fixed on a small figure. Kewalin had her hair tied up simply, and the sunlight illuminated her aura impressively. She wore a short-sleeved white lab coat, walking with confidence.

With one hand, she untied her hair and shook it loose. Many people were watching her with admiration, but no one dared to get too close, as Kewalin carried an imposing demeanor, like a movie star. If I had to compare, Kewalin would be like the actress Aum Pachrapa, walking gracefully to greet an important guest.

Kewalin’s soft smile appeared when she saw me, and with a sweet voice, she greeted me:

"Hi, my Jat j!"

And then, my heroine turned into a cutie, as a smile escaped her lips… Damn, she was so elegant before.

"You’re so full of yourself, you know that? Do you realize that everyone was admiring you while you walked?"

"I wasn’t looking at anyone; I only saw you."

I blushed. What’s going on? Am I being flirted with? Why do I always fall for this? I can’t let it happen!

"Are you done with classes?"

"Yes, I’m done. And you, no classes today?"

"I have, but I found a way to skip so I could see you."

"Such bad behavior."

"I think your love was calling for me all the way to Rangsit, so I came here. See how much I’ve done for you, Kew?"

"What are you waiting for? Let’s just have sex already."

***Cough.. Cough***

I choked on my saliva again, which made Kewalin laugh carelessly, not bothering with the image she was trying to maintain. People passing by on the street looked surprised at the fragrant girl laughing so heartily. As for me, I couldn’t help but smile too, just seeing that I managed to make Kewalin laugh.

"You’re so repressed, yet you say you’re well-behaved. But you say the word 'sex' like it’s nothing, like it’s just going out to eat."

"I’m naughty. You don’t need to beat around the bush. What do you want to do today?"

"I want to go to your room."

"My room doesn’t have anything interesting."

"I want to have sex."

Now it was Kewalin who choked. I patted her back lightly, as if comforting her, and nudged her to walk with me.

"Let’s go for a walk first, and then we’ll decide what to do."

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This could be considered our first date, although I felt like I was walking into an abyss, afraid of running into someone I knew. The thing is, I have many "close friends." I don’t know what would happen if one of my exboyfriends showed up and recognized me.

Now, we were sitting in a small café with few people around, so I decided to take off my sunglasses. Kewalin looked at me as if she knew exactly what I was thinking, squinting her eyes.

"You have a lot of ‘enemies,’ don’t you? You always look suspicious when you’re walking with me."

"It’s nothing like that."

I shifted uncomfortably and then asked directly:

"What if, by chance, we ran into one of my ex-boyfriends, and he greeted me? What would you do?"

"I wouldn’t do anything. I’d watch how you handle the situation. It might be fun. And you, what would you say about me to your ex?"

"I’d say you’re a close friend."

This immediately made Kewalin scowl, after having been smiling the whole time. I quickly tried to fix it.

"We’re both women, right? If I said you’re my girlfriend, it’d be strange. My exes always introduced themselves like that."

"So, it means you’ve never had a boyfriend, only close friends?"

"But we know you’re my girlfriend… this is love."

I said, trying to please her. Kewalin made a face of disbelief.

"You’re so sweet with your words."

"Sweet? I’m sweeter than you think. After eating, how about we kiss a little?"

I licked my lips, a habit when I wanted something, but Kewalin grabbed a napkin from the table and threw it at me.

"Idiot… Again with this? Since I met you, you’ve only made me say things I shouldn’t."

I looked at Kewalin, smiled, and stared at her with desire. At that moment, I was completely captivated by her, all my senses consumed—appearance, taste, scent, sound, touch. I even surprised myself with this feeling, but when she realized it, she became shy, looking down.

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I want to bite your nose."

"There are people like that?"

"Will you let me?"

"We’re not doing that in the middle of the café. Are you crazy?"

As we played around, I started to notice the stares from a nearby table. It was a group of university boys whispering about us. When I looked at them, they all fell silent, which confirmed they were talking about us.

"Someone seems interested in our table."

"Who?"

I nodded toward the group, and Kewalin looked at them with a cold, indifferent expression, like a true queen. She exuded a chilly aura that even made me feel frozen.

"Kew… you don’t have to be so harsh."

"I don’t like people staring at us. It invades our privacy."

But it seemed someone from that group, bold enough, approached our table and, with an unsure voice, introduced himself, ignoring Kewalin’s cold aura.

"Sorry, it’s just that one of my friends over there is interested in you both."

Kewalin remained silent, while I, being more sociable, smiled and rested my chin on my hand, asking cheerfully:

"Who is it? Me or the doctor sitting across from me?"

Since Kewalin was wearing her dental school uniform, it was clear she was a future “dentist.” The guy, a little embarrassed, answered:

"Both of you."

"How greedy."

The fragrant girl finally spoke. The sweet voice that called me "Jat j" when we met at the entrance seemed crushed to the ground, with no chance of reviving after using such a tone.

"Wants both but doesn’t even have the courage to come over himself." "Kew…"

"Go back and tell your friend who likes us both that… I and the woman in front of me… we are girlfriends."

"…"

"We just finished eating and are going home… to kiss. So stay out of our business!"

Kewalin’s firmness made the guy practically disappear into thin air, running away at almost 100 meters per second. After that, my little Jum Jim simply grabbed the money, left it on the table, and hurried out of the café.

"Wait, Kew!"

I ran after her, laughing. But Kewalin still wasn’t smiling and seemed very irritated by what had just happened, even though nothing serious had actually occurred.

"What’s the matter, Jum Jim? Why are you so upset?"

"Why did you smile at that stranger?"

"He was polite, wasn’t he?"

"So what? Did he give you money?"

"Being polite doesn’t mean he has to give something in return. We can be friendly to everyone, but what you did was a bit cruel. He came to talk to us politely, and you chased him away, even making ambiguous comments! Now, who knows what that group is thinking about us… ‘Going home to kiss’? Seriously?"

"I don’t like you smiling at everyone."

"Are you jealous?"

The fragrant girl stopped walking and turned to face me. Her face, which had looked angry, now seemed surprised, blinking repeatedly.

"Is this jealousy?"

"Ahhh, you’re so cute, my doctor!"

I pulled her into a tight hug and pinched her cheeks with both hands.

"Why are you so adorable? What were you thinking, agreeing to date someone like me? I’m so lucky!"

"I don’t know why I agreed to date such a flirt like you. From now on, I won’t go out to eat or hang out with you. If someone flirts with you, you’ll start handing out smiles again."

"But if we don’t go out, how will we meet?"

"We’ll meet at your place or mine."

Kewalin replied spontaneously, and it made me smile like a tiger seeing its prey. But then I let out a deep sigh, remembering my promise not to cross the line with her.

"Why are you sighing?"

"Because going to your place or mine will be boring. There’s nothing to do."

"There is."

"What?"

"Sex."

"Kew!"

I raised my hands and held her face before resting my forehead against hers. "We’re not talking about that. We’re not doing that. I already told you we won’t."

"You didn’t say we wouldn’t. You said we’d take it slow. I don’t even know how to kiss yet."

"Ah…"

"Now we have something to do, don’t we?"

Kewalin smiled at me mischievously.

"So, can we go to my room now?"

"…"

"Will you teach me how to kiss? I’m dying to exchange saliva with you."

Help… I’m about to faint.

Is this girl truly innocent, or is she just playing with my head?

# 07. Focus on You

"I can't take it anymore!"

Kewalin screamed, quickly backing away as if she was scared.

"Kew..."

"I can't breathe! Stop sucking my nose!"

This time, the owner of the perfume decided to push me a little harder and wiped her drool-filled nose with the back of her hand.

"Seriously, you come to my room, and instead of wanting to hug me or do something normal, like any other person would do, what do you do? You come and ask to suck my nose!"

"But you let me, right? I haven't satisfied my desire yet. Come here, just a little longer."

"No way!"

Kewalin raised her hands to cover her nose.

"Is my whole body just nose? Is that all you want to suck? I've already given you all the tips possible! I brought you to the bedroom, told you to teach me how to kiss... And then you sit me down on the bed and do this? Look, you're making me lose all my self-esteem, you know? You said I was beautiful, that you liked everything about me, but what you do is the opposite!"

"You mean to say that sucking your nose makes you lose self-esteem like that?"

I put my hand on my chest, pretending to be shocked.

"But, gosh, your nose is so perfect! It's well defined, it looks like a wave... It makes me want to suck it, bite it... Aaaaaah!"

"..."

"Come here, sit here. I promise I won't play with you anymore."

"So... are we going to have sex now or what?"

"Kewwwwwww!"

I almost screamed as I laughed, because the future Doctor Kewalin had just said that completely naturally. Even so, I knew she was just joking.

"Look, I think it's great that we talk openly, but throwing out the word 'sex' like that, so casually, makes me a little uncomfortable."

"Hey, aren't you a pervert? Now you want to play coy?"

"If it were someone else saying it, I would accept it. But coming from you, the lovely Dr. Kewalin, who even found the word 'idiot' offensive when we first met... Now to say 'sex' like that?!"

"And what's wrong with saying 'sex'?"

"How about we use another word instead of 'sex'?"

"Oh, like a code? Fine, you choose the word."

I looked up at the ceiling, thinking, and snapped my fingers.

"I know. Let's use this one."

"What word?"

"Let's mate together."

"Are you serious? We are not horses or oxen!"

Oh, yeah? I've always used that word as a normal thing among friends. Have I been confused the whole time? I mean, I thought 'sex' was a vulgar word, but 'mating' was a common thing to say.

"So, how about 'SESu'?"

"It's no use, it still seems like we're talking about something obvious. How about 'cute'? Like: 'Oh, today I want to do something cute with you.' What do you think?"

If we just use one little word a little sweeter, the world will turn pink. From

'sex' to 'cute'. From now on, I'm going to start seeing that word differently...Forever.

"Okay, use the word 'cute'. Ah... what a relief! From now on, I won't but hearing the word 'sex' from my dear doctor's mouth in public."

I raised both hands, as if thanking God.

Kewalin laughed and, in his playful way, pinched my nose.

"You have a pretty nose."

"But yours is prettier. Ah, I wanted to bite it again."

"How about we kiss?"

Kewalin was the first to approach, placing her lips on mine. I was a little surprised and widened my eyes, not knowing how to react, but I continued without doing anything.

"And now, what do I do?"

"Do you really want to know all this?"

I moved my mouth, our lips still touching, and Kewalin nodded.

"You have to use your tongue, right? I saw a video, but how are we going to know how to respond to each other? And when we kiss, won't our teeth chatter? Do we need to exchange saliva?"

The curious person kept talking, but stopped when I took the lead. I used my lips to open Kewalin’s mouth and slowly went in with my tongue. The little girl quickly pulled away, blushing red.

"What's wrong? Weren't you the one who wanted to try?"

"It feels... warm and soft."

"It has to be soft, otherwise we won't feel anything."

"But what if our teeth clash? If we keep kissing, with tongues, will your tongue clash with mine?"

"Why are you asking so many questions? I'm a person, not a frog for you to stick your tongue out like you're eating a bug."

"But..."

"Do you want to try again?"

"Yeah... I said I'd try, but now I don't know why I'm so embarrassed."

I pulled Kewalin back to me and tried again. Now she gave in and, although she was a little hesitant, she began to respond better, like a child learning to write the first letters of the alphabet. We were both guided by emotion.

I, who was in charge, seemed to lose control little by little, until I realized that Kewalin's hand was squeezing my right wrist, which brought our class to an abrupt halt.

She held my hand, which was on top of her woolen dress, and looked at me with her light brown eyes, narrowing them slightly. Her voice was calm. Kewalin looked at me with her light brown eyes and narrowed them, asking in a calm tone of voice:

"What is this?"

"I... I..."

I didn't know what to do. My impulsiveness was leading me to act like this with Kewalin, and my hands were in places I never thought they would be. "This is part of foreplay, isn't it?"

"Kew..."

I raised my voice again, before quickly pulling my hand back, but Kewalin held it tightly, so my hand stayed there, resting in the same place.

"I didn't mean to do that, the hand went by itself. I'm sorry."

"I'm really mad."

"..."

"Grab it and squeeze it too. Beep beep."

"What do you mean?"

"Press it like this, like a car horn."

And then Kewalin smiled broadly.

"I love how you look like that, it's so cute, Ann."

"Are you kidding me?"

She used both hands to pinch my cheeks and, with a mischievous smile, asked me:

"Now your confidence is back, huh? I thought you wanted to kiss my nose, what now? Is the rest of me more interesting than my nose?"

How could someone like Kewalin exist in the world? I was speechless, I had never met someone like this, who seems angry at first, but then asks me to squeeze her breasts.

"Do this, squeeze."

I squeezed it a little and pulled my hand away. I couldn't believe something like that could be so cute.

Normally when I fall in love I'm direct and overwhelming, but with Kewalin it's different.

She turns something like sex into something so adorable, everything seems cute.

"The lesson ends here. How do you feel?"

"I feel like it wasn't enough, there wasn't enough time to reach a point more intense. Our teeth didn't chatter like I imagined. Besides, it felt really good, like touching something soft, and even though we were exchanging saliva, it wasn't at all repulsive."

"Yeah... there's no need to go into so much detail, just a general explanation is enough to make the teacher feel comfortable."

I raised my hand and covered my face, embarrassed. Kewalin hugged me and laughed.

"You're so cute, Ann."

"No, Kewalin, you're the one who's cute."

I realized that I was completely involved in this love.

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I decided that I would "save the sour and enjoy the sweet later" when I found someone who I thought was the right person, and that there was no need to rush. So when I was sure that I was going to be a "new Anna", I decided to come clean and end things with my "close friends" via Facebook messages, since my phone with all my contacts went out the window.

After breaking up with men and women, some insulted me, but I blocked and deleted them, letting their words dissipate like water current. I really like technology these days, you can break up with someone over text, it doesn't hurt as much because you choose not to read it. I don't like confrontation. I'm afraid to give in if someone cries in front of me after I break up.

After sorting everything out, I contacted two close friends who were online at that moment to talk about my new number and update my news. As soon as I connected, Pupe, my dear friend, commented right away:

"Missing, huh? Foreigner. Must be involved with another boy."

As soon as I recorded it, she started making fun of me, as always.

"Again with that 'foreigner'. You know I don't like that."

I replied sullenly, but she didn't even care.

"If you don't like being called that, why do you call me that? Friend is to make fun of you... So, why couldn't you call me?"

"I threw my cell phone into the sea."

"How fancy!"

Miew, another friend on the call, made a disgusted face.

"Who has a pretty face, lots of fans, and still throws their cell phone into the sea? I wish I was you!"

"Enough with the jokes. I'm just letting you know that I've changed my number."

"If that was all, you could have just sent a message. You didn't need to hold a conference, thinking that your friends want to see your face?"

Pupe put her face close to the camera.

"Speak soon. We are waiting."

Having known these two since elementary school, I felt a little shy, but I closed the screen to let Pupe do her exaggerated pose.

"Are you going to keep being mysterious any longer? It's already boring."

Miew grimaced and said:

"Speak now, go on, 'foreigner'."

"I'm in love."

I spoke.

Soon, there was complete silence from the two, who began to look at the ceiling, Pupe began to speak:

"You, 'foreigner', say you're in love? You, who love and throw away? Isn't that what you said about never giving yourself to anyone again? Have you forgotten?"

She began to relive the past.

"Don't you remember when you cried until you threw up?"

"You don't need to relive this. Everyone can have a new love."

"But why do you think this time it's love?"

Miew, who looked more serious, asked curiously, which made me want to talk to her more than to her friend who was just mocking.

"I feel like I have butterflies in my stomach all the time. I'm happy."

I replied with a smile.

"I want to take care, and squeeze..."

"Is it a man or a woman?"

Pupe's question took me by surprise. I didn't know why I was so shocked, but when I thought that I had always studied at an all-girls school and had been involved with people of all genders, it seemed natural, but this time it was different, strangely.

"Woman."

"Anna, listen to your friend."

Pupe put her chin on her hand and looked at me through the computer screen, speaking in a serious tone, like an older sister.

"When you were in an all-girls school, you could do whatever you wanted with girls, but now that you're an adult and can date men, why are you falling in love with a woman?"

"Don't keep that conversation, Pupe."

Miew intervened, as if defending my choice.

"Nowadays, same-sex couples are getting married everywhere, love is a beautiful thing."

"I think you're just excited about something new, and where's my 'hottie'? Did you forget about him?"

"I threw everything in the trash. I didn't even remember that I had arranged it with him."

I looked at the clock on the wall, which was almost midnight, and I felt guilty.

"I left him in the middle of the road again."

"I think that guy really liked you. Instead of worrying about someone who can give you everything – love, financial stability, education and... 'cum' – why don't you give him a chance?"

"I really like Kewalin."

"Kewalin? You call her 'Lin', don't you?"

As I was caught, I straightened up and looked at Pupe, who seemed to have found my weak spot.

"No. I call it Kew."

"You still haven't gotten over the past, have you? That woman named Kewalin isn't going to be a replacement. I don't want to see you crying again, Anna.

I remember when you were hugging the toilet, throwing up and crying. I can't stand to see that anymore."

I remembered the sad past and just clenched my fists tightly. It was as if someone was cutting my heart with a knife every day. The pain was unbearable at first, but over time, I became numb to it.

And that's what made me who I am today. I only get involved when I choose to. I won't miss anything, I'll be the good one in the story.

"With Kew it's different. I feel something new. I treat it with affection and even refused something more intimate."

"Why?"

Pupe asked with a mischievous smile.

"Aren't you afraid of leaving her later, like you did with the others?" "You're just trying to provoke, Pupe. I'm changing, I'm going to be a better person. I love only one person, with all my heart."

"You will never forget your first love, Anna."

"..."

"This Kewalin is not your first love. In the end, if you stay with her and find nothing else interesting, you will throw her away, just like you did with all the others. You can't bear the pain, you will give up again. You can even try to deny it, but you know yourself better than anyone else."

We talked a little longer, until the call ended. In front of my friends, I pretended that everything was fine, but when I was alone, I started to get worried.

And they were right. I was afraid to do something with Kewalin, because she was so sweet and kind that I didn't want to destroy that.

And most importantly...

I was afraid that if I had her, I would leave her.

That's the real reason I was hiding.

# 08. Tiger vs Prey

Finally, I managed to arrange a meeting with Tham using a new phone number that few people know about. Today, Tham brought along his little brother, a cute little boy of about 5 years old. We are sitting in an ice cream shop, looking like a young couple with a baby born too soon.

What an adorable, cuddly boy!

"How can he be so white? And his cheeks are so rosy!"

I really wanted to pinch those little boy's soft, rosy cheeks.

His skin looked flawless, a tone that clearly showed he had never been in the sun. Perhaps it was because Tham’s family is of Chinese descent, and that explained the clear, flawless glow of his skin. If Snail White wanted a boy to be their child ambassador, they should definitely contact this boy. I’ll keep that in mind!

But does my life now revolve only around wanting to pinch cheeks?

"Tham, do you have a brother that's that younger?" I asked.

"It was an accident. My parents love him very much."

He replied.

I looked at the two brothers, alternating glances, and nodded. They looked so alike! The fair skin, the smile, the shape of the face...

"But why did you bring him today?"

"My parents went out to take care of some things and left Tim in my care. You don't feel uncomfortable about that, do you?"

"No, not at all. Tim is super cute and well behaved."

Honestly, I don't usually like kids very much. They're usually noisy, they make a fuss when they want a toy and

They even throw themselves on the floor. But Tim is different, very calm and obedient, very similar to Tham in that aspect. For some reason, I feel an inexplicable sympathy for this boy.

"Today is on me. Consider it an apology for canceling on the day we agreed."

"Why did you disappear that day?" *I went to squeeze another woman's breasts...*

Of course I didn't answer that. I just smiled.

"I was talking to a friend."

"And what did you want to talk to me about? It seemed like something important."

I stood there for a moment, staring at Tham's handsome face, which was looking at me with a carefree smile. Suddenly, a feeling of guilt took over me, mixed with regret, sadness and fear of making mistakes. All this left me silent for a few seconds before responding with a smile.

"It was nothing major, I just wanted to say I missed you. We haven't seen each other in days."

*My name is Anna... and I am a cowardly woman.*

I break up with everyone, but I always keep the best option as a backup — which, in this case, is Tham. This means that I now have both Tham as for Kewalin as choices, and neither of them know it.

Damn it!

I didn't want to be like this. I swear I've tried to love just one person, but I'm still afraid.

And it's all that damn Pupe's fault, who left me in this state!

"I'm so glad you missed me. It makes me feel important."

Tham said with a smile that lit up his entire face.

"I love you, Anna."

All I did was smile back. I neither accepted nor rejected his declaration, even though my heart was pounding. The weight of guilt for deceiving Kewalin began to wash over me again. If the perfumed person knew I was like this, she would certainly be disappointed.

Or maybe not? Kewalin knows very well that I'm a womanizer.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to her that I'm seeing multiple people. As long as I don't let her find out, is it really a problem?

"Your birthday is coming up. Do you want something special as a gift?"

"Birthday?"

My eyes widened as I remembered.

"That's right, it's next month! But isn't it too early to ask that?"

"I want to know so I can prepare something good."

"How about a 100 carat diamond ring?"

I replied casually. Tham smiled and reached out to hold my hand.

"If I really give it, will you accept it?"

A little embarrassed, I slowly pulled my hand back and rested my chin on my hand.

"I don't know. I'll think about it."

Actually, I only said that to make it seem uninterested. He's still a college student without a job. Where would he get the money to buy a diamond ring? I ordered something expensive on purpose so he wouldn't buy anything. Besides, gifts aren't that important to me.

"I have to go now. I arranged to meet a friend."

I looked at the watch on my wrist, figuring that Kewalin must have arrived at the mall by now. I didn't want the perfumed person to find me with such a handsome man. That could lead to... correct understandings.

"See you later."

"Who did you arrange to meet?"

"Colleague."

"Woman or man?"

"Woman."

"Oh, okay."

Tham, who had never known my sexual orientation, was relieved to hear that I'll meet a woman and he left with his little brother. As soon as they left, I called Kewalin. Sure enough, she was parking in the third mall floor and getting ready to go in.

Today it was her turn to come to me, after I had gone to Sam Yan to see her the other day.

When I saw her, she was looking beautiful in a casual outfit: a white shirt, jeans and sneakers, with her hair loose and slightly wavy. Her elegance was still evident, even though, when she is with me, Kewalin behaves like a sweet 15-year-old teenager.

"What's up, Jat J?"

"Was the traffic bad, Jum Jim?"

We exchanged these jokes naturally, as always. I put my arm around her waist, pulling her to walk beside me. Kewalin looked at me slightly surprised, but smiled and asked:

"Aren't you afraid people will look at us strangely?"

"They'll probably think we're really close friends. Now, if we were walking and kissing, that would be a different story."

"Ah, but I like kissing. I still think about that day..."

"Me too."

"Actually, I wanted to talk to you... something in my body has been strange since that day."

"Why? What happened?"

Before Kewalin could finish her sentence, she suddenly stopped, as if she had seen something. Her body tensed, and as I followed her gaze, I realized that I had encountered someone I knew.

"What is it, Kew?"

"My father."

"..."

"He's here... with his family."

At first, I didn't know which one of them was Kewalin's father, but the strange behavior of an older man made me certain. He seemed surprised to see her. He walked upright, with an imposing air, accompanied by an older woman and two people our age. From the scene, you could guess that it was his official wife's family.

The two looked at each other briefly, like strangers pretending not to know each other. I noticed the pain in Kewalin's eyes and felt immediate empathy. I didn't know what to say, so I just asked:

"Are you well?"

"I don't want to stay at the mall anymore."

"Aren't you hungry?"

"No."

Her serious and unjoking tone made me realize that the atmosphere was heavy, full of tension. I decided that it was best for us to leave.

We took the conversation to my apartment nearby.

I confess that I scheduled the meeting at the mall precisely to avoid us ending up in my room, because I didn't want that to compromise our relationship. But, given Kewalin's emotional state, there's no sign of her some joy or excitement, it was clear that today we would not do anything of the sort.

... I think.

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"Sorry for the mess in the room. I'm even embarrassed."

I hurried to pick up the scattered things. The room wasn’t actually that disorganized, but compared to Kewalin, which I’d visited before, it was like comparing a warehouse to a hotel room. You get the vibe, right?

"Your room has a really cool style. You like blue, don't you?"

Kewalin commented, looking at the photos I had stuck on the wall.

"And you likes the sea too."

"I like water. It gives me a refreshing feeling. I don't know how to travel to the mountains, you know? I mean, I know there are cool things to do, like camping, playing the guitar, enjoying the cold and the dew. But apart from that, it seems like there's nothing else. As for the sea, you can dive, wonder what's under the water, look at that relaxing blue."

"I also like the sea, but I'm afraid of water. I can't swim."

"Brave, then, for having traveled alone with a backpack that day."

"I have to thank that courage, because that's how I met you."

"Sit down. I'll get you something to drink."

Since my room is small, the only place to sit is on the bed. Kewalin sat up and started looking around. It wasn't the first time a woman had come to my room, but there was something different about her.

I was nervous.

"Here, have some water to calm down."

"But I'm not nervous."

"You clearly haven't looked in the mirror, have you? You look so cold that if your gaze could turn people into stone, everyone would have turned into a statue by now."

"Should I do that to you too?"

"No, but I can feel that there's something on your mind."

I put my hand in her hair as she sat next to me.

"It's okay. Everyone has problems. Think of them as small things. There are five words that always help me."

"Which?"

"'This too shall pass.'"

Kewalin smiled, as if those words were a relief, and hugged me, resting her face in my neck.

"It's something so simple, but it makes us feel good."

"I use this for myself. Whenever I have a tough test or think about dropping out of college, I remember these words. If you pass, great. If you don't, fuck it. Tomorrow you start over."

"What a dirty mouth you have. 'Fuck you'..."

She raised her hand to cover her mouth, as if the expression were something forbidden.

I couldn't contain my laughter and ruffled her hair lightly.

"Sorry. I always forget and end up being careless with you."

"How do you feel about me being the daughter of a mistress?"

The unexpected question took me by surprise, but since I don't care about these things, I answered without thinking much:

"It doesn't make any difference to me. Whoever's daughter you are, you're still the one here."

"But society hates this story of a legitimate wife and mistress."

"And what does the child have to do with it? Did you choose to be born the daughter of a lover? No, right?"

"But my mother chose to be. And my father chose to betray and have me born. They were selfish."

Kewalin spoke with obvious bitterness, and I could only stroke her back, trying to comfort her. I didn’t know how to help her feel better, so I just stayed by her side.

She probably hates cheating people. How ironic that she would cross paths with someone like me who is keeping someone else on hold for fear of letting them go.

Sometimes I feel like every word she says about her father is like an indirect message to me.

"But you've grown up well, haven't you? Grown-ups have their own reasons. Want to hear a story from me? Maybe it'll make you feel better."

"Do you also have problems in life?"

"Who doesn't? Do you think I look foreign?"

"Yes. You're mixed race, right? I always wanted to ask, but I kept forgetting. Mixed race of what?"

"I'm not sure."

"What do you mean?"

"When someone asks, I sometimes say I'm half Thai and English, Thai and German, Thai and American, or Thai and Australian."

Kewalin still didn't understand anything, with a confused expression. So, I decided to tell her something that I've never revealed to anyone, except my two best friends, Pupe and Miew. I took out my ID and handed it to her. she.

She read the name on the document, surprised:

"Anna Hoki... Are you half-Japanese? But your appearance..."

"No."

"Then why?"

"My father is some foreigner, I don't know where or who he is from."

"..."

"My mother was a prostitute."

I used the harshest word possible, as if I was mocking my own life, but I laughed to cover it up and make the subject less heavy.

"I was lucky that my mother found a new husband, a rich Japanese businessman who truly loved her. He was not disgusted by her and took her to living with him, supporting my mother and paying for my studies. He gave me money, everything I needed. So, Cinderella? Did I manage to make you feel better?"

"Don't laugh while telling something like that."

"Why? Life is a joke, after all."

Kewalin pulled me into a hug, stroking my back.

Even pretending to laugh, I felt a lump in my throat as I remembered my past, living in the old house in the favela, waiting for my mother to return. When I managed to study at a good school, my high school classmates made fun of me, saying that my mother was a whore.

"See? Everyone has problems in life."

"You're making me feel guilty for complaining about my own problems."

"I just want you to see that the world is full of people with problems. We shouldn't carry this burden alone. Now tell me... Do you feel disgusted with me because my mother was a prostitute?"

"Of course not."

"Then it's all right."

We looked at each other for a moment and smiled before leaning in for a slow kiss, like we had practiced last time. This time, Kewalin seemed more confident, with no hesitation or suspicious curiosity like before.

The mood around us changed, filled with seriousness and intense emotions. Without realizing it, I began to touch Kewalin impulsively.

I pushed her down so she was lying down, sliding my lips all over her body, inhaling her scent. She then tilted her head and lightly bit my ear, making me jump back in surprise.

"What it was?"

My face felt hot as if it were inside a pressure cooker. Kewalin smiled, cupping my face in her hands.

"Wow, your face is so red. Is that your sensitive spot?"

"Where did you learn that?"

"I read about this. They say people's sensitive spots vary: for some it's the kiss, for others the neck, and for others the ear... And it seems like yours is here."

"I think we better stop here."

I closed my eyes and forced myself to stand up, but Kewalin held my wrist tightly, her expression equally serious. "Why do you always reject me?"

"I want to take it slow. We've gone too far."

"No, there's something else. I've noticed for some time now that you have something in your heart. Your gaze seems to want to devour me, but you always controls. I'm observant, curious, and I ask a lot of questions. Do you think I don't notice how you feel?"

I bit my lip, looking at her and sighing deeply.

"Yes, I want you. I've never let anyone into my room or gone into anyone's room and come out unharmed."

"And why does it never go beyond that with me?"

"Because I want to take care of you."

"Are you going to take care of me for ten, twenty years? Will nothing ever happen between us?"

"Why are you so curious?!"

I leaned over, exhausted, and sat down.

"I don't want to be a bad person."

"Why would you be bad?"

I looked at Kewalin for a long time, hesitating whether I should speak or not. Finally, I decided to say it, so that she would give up on that idea.

"I'm afraid that if we do this, I'll... use you and abandon you."

Silence fell between us for about three minutes. It may not seem like much time, but in that situation it felt like an eternity. I had never felt so honest about my feelings before. Kewalin was the first person I had ever opened up to so much. Did I really like her that much?

"Let's find out."

Kewalin broke the silence. I looked at her blankly.

"Find out what?"

"Whether you're really going to abandon me or not."

"This is not something to test. If I were a man, I would be a tiger, and you, the prey."

She wrapped her arms around my neck, looking into my eyes. "Then know that I am delicious prey. Once will not be enough."

She pulled me into a kiss, nibbling on my ear again.

"I like to tease."

"Kew..."

My breathing became heavy, and I was losing control. My hands began to move on their own, sliding down her back and releasing the bra clasp.

"There is still time to stop."

"Besides, I have a problem with my body."

"Which one?"

"It's... wet."

She whispered softly in my ear, leaving me completely shocked, as I knew exactly what she meant.

"You can solve this, can't you? Like you said on that island."

I pushed her body so she lay down again, taking off her jeans with difficulty. She laughed at the situation, but the mood between us was too intense to go back.

"Kew, you're a doctor. You know why it's wet, right?"

"I know."

"Then why did you say it was a problem?"

"Because I'm provoking you."

"Straightforward as always. And you know..."

Finally, the tight jeans came off her body. Slowly, I moved down to her abdomen, kissing her softly.

"...the more you lick, the wetter it gets."

"I didn't know that."

"And you still want to provoke?"

"I want to see if it's true..."

At the end,I couldn't hold it in any longer. Before I lost control, I left one last warning sentence:

"Now you will see that it is true."

# 09.I am the same person

Since it was Kewalin’s first time, I had to be careful not to make her too nervous. For her, everything was exciting, new, and mixed with a touch of apprehension—from the moment the buttons on the shirt were unbuttoned, the tight jeans removed from the body, until the last barrier: the underwear.

"Can you turn off the light?"

I understood that Kewalin didn't feel very confident about her body.

Although I wanted to say that she was beautiful in every way, I respected her request. After all, everything had to be consensual, without impositions. If she wanted something, I would offer it without hesitation.

Our bodies were completely naked. At first, Kewalin was still shy, hesitant to expose herself. But when she realized that I was also bare, she began to relax. It was as if we were exchanging secrets, revealing parts of ourselves.

Her curiosity only grew as our skin touched. Her small hands slid down my body, eventually reaching my hips, where they moved absently.

"Mmhh..."

The sound that escaped Kewalin’s throat made me almost lose control. Her perfume, mixed with the scent of cherry blossoms, made my mind swim. The careful touch I had been maintaining began to give way to something more intense. I gently bit her shoulder, my hands squeezed her breasts tightly, while my thighs began to rub against the wet center of her body.

Without realizing it, she began to move at the same pace, following the contact.

"Uh... haa..."

The sounds of Kewalin's moans and heavy breathing made me unable to resist gently biting her ear, further instigating her curiosity about where this moment could take us. After I explored every part of her body, making her surrender completely to the touch, I slowly lowered my lips, while she, without refusing, even seemed to anticipate what was to come, instinctively opening her legs.

"Um... mmm..."

Finally, she understood that feeling of "being wet" needed someone to take care of it. And that was my task, sliding my tongue with precision, knowing exactly where and how to please a woman. Kewalin writhed as if in agony, but held tightly to my hair, as if afraid I would stop.

"An... I don't know how to explain it, but it feels like... it feels like I'm going to explode!"

I understood exactly what Kewalin meant by "explode." Her body twitched, muscles tensing and then throbbing in spasms. Still enjoying myself, I increased the pace of my tongue, making it crawl away, trying to escape.

"I... I can't take it anymore, Ann... I can't!"

"This is just the beginning."

"What...?"

"You don't even know everything I can do yet."

I crawled back towards her, as my fingers returned to gently caressing that sensitive part, making Kewalin relax for a moment.

The moment she let her guard down, I began to slowly slide a finger inside. It made her shiver.

"It hurts..."

"Just a little bit."

I responded softly, moving my finger slowly so she could get used to the feeling.

"I promise your first time will be special. I won't hurt you."

Even though I said that, Kewalin looked nervous. She hugged me, digging her nails into my shoulders as I continued.

"In the beginning, everything was fine... but now..."

I curled my finger and that made Kewalin shudder again, this time letting out a moan that indicated she was beginning to feel pleasure.

"Mmm..."

I started slowly, but soon picked up the pace. Kewalin's body, now more accustomed, reacted intensely. She moaned in my ear, and suddenly it happened again. The feeling of her muscles tightening around my finger told me that she had come again, but in a different way this time.

We lay together, letting her relax, her eyes still closed, while I watched her breathing calm down.

"It's always like this the first time."

I said.

"It might be a little awkward at first, but next round..."

"Next round...? Ann!"

Before I could finish, I moved my finger again, making Kewalin flinch. She raised her hand to lightly hit me, but that didn't stop me.

"Please... let me rest, Ann. Mmm... ahh... I said I wanted a rest... ahhh!"

"See? I told you it would get better."

I whispered, gently kissing her chin, satisfied with the result.

"I'm good at this."

"Damn... you're really good at this."

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After everything that happened, we were now lying on our sides, looking at each other. Kewalin was wearing few clothes, shyly hiding under the blanket, while I stared at her with an intense gaze.

"Don't look at me so much, I'm embarrassed."

She said.

I pulled the blanket back to get a better look at her face. Kewalin was even more embarrassed, as she had said, and raised both hands to cover her face.

Still, she left a space between her fingers so she could watch me, looking like a small child.

"Ashamed of what?"

"I made some strange sounds."

"That's normal."

I responded with a laugh, finding her reaction adorable.

"So, how do you feel? I've been so excited to try it."

"Do you want me to describe it in detail or just a summary?"

"A summary is enough, because when you start explaining things like a doctor, it ends up being scary."

I covered my face with my hands, feeling embarrassed. My God, we've been through so much and now I'm blushing because of this woman?

Kewalin looked up at the ceiling and stopped covering her face, seeming to think.

"It was a hot, intense sensation... like being in a high place. It was a chill that started in my feet and spread throughout my body. I remember the muscles in my legs were shaking all over. But overall, it was a really good feeling."

She gave me a thumbs up.

"You made me feel like I was a bomb going off!"

"Why don't you become a writer?"

"What about you? You did this to me, but what did you feel?"

"I was happy to see you explode like a bomb, of course."

I replied with a wide smile. Kewalin narrowed her eyes, looking at me as if she he was demanding justice.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I want to hear Ann's sounds too."

Before I could respond, Kewalin's naked body turned on top of me, covered only by the blanket. She began to act on her own, sliding her hand under my shirt, mimicking what I had done to her earlier.

I smiled slightly, waiting to see what this copycat would do to try to win me over, but it would be difficult, considering I had much more experience.

"Let me do it too."

She said.

"You won't make it."

I provoked.

"I know I'm studying dentistry, but I understand the human body pretty well, you know? I'll show you that I know a few things."

The little girl leaned forward, using her tongue to lick the side of my ear. It made my skin crawl, and an "Ah" escaped my mouth without meaning to.

"I've already watched all the videos on the internet."

She whispered.

"Oh, stop it..."

I tried to refuse, but my voice sounded weak and unconvincing.

Meanwhile, Kewalin remained focused on my ear, and her hand slid easily inside my clothes, simpler to remove than the jeans she had been wearing before. She came closer and whispered in a soft voice:

"Your body isn't telling you to stop. It's not very hygienic when it's not dry, you know?"

"I told you, the more you do it, the wetter it gets." "Then I'm going to lick it dry. You can expect that."

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We can't underestimate this little doctor. After everything was over, we both slept for a while, until we looked at the clock on the wall and realized it was time for Kewalin to go back to her room. I followed her to the exit, following the sweet fragrance of her body, without saying a word, just exchanging silent smiles. Everything seemed to float in the air, as if it were magic.

I actually don't know how to describe this feeling.

I've never been like this... Well, actually, I haven't felt like this in a long time. So long that I thought it would never happen again.

"Am I a good imitator?"

Kewalin finally asked as we walked down the hallway. The two of us walked slowly, and the sound of our shoes rubbing against the floor broke the silence, to the point where it felt like there were only the two of us in this world. "You are good."

I said.

"I'm an excellent learner, my father always says that. When I dedicate myself to something, there's nothing I can't do."

"You're also the type to pay back in kind. You won't accept being treated unfairly. I'm even getting scared now."

"Afraid of what? If I don't do anything to you, what would you do to me?"

We looked at each other in silence as we walked together, until I suddenly stopped. Our gazes seemed to share the same thought, and then I said something I had never said to anyone like that.

"You're not leaving, are you?"

Kewalin looked at me and smiled broadly, as if he liked what I said.

"I was hoping to be invited."

"And do you have class?"

"Yes, in the afternoon."

"Will it be difficult for you?"

"If you ask me to stay, I will stay."

"I'm asking you to stay. I still want to continue being affectionate with you."

I said embarrassedly, lowering my head. Even though I am someone bold, when I say something like that I get all shy. Or is it because the person in front of me is this naughty doctor, whose personality I can't understand? Sometimes serious, other times cheeky, or even naive. I didn't know how she would react to this invitation.

"Then I'll stay."

Kewalin grabbed my hand, turned around, and invited me to run.

"Let's go back to the room. I thought you wanted to be alone."

We laughed at each other before running back to the room. Now our world was completely rosy, and it proved that for Kewalin, this wasn't just a onetime thing and then I would leave her like the others.

There was still something to be discovered, and I wanted to keep this going for longer. I wanted to stay with her as long as possible...

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Now I feel so happy that I can't even eat properly, because I am always full of joy. I am always by Kewalin's side. If I ever have class and she doesn't, she comes to the university to wait for me. And if it's the other way around, I'm the one who goes to pick her up. I just want to see her every day, as if she were my drug, my addiction that I can't live without.

I completely forgot that there are other people in the world besides the two of us, but in the end we encountered the typical problem of college students who still can't make money. Okay... I do have some extra income from selling photos on the internet, but it's not enough to cover the cost of the fuel to go to and from Rangsit and Samyan every day.

"I think we should rent a room that's halfway between Rangsit and Samyan, that way we can meet up and save on gas."

Kewalin's suggestion made me nod immediately, because I had thought about it too, but I didn't imagine she would say about it before me.

"I agree. We can use the gas money for rent."

"That way we can spend more time together without spending so much on fuel. Deal!"

"Deal."

It all happened so fast. We started dating, we fell in love, and I've never been with anyone for so long. Now, Kewalin and I seem to live together, because there's not a day that goes by that we don't see each other, hug, kiss... or rub each other's noses.

This is the only time Kewalin makes a face when I ask to kiss her nose. I can't help it, I want that pretty nose, I even want to bite it because it's so beautiful.

But like I said, I'm so happy that I ended up neglecting the people around me. Tham tried to call me, but I just talked to him in a superficial and turned it off. Even my closest friends, Pupe and Miew, they were trying to contact me, but I wasn't paying much attention. But today... I had to see a friend.

**MaMiew:**

SOS, Pupe is going crazy, help!

After receiving the message, I realized that I needed to leave Kewalin's house at midnight and explained that I had to go see Pupe.

"I need to go see my friend, will you be okay alone?"

"Yes, you can go. Will you come back?"

"Of course, I'm worried about my friend, if she sent me this message, it's because the situation is serious. Go to sleep, you don't need to wait."

"Call me when you get there, so I won't have to worry. Driving at night is dangerous."

I nodded and gave Kewalin a kiss on the cheek before running off to see Pupe, who was at the bar. When I got there, she was completely drunk, dancing strangely, like she was a zombie.

I already knew from Miew that Pupe had been dumped by her boyfriend who had left her for another woman, and on top of that, her Chanel bag, worth 200 thousand baht, had been stolen. It was a pain I knew well...

"Why are you like this, Pupe?"

I stared at her as she reeked of alcohol.

"She should be dancing at a folk festival if she's going to take up so much space."

"Shall we take her home?"

I sighed as I looked at my friend.

"Look at her condition, it's not easy to take her home like this, we have to take care of her."

We walked over to where Pupe was, still trying to toast with the others, when she saw us and ran to hug me.

"Dear friend!"

"You come out smelling like alcohol, it's like you took a shower in drinks."

"That idiot Tam tricked me, he stole everything from me!"

"The 200,000 baht Chanel, right? Should have filed a police report." "Haa... believe me, the 'real' pain of being left is indescribable. Why do loyal people always have to suffer? Where is the justice?"

"Let's go home, you're too drunk."

"You have to agree with me!"

Pupe let go of me and held my face to look into my eyes.

"You know what it's like to be left, the pain of being left by someone who left you for someone else... I'm the only one who suffers, I'm the only one who feels this pain."

"Yeah, I know..."

"And you too, Anna! Be selfish, don't let anyone hurt your heart. Throw them away before they hurt you, or you will suffer like I am now!"

And then Pupe made a face and threw up on my shirt.

"Wretch!"

I screamed, as Miew held her so she wouldn't fall to the ground.

"Go take a shower first, then I'll ask the security guards to help you get to the car. Wait for me there."

"Hmm..."

The sweet scent of Kewalin that was on me disappeared because of the mess my friend made. I went to the bathroom, irritated, to clean up the mess she made, I felt disgusting, but I couldn't do anything but clean it up.

Although...

"Anna..."

Someone called me and I looked to see who it was. It was an ex I had broken up with on Facebook. I could only look at her in surprise and then smile, a little embarrassed.

"Key..."

"I'm glad you remember my name. How did this happen?"

The beautiful, impeccably-looking woman I had met at the bar and managed to quickly win over for a night of fun, crossed her arms and looked at me.

I shrugged and explained briefly.

"I came to pick up my friend."

"I even thought you were dressed too simply today, but you actually looked good in a different way."

Key came over and willingly took her own handkerchief, wet it and used it to wipe the vomit stain off my clothes.

"I didn't think I'd meet you again."

"I didn't think so either."

"Do you usually hook up with someone and then just disappear?"

The direct question left me speechless, swallowing hard.

"What are you talking about? We both had fun, right?"

"Was it just you having fun? For some people this is serious, especially for me... I wanted to talk to you in a more personal way serious, but I ended up being left aside through social media, as if what happened between us was just a game. A sale of merchandise."

"How can you possibly get serious with someone you met at a bar?"

"But when you came to win me over, you seemed pretty serious. Even I like men, so I ended up going to bed with you. And now you say it wasn't serious, when we had fun... What's this?" I raised my hand in surrender.

"I have no excuses. I'm sorry for what I did."

"You don't look like the Anna you used to. Before, you had such confidence, like a tigress, but now you look like a little kitten who finally found someone to tame."

When I was called that derogatory term, I immediately straightened up.

Someone like me can't be tamed by anyone. Talking like that is too much. I'm not a cat.

"I'm glad I found you, Key."

"Me too."

Key smiled and took a step back, heading towards the bathroom, dropping the tissue.

"But I'd be happier if someone brought my scarf back."

***Crack!***

Key went into the bathroom, and I stared at the fallen handkerchief, thinking for a moment before pretending I didn't see it and leaving.

But then I decided to go back, picked up the handkerchief and knocked on the door, calling for the owner of the handkerchief.

***Crack...***

The beautiful woman opened the door, smiling in satisfaction. She tugged on my shirt, pushing me inside, and closed the door behind us.

Finally... the Anna from before was awakened, just because I didn't want to be a cat.

**I went back...**

# 10. Penguin

I did this... being completely aware of everything.

No one knows about this except Key and me. You could say it's a secret between us. I don't know if we'll meet again or not. Maybe I don't need to worry so much about what happened, because what's done is done. But still, I feel guilty and anxious.

All because of fear...

What happened to Pupe left me shaken, and in a way, I agree with her that love doesn't exist. It may even seem like I'm using it as an excuse to justify betraying Kewalin. But deep down, I know it's because I'm afraid of love, and that's what triggered this behavior.

But that's okay. As long as no one knows, I can pretend none of this happened.

Why should I feel guilty? It's not like this is the first time I've done something like this. Sex, for me, is like eating a meal — something routine. Before, I did it so naturally...

Since that day, Pupe has clearly lost a lot of weight, out of sadness. Her boyfriend left her, her purse disappeared, and she didn't even have the courage to file a complaint, afraid of being embarrassed and her parents finding out that she was sleeping away from home frequently to be with him. In the end, she gave up her 200,000 baht purse and took advantage of the situation to lose weight.

As for me, I continue to act normally, although sometimes I can't look Kewalin straight in the eye.

Of course, someone as observant as Kewalin noticed. Today, she lost her patience and asked directly, while we were alone in the room:

"Why are you avoiding looking at me?"

"I'm not."

I tried to laugh, but Kewalin narrowed her eyes and grabbed my face with both hands.

"Did you do something wrong?"

"I didn't do anything, really. Don't start with that, or we'll end up fighting."

I pushed her hands away and stood up, walking away. Ever since that day, whenever I'm around her, I feel nervous and uncomfortable. Even I get irritated by it.

"We never fight. Why are you so tense? I'm asking because I care about you."

"You act like you're trying to trap me into something, and it pisses me off."

"Wow! We're about to have our first fight, just like any other couple!"

Kewalin spoke in an excited voice, and the tense atmosphere quickly turned into something light and pleasant as soon as I heard her tone. I couldn't help but feel affection for the way she looked at the situation.

"Kew, you're amazing. You can turn something that was getting heavy into something so cute."

"I didn't do anything.. What is this, is there something wrong?"

I threw myself into Kewalin's arms, who was sitting on the bed, and buried my face in her neck, inhaling the scent of cherry blossom, letting it wrap myself in that feeling of softness.

"Are you stressed about something, An?"

"Sorry for being harsh before. It's just that I'm in the final stretch of college now, about to graduate. It makes me a little stressed. Don't be mad at me, okay?"

"If I knew exactly what was making you stressed, I could understand better and talk to you about it. Just tell me, okay? It's not that difficult."

Not only was I hiding things from her, but now I was also lying. And the person next to me had no idea. And on top of that, I acted in a way that almost provoked a fight. Why am I so horrible?

"Let's turn this stress into something good, how about it? I remember from your ID that next week is your birthday. What do you want as a present?"

I lifted my face from Kewalin's neck and stared at her. She remembered everything so precisely... just from quickly glancing at my ID?

"Your memory is truly amazing."

"If it's about you, I remember everything."

"You're so smart."

"I don't remember with my head. I remember with my heart. I kept everything here. Even if I lose my memory or suffer an accident that makes me forget, my heart will always remember you."

With that charming smile and mischievous manner, she arched her adorable eyebrows. I couldn't resist and bit her nose lightly, affectionately.

"Beautiful and still with that sweet way of speaking. Where did you get that from?"

"From Facebook, hehe. But it sounds good, doesn't it? Remembering with the heart... I myself found it cheesy while I was saying it. But seriously, tell me, what do you want as a gift? I'll find a way to get it."

"I don't want anything."

"Why not? Go on, order something! This is the first year I can celebrate your birthday. It's our first year together. And we'll be together forever."

"Forever? Don't you even consider the possibility of something going wrong? Won't you want to get married one day, for example?"

I asked with a smile. Kewalin tilted her head, pondering as if she had never thought about it before.

"Um, true... Even if I want to be with you, my family probably wouldn't accept it. It would be weird, two women living together as a couple. What will we do?"

"So, what are we going to do?"

I wanted to know what she really thought about it, so I let her rack her brains for a moment.

"If, one day, for whatever reason, we are forced to separate, as happens in dramas because love was not reciprocated... How about this: when we are 50 years old, if neither of us has anyone else — like, because it didn't work out or the husband died — we get back together. What do you think?"

Even though it was something completely imaginary and distant, I couldn't contain my smile. I grabbed her cheeks and squeezed them, delighted with her idea.

"Fifty years, huh... Okay. If by that time we still love each other and don't have anyone, we'll get back together."

"I loved it. Deal then."

"You used to smile."

"But what about the present? You really don't want anything?"

I leaned my face down and whispered softly in her ear:

"I want you."

"But you already have me."

"I want more. I want everything: your head, your eyes, your mouth, your neck, your nose, your chin, your lungs, your liver, your guts, and most of all, your heart. That's the most important thing. If I have your heart, I want nothing else."

Kewalin looked at me, embarrassed, before hugging me the same way I had done with her initially.

"Have you heard about penguins?"

"What about them?"

"Males, when they like a female, go to her and offer her the most beautiful stone they can find, among millions of others. It is as if it were a marriage proposal. If the female accepts the stone, means that she likes him, and the couple remains together forever, being faithful to each other until death."

My heart raced. I was shocked, because this story was something I had told years ago to someone from my past... My first love. A love that still hurts just remembering it. And now Kewalin, my current girlfriend, was repeating the same story as if the past had come back to haunt me.

"Where did you hear that?"

"From a friend of a friend. Why? Is there a problem?"

"No... I just found it interesting. It's a beautiful story."

"It is not?"

Kawalin stepped away, held my face with her hands and said:

"I want you to know that I love you. My heart, which I have never given to anyone, is yours. It may not be the most beautiful stone among the millions you have ever received, but it is the only heart I have to give you. And I want you to accept it."

"Doctor Kewalin..."

I leaned my face down and kissed her softly on the lips before pushing her back onto the bed. We did what we loved most when we were together. "I accept this stone, my dear."

. .

I've heard it said that 'everything we do comes back to us in some way, no matter how small or big'.

This phrase echoed in my mind as I looked at the message from Key, someone I had already unfriended. It appeared in my inbox asking to add her again. As soon as I clicked on the message, I saw the typing icon appear, indicating that she was writing something.

"Are you afraid to take me back?"

She wrote.

Why would I be afraid? Without thinking much, I clicked "Accept" and replied coldly:

"Satisfied now?"

"You don't accept a challenge, do you? It's funny. You know, I miss that day at the bar. How about we meet again? Tomorrow is my birthday. Come see me and... maybe we can have a lot of fun?"

"No, thank you. I don't repeat experiences and I'm not interested in used things."

"Wow, that's cold. But that day in the bathroom you didn't seem like that."

"Discussion over."

After that, we didn't talk anymore. I ended the conversation without the patience to continue, finding it all pointless. Blocking her again would be admitting defeat, so I left it as it was.

"What the hell..."

I thought.

I don't like challenges. Whenever I don't do something, I feel like I'm losing or being weak. And to be honest, accepting a Facebook friend wasn't such a bad thing. Besides, Kewalin, my current girlfriend, and I weren't friends on Facebook.

**'We don't need to know everything about each other, right? That would only lead to unnecessary fights.'**

She was the one who suggested it, and I agreed. I found it surprising, because unlike other people who insist on having their partners as friends on social media, she seemed to want to avoid any confusion.

But on the other hand, did Kewalin have something to hide? That thought bothered me.

"What's wrong? Why the long face?"

Kewalin asked, coming out of the bathroom and seeing me fiddling with my cell phone while frowning. I was startled and quickly smiled, as if I had nothing to hide.

"Nothing."

"With that reaction, it seems like there is something, yes."

"I was just wondering... Why didn't you ever want to add me on Facebook?"

I changed the subject to avoid her suspecting anything.

"Didn't we talk about this already? Knowing too much about each other would only lead to problems."

"You're not trying to hide something, are you?"

She smirked, seeming to enjoy my insecurity.

"Are you suspicious? How cute. I've never seen this side of you before."

She said, as she sat down next to me and hugged me.

"So? Why didn't you ever add me?"

"I use social media to vent. Sometimes, when I'm in a bad mood, I vent everything there. If one day I end up saying something about you and you read it, it wouldn't be good, right? It would wear down our relationship."

"Is that all?"

"The most important thing is that my parents are on Facebook too. Better to nip the problem in the bud."

When I heard the real explanation, I felt relieved. It was a family matter. Quite different from my situation, since my mother never cared about my personal life, only about the money she gave me.

In the end, unfriending her on Facebook was the best thing for me. I was just being silly for nothing.

Besides, I still had Tham on my profile, who loved to like my posts and send me ridiculous declarations of love. That would only bring problems. Better this way.

"Now that you've explained it, I feel more at ease."

"By the way, tomorrow is your birthday. Have you decided what to do to celebrate?"

Kewalin asked.

"I never celebrate with anyone. For me, it's just another day."

"No way! This is our first anniversary together. It has to be special."

"How about just the two of us here in the room? Going out is complicated. What if someone tries to get close to me and you get jealous."

"Fine by me."

"But I have an early class tomorrow, so tonight I'm going to sleep in my room."

"You still came here, right?"

"I wanted to see you."

She smiled and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

"So cute. So go rest. Tomorrow, we'll celebrate together. With everything we're entitled to."

"With everything?" "Everything really."

. .

I stayed with Kewalin until almost 11 p.m., then drove back to my apartment in Rangsit. Driving at night has its advantages: traffic is light, and the journey is quick. My plan was simple—take a shower as soon as I got there and go straight to bed. But as soon as I got there, I had a surprise.

Tham was standing in front of the building, holding a birthday cake.

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you..."

He began to sing, lighting glowing candles in the dark on a small £1 cake. I looked around, feeling a mixture of shame and awkwardness, fearing that someone would see us. I never liked that kind of thing. To me, it seemed overdone and out of place, like something out of a romantic drama or a shoujo manga.

I'm not the heroine of any of these stories. However, I'm also not cruel enough to frown or scold you.

"What's this? It's not even my birthday yet."

"It is. It's past midnight. It's 00:02."

I looked at my watch and realized that it was indeed a new day. He wanted being the first person to wish me a happy birthday, probably finding it romantic.

"Happy birthday, Ann."

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

"I called, but you didn't answer."

"It must be because my cell phone is on silent."

I started looking for my cell phone in my bag and, when I couldn't find it, I became desperate.

"Wait... Where is it?"

Did I forget it in the apartment? How could I have been so absent-minded? "Um, pay attention to me first."

I looked up, and at that moment, Tham placed the cake on the marble table in front of the building. Then he knelt down and opened a small red velvet box. I didn’t even need to look to know what was inside. I had seen this scene in many dramas.

No... He won't do that. Not here.

"Happy birthday. Here's the diamond ring you wanted. It's not quite 100 carats, but it's from the heart."

"Get up, Tham! Don't do this here. What if someone sees us? It will look bad!"

"An, I'm serious."

The tone of his voice left me speechless. A feeling of discomfort washed over me.

"Today is not just your birthday."

"Oh no? So what is it? Constitution Day?"

I tried to joke around, but I was getting more and more worried about the possibility of another "surprise." Kneeling like that...

"Have you ever heard of penguins?"

Penguins? Why was this penguin story coming back?

"What's wrong with penguins?"

"They say that when a male penguin likes a female, he finds the most beautiful stone among millions of others and gives it to her. If the female accepts it, they stay together for the rest of their lives."

There went that story again...

"This ring may not be 100 carats, but it's the result of all the savings I've saved since high school. I've been meaning to buy something I've always wanted, but I never imagined I'd use that money for a diamond ring. An, you're my penguin."

"Tham..."

Don't say it. Don't say it.

**"Ann... This year you will graduate. Marry me."**

# 11. Birthday

I already imagined that this scene looked familiar. It's that typical request for wedding that appears in any soap opera. At least he didn't do it in front of a shopping mall, with a giant LCD screen saying "I love you". If it had been like that, I think I would have fainted from embarrassment.

Now, I feel cold sweat running down my back. Like I said, I'm a coward. Hurting someone's feelings or making them feel embarrassed is something I don't have the courage to do. But if things go wrong, It's come to this, I think if I don't reject it, the situation will get completely out of control.

He came to surprise me on my birthday, didn't he? And out of nowhere, he asks me to marry him...

*"Accept! Accept! Accept!"*

A low but audible cheering voice came from somewhere and made me stop.

When I turned to look for where it came from, I noticed some silhouettes hidden in a corner of the building. A small group of three or four people were spying on the scene. That's when I realized we had an audience secret.

"Whoever is there, you can leave now!"

I yelled, and my expression quickly turned irritated when I realized they were my friends.

I should have guessed that this cliché scene would have something to do with them.

Tham took the ring out of the box and, with trembling hands, placed it on the ring finger of my right hand. His eyes began to fill with tears, and I had to look away. Please, he's a man! He shouldn't cry like that in front of me!

"Finally... Anna said yes! Hooray!"

The voice of Pupe, one of my friends, echoed with a scream so loud that the whole building must have heard it. I looked at her, furious, and pointed my finger.

"Turn off this live now!"

"Why?"

"Turn it off! I don't like this."

Pupe looked displeased, but said goodbye to the people on Facebook before ending the broadcast. Of course, the other two people who were recording also hung up. When I was sure that there was no one else watching besides them, I took the ring off my finger and gave it back to Tham, in front of everyone.

"You can have that."

"Hey, what's that?"

Pupe and Ma Miew looked at me, completely confused by my reaction.

I gave them an irritated look, turned around, and headed straight for the building. Before I could enter, Tham ran after me and grabbed my arm. His voice was shaking, and all the sweet and romantic mood from before had turned into tension.

"Why, An? You like me, don't you? Why did you reject me?"

The word “rejected” caused everyone around to fall into absolute silence. It seemed like my two best friends finally understood why I leaned towards Tham in the beginning.

"Tham, you want me to graduate and get married right away, raising a family? You don't even think about giving me time to work, travel, fulfill my dreams and do what I want first?"

"But we can get married and do other things at the same time."

"Our life still has a lot to face, Tham. Why rush things like this? If you're in a hurry, then marry someone else. I'm not ready."

I replied firmly and pushed his hand away.

"And don't surprise me like that anymore, please. That's too much pressure. If I want to get married, I'll say I'm ready. Don't you know that when you ask someone to be a part of your life, you need to be sure that the other person wants it too? That's pressure."

"What's wrong with me, An? I love you and I'm ready to take care of you. Besides... you were the one who approached me first. We've known each other for two years..."

"Only two years. Don't use that word 'love' for two years."

"But it's been long enough for us to understand each other, hasn't it?"

Now we stared at each other, and silence settled between us, a tension that was almost frightening. Finally, I spoke, with a heavy heart.

Even though I hated making anyone suffer, I knew I had to do it.

"I don't love you, Tham."

"..."

"Everything that's happened so far, I was just afraid of being alone, so I kept you close. But now, it's time for you to move on."

The "audience" began to walk away, clearly feeling guilty for being involved in something so intimate. Tham, upon hearing my words, He seemed unable to accept the truth. He lost control, acting as if he had lost his sanity.

"So, everything we've lived through meant nothing? I love you, and you've never rejected my proposals before, but now this..."

"I'm a bad person, Tham. I'm not good enough for you. You're handsome, rich, educated. Go find a good woman who's right for you."

"How can you do this, An? How can you make me waste all this time with you?"

His voice was fullof disappointment, which made me sigh. If I could get down on my knees and apologize so he would stop being mad, I would.

"Sorry, Tham. I'm horrible. But it's only been two years. Think of it as a painful lesson, something that will make you stronger and prepare you for true love. We're done here... no, actually, we were never anything. It's over."

I ran my hand over my head, preparing to leave. Tham shouted angrily, like someone who was completely destroyed. I heard his words and at the same time felt a mixture of pity and pain.

"I curse you to find someone like you!"

I froze. Those words felt like a boomerang, coming back to me. I had said something like that to someone else in the past, and now, it felt like fate was mocking me, making those words come back to me.

But even so, I didn’t look back to answer Tham. I knew he was hurt, and deep down, I also felt guilty for giving him false hope. If I was being called names, it was deserved.

I sighed...

.

.

Finally, I managed to cut Tham out of my life definitively and unexpectedly.

Now, I have no one else to consider myself. Both my life and my heart are Kewalin's, hers alone.

How funny, right...

As for Pupe and MaMiew, who were present today, they sent me apologetic messages. I ended up fighting with them, of course. What should I do? Stop being friends with them just because of a man? That's not what I want.

Friends... in the end, they're still friends.

Now, I only have Kewalin, and I know it's risky for my heart, but I think I need to try. I thank Big Ass for making this song, because it helped me have a reminder that this is life. Sometimes you have to take risks.

After finishing classes in the morning, I rushed to the apartment that Kewalin and I rented to celebrate my birthday, as we had agreed. We didn't talk on the phone, because I had

I forgot my cell phone at home. The longer I didn't hear her voice, the more I missed her. When I saw her, I would hug her, just to kill the longing.

Ah... does Kewalin know how much I'm in love with her?

"I arrived!"

As soon as I opened the bedroom door, I found Kewalin sitting on the bed, looking at my cell phone with a tense expression, scrolling through the screen, while next to it was a birthday cake. A tightness in my chest made me run to her, grab the cell phone from her hand, but she was faster, dodging it and getting up to watch a video, turning up the volume.

I didn't even need to watch the video to know... it was a live stream that ended up being a recording of last night. It must have come from a friend of mine on Facebook.

Pupe hasn't deleted this yet, has she?

"It's not what you think, Kew."

"He got down on one knee and proposed, and yet it's not what I think it is?"

Her voice was cold, unlike any other time, which made me feel a chill. Kewalin looked at me with her light brown eyes, fixed on mine.

"You even accepted his ring. After you graduated, you were going to have a wedding, right?"

"It was an act, please hear me out. I didn't mean to humiliate him."

"If you didn't give him hope, why did he get down on his knees and proposed you."

Kewalin looked at the video, her expression in disbelief.

"This man..."

"Listen to me, please."

I tried to get closer, but she forcefully pushed my hand away.

"Don't touch me. It disgusts me!"

Her words were like a sharp blade to my heart, almost making me fall. But I could only stand, trying to compose myself, sighing.

"How do I explain it, for you to believe? He knelt down to proposed me after graduation. I asked him to give me the ring, just to stick to the script, because I didn't want to humiliate him in front of a live stream with almost five hundred people watching. I didn't want to kill him right then and there. Then, when it was over, I gave him the ring back and was done."

"You broke up with him now, but you were dating me?"

I was speechless, not knowing what to say. It was a secret relationship. I wanted to protect myself in case something happened to either of us.

"I'm done with him now. Can't you just let this go?"

"Talking is easy, right? You know I hate cheating, but you still did it. I understand why."

"I won't do it again. I was wrong."

I tried to go to Kewalin to hug her, but she raised her hand, moving away to another corner.

"Please, Kew, don't make this harder. I don't like fighting. Let's get this over with."

"So let's talk about something else... The woman named Key texted you saying she bought a new outfit from Japan for celebrate her birthday, without commitment, because she is still obsessed with what happened that night."

"..."

"At the bar."

Now, this was a bigger problem. I put my hands on my face, starting to get irritated, not knowing what to say to justify this situation.

"Stop making trouble, Kew. It's my birthday today. Don't make a big deal out of everything!"

"Don't come and make a fuss. That won't work on me, you're a filthy person..."

She spoke so angrily.

"You said you were going to see a friend because you were worried, but you ended up having sex with another friend in a bar bathroom. You didn't even choose the best place, did you?"

"And if you had chosen the place, would the situation have been better?"

I bit my lip in irritation and let out a sarcastic comment, which only made

Kewalin even angrier. She picked up something nearby and made a movement as if he was going to throw it at me, but stopped at the last moment.

"How can you be like this... Could it be your mother's fault?"

That was the limit for me. No matter how wrong I was, Kewalin had no right to touch the most sensitive point in my life, mentioning my mother and hurting me like that.

"Don't talk about my mother. You can hate traitors all over the world, but don't come attacking me because of your father."

"It was because of my unfaithful father that I am here, wasn't it?"

"Being a lover's daughter is not a tragedy. Don't make a big deal out of it."

At that moment, Kewalin threw my phone at my head. The impact wasn’t enough to seriously injure me, but it left me dizzy and staggering. Her voice was filled with anger, without any remorse, full of hurt, as if she were striking me repeatedly with a bat.

"Yes, because I am the daughter of my father's lover, who was unfaithful, and I do not couldn't solve any problems, so you had to raise me until I grew up. I expected the person who loved me to not be like that, but you're not exception. Why... why can't you stop this unfaithful behavior?"

"If you know it's an instinct, then why did you start dating me? I warned you, didn't I? I'm like a tiger. If you accepted the risk, then you have to accept the consequences."

"Anyway, I have to accept the wrong things you do, right? Don't you think it's your fault?"

Kewalin looked discouraged, she took a step back, leaning against the wall.

"I thought people could change, at least one person in the world, and I chose you, I chose to fall in love with you and hope you would change, but it wasn't like that at all."

"..."

"Instinct is instinct."

The tears that ran down the perfumed person's face began to to calm the anger that burned inside me, like magma exploding from a volcano, and I wanted to walk to her, comfort her, apologize, even kneel down if I had to.

But I could only stand there, staring, like a person who doesn't like to admit defeat.

"If you leave this behind, nothing will happen."

"Selfish."

"What's the problem?"

I started to get really irritated. That was why I would have one-night stands and pull away, because I didn't want to have to fight like that. It was exhausting.

"For you, this is probably a small problem, right? You bastard, you bastard, you bastard!"

Kewalin's shout made me lose my patience once again. Today, I've been cursed too much. How can she talk like that?

"If the problem is that big, let's break up. I don't like this."

"Of course, we can't be together. I can't stand the promiscuity. I don't know who else you're mixing with."

"It was no big deal, it was only with two people, if you count the person you sent the message to that you shouldn't have read."

"If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't know who you hang out with, who you mix with, right? Do you know how disgusting that is?"

"It was just a moment in the bathroom, a quick thing. With you it was much longer. Besides, I was with a woman, I don't see a problem with that. It's just sex. Love and sex are different things."

I kept my detached attitude, even though I knew he was trying to justify herself in an incoherent way. What happened had already happened, so it was better to let it go.

"This is treason."

"Yes, it's cheating, but I wasn't completely unfaithful."

"And the guy in the video, what's that?"

Kewalin seemed to have lost the strength to continue the conversation, because the more we talked, the more she seemed not to understand.

"Even after all this, you still think you didn't do anything wrong? Get involved with me and him too!"

I kept looking for excuses to justify myself, even though I knew it was all repulsive and completely meaningless.

"I don't think I made a mistake, because for me, Tham is the only 'boyfriend' and you are the only 'girlfriend'. I was with each of them, where's the mistake in that?"

Kewalin collapsed to the floor, crying like a three-year-old.

When I heard the sound of crying, my stubbornness disappeared and without realizing it, I ended up calling her name with compassion for everything I had put her through.

"Kew."

The perfumed person raised her face and glared at me with a fierce gaze, something she had never done before. Her eyes were filled with pain, resentment, and there was no forgiveness, not in this life or the next. "The only mistake in my life was meeting you! I curse you so that you may find someone like you, to feel what it's like!"

After saying this, Kewalin tried to get up and, staggering, walked towards the bedroom door like someone without strength. I just watched, shouting after her like a stubborn person who didn’t want to admit defeat even though my heart was breaking.

"Go away! If you want to go, then go!"

It was the first time I said this, with tears falling at the same time. Today, I was being cruel, but also the most unhappy person. Today was my birthday, why was this happening to me? I wanted continue with Kewalin, I wanted it to be a serious relationship, with just the perfumed person, but I was rejected, insulted, called a wretch.

You can't forgive me, is that it?

I fell onto the bed, shuffling my feet, even though I wanted her to go away, even though tears were like a waterfall. I was still worried and wondering where Kewalin would go now.

Well, go. If you want to go, then go.

When I moved a little, I saw the little cake next to it, with a cute birthday message:

"I love you lots."

My tears grew and without realizing it, I ran my finger over the cake frosting to taste it.

Why can't I stop crying? I was about to lose Kewalin, is that right?

What am I doing? I don't want to lose her, so why don't I go after her?

"Kew!"

I ran out of the room, took long strides, and then started running, afraid I wouldn't be able to catch up. When I got to the bottom floor, I saw the Kewalin's car driving away until it disappeared from sight. Not wanting to waste time, I got into my car and started following.

I need to apologize... I love you, Kewalin, I can't lose you.

I honked, but I wasn't sure if the car in front knew it was me. Soon, Kewalin's car sped up and passed mine, clearly showing that she knew she was being followed and didn't want to talk or negotiate.

I didn't give up and took out my phone, calling her while honking the horn.

This time, it seemed like Kewalin was willing to talk. Her voice came through the line, full of anger.

[Why are you following me?]

"I apologize, Kew. I was wrong, stop the car and let's talk."

[We have nothing more to talk about, we're done.]

"I'm not done. I... I was rude. I just wanted you to know how I felt about everything you called me."

[And you think you deserve forgiveness? Wretched, promiscuous, unfaithful, go to hell!]

These must be the swear words Kewalin could find. If it were someone from a lower class, I would probably see a monster roaming the streets of Bangkok, and the people here would probably take their cell phones to take pictures and say it was the phenomenon of the monster wandering more than Lumpini Park.

"I promise that from now on, I won't do anything like that anymore. I'll only have you because I..."

"Ahh..."

The perfumed person's scream came from the phone. I, who was driving behind her, saw Kewalin's car lose control, as if it had swerved something, and crashed into the curb with a loud noise!

"Kew!"

I stopped the car abruptly, completely scared, and immediately turned to the side of the road. I ran out, not knowing what to do. A skinny dog, half running, half walking, seemed like there was nothing wrong. I believe he was the one responsible for causing the perfumed person's car accident.

Now, Kewalin's body was leaning against the steering wheel, covered in blood. Her car was partially submerged in the water, and the crash was so hard that the impact highlighted the severity of the accident.

"Kew... Kew!"

I knocked on the car window and tried to open the door, but I couldn't do anything but cry.

"Kew, don't do that... Kew!"

I looked around, and there were only cars passing by quickly, the noise of the engines was deafening. I cried even more, screaming like someone gripped by fear, with a racing heart.

"Someone, please... help!"

"..."

"Help my girlfriend!"

# 12.True or False

All what happened so far is a story of the past... Currently, Kewalin has been rescued and is safe. Fortunately, at that moment, a kind-hearted person stopped the car, got out to check the situation and, with much more presence of mind, he called the first responders, ambulance and the police to help.

That's how the pleasant-smelling person was taken to the hospital.

It's been several days since then. My love has woken up and seems to be fine, although he still has bruises on his body and a broken arm from the impact. Other than that, there's nothing to worry about, except for one detail...

She can't remember anything about me.

I visit Kewalin in the hospital every day, but despite this, she still can't remember anything about me. It's gotten to the point where her mother, relatives, and friends are starting to suspect that I'm a scammer trying to trick Kewalin. And frankly, who wouldn't? No one around her knows me.

Our relationship seems to have been a secret.

No one in Kewalin’s circle knew of my existence, just as no one in my circle knew of hers. The only exceptions were Pupe and MaMiew, but even they hadn’t met Kewalin personally.

Now that I've made everything fall apart, it seems I've gotten what I wanted. She doesn't remember me, as if I never existed in her life, as if your memory had been completely reset. It would be better If she woke up furious, hated me, yelled at me... anything would be better than this indifference, this emptiness, this lack of memory.

It hurts... it hurts so much.

I love her to the point where it scares even myself.

Now, the one who loved me so much, for whom I was the first love, She simply can't remember me. I didn't even know the day she left the hospital. No one told me when or how she would be released.

I could only sit, dejected, trying to find a way to see her again, that pleasant-smelling person who used to look at me with such passion.

But no matter how much I think, I can't find a solution.

"What's wrong? Why do you have that stray dog face?"

Pupe asked, laughing. At the moment, I was sitting in her large mansion, drinking beer with dismay. Meanwhile, Pupe seemed to have already overcame your broken heart, as if it never happened, and now, Apparently, she was meeting a new man.

Unlike me, who lost my beloved simply because she can't remember me. How could I not be discouraged? My love left the hospital and came home, and the worst part is that I don't even know where her house is.

What kind of girlfriend am I, anyway?

"Wow... What kind of person doesn't know where their girlfriend lives?"

With a curious and genuinely interested expression, I turned to look at my friend, who was standing next to me. Pupe, with his sharp tongue, didn't miss the opportunity to give me a direct answer:

"A terrible person."

It was like a knife had pierced my chest. She was right. How can I be called her girlfriend if I know absolutely nothing about her?

"Did something happen, foreigner?"

I bit my lips, wanting to cry but unable to shed a tear. I didn't even know where to start.

"Do you remember when I told you that... I was in love?"

"With who this time?"

I looked at Pupe with a bit of irritation. Okay, I admit I've already

I've been involved with a lot of people in the past, but right now, none of them were on my mind except Kewalin. And I don't even know where she is now, somewhere in Thailand.

"Kewalin."

"Ah, the one you refuse to call Lin, huh? What happened?"

"It was because of your live!"

I growled at Pupe, who made a slightly guilty face.

"Hey, you already called me names for that. Are you going to call me names again?"

"It was that stupid live stream that caused all the problems between me and Kewalin. And now, it's become a huge problem."

"What kind of problem?"

"I don't exist to her anymore."

"Wow, you've been discarded."

Pupe raised his hand, covering his mouth with a surprised expression.

"Our foreigner was rejected? But, thinking about it, it's understandable. If it were me, I would end it too, especially after seeing a live broadcast like that. Dating me, but accepting a ring and saying "yes" to a marriage proposal, even if it was staged. Didn't you explain it to her?"

"I explained, but she didn't want to listen. And now, not only does she not listen, she doesn't even remember me."

I briefly explained what had happened. Pupe made an expression as if he had seen a ghost and just shook his head.

"I don't believe it. That only happens in soap operas, this amnesia thing. There's no way it can be true. Do you believe it?"

"I can't believe it, but it feels real. Kew really doesn't remember me. The way she looks at me, her body language, everything..."

I placed my hand on the left side of my chest.

"It hurts so much. It's just like that time."

"Hey, calm down, friend."

"Wow, will I end up like that time?"

I remembered my first love, who almost drove me crazy. I cried As a person without direction, I vomited from so much suffering, became thin, and could neither eat nor sleep. At that time, my maturity was practically non-existent. Now, even though I have grown up, I realize that when it comes to love, I have not changed at all. It has nothing to do with maturity.

I'm hurt.

In fact, the fact that Kewalin forgot about me should be a good thing for her.

But for me, it is unacceptable.

Being invisible to Kewalin is so painful that I can't bear it. It's stuck in my heart, and it doesn't seem like something that suits me.

"I feel my heart broken."

I put my hand on the left side of my chest, my voice shaking like never before, because I had always been a confident person. It was rare for me to cry or feel so shaken by something.

"Being invisible to her hurts me."

The tears that welled up in my eyes left my friend, who had never seen me in this state, completely perplexed. Pupe

He reached out to wipe my tears, but I pushed him away.

"Don't act like I'm weak."

"You're weak. Don't pretend to be strong in front of a friend who's known you since freshman year of high school like me."

"I'm just confused. I don't know what I should do."

"It's not difficult. If you love her, just bring her back."

"How am I going to get him back? I... I've never begged or apologized to anyone."

"Well, you never did, but you'll have to if you love her that much. Do everything to get her back. If you made a mistake, apologize. If she acts like you don't exist, create a new version of yourself so she can't forget you."

"As?"

My wealthy, straightforward friend raised her eyebrows and blinked at me, clearly amused at seeing someone as smart as me asking something with such curiosity.

"Win her back again."

My friend's words kept echoing in my head. I am Anna, a woman who never really wanted to get involved with anyone, especially in love. I am the kind of person who, with a simple look, can make anyone fall in love, since I have an appearance that could be considered attractive. And now, I am being asked to apologize to a woman who no longer remembers me, to tell her:

'I'm your girlfriend.'

This is harder than anything I have ever faced. I clearly remember the first time I met Kewalin: she was perfumed, serious, never looked at anyone, kept her distance, with a certain pride, following the motto:

*'Those below us will see us as arrogant, while those equal or superior will see us as valuable.'*

I was shocked at the time, but now I understand what it means to be lost.

Winning her back is ten times harder now. If I really want her back, I need to start all over again. But I don't even know where her house is.

The last time I went to the apartment, the manager told me she wasn't there. When I asked for the address, he refused to tell me, saying it was a secret. It's all very unclear. I've tried calling her, but the cell phone is always off. I don't know if it's because she's still unconscious after the accident, or if the phone is defective.

I lost all options... my girlfriend disappeared like the wind and sunlight, as did our memories.

***Drrrrr...***

As my mind wandered about the woman I didn't remember, the number "Kewalin" appeared on my cell phone screen. I jumped in surprise, almost dropping the phone, but quickly picked it up and answered, my heart pounding, not understanding what was happening.

"H... hello?"

"Who are you?"

The sweet voice on the other end of the line soothed me, sounding like a soft melody, like those from a Thai spa, but the coldness in her voice made me feel like I was talking to the school coordinator who caught me playing truco.

"Kew? Wow, I was surprised! How did you manage to call me?" [Kew?] The voice on the other end sounded surprised.

[My name is Lin.]

Then there was silence. I felt a tight sensation in my throat.

[Why are you silent?]

"I was surprised because it's you, Kew... Or rather, Lin."

Even though I wasn't used to calling her that, I thought it was what was necessary for the moment.

"I went to visit you in the hospital last week, and they told me you were already out, but no one told me where you were."

[I don't even know who I'm talking to. I saw the phone number, but I don't recognize the name. Is your name Anna?]

"Yes, it's me. I visited you in the hospital, but you don't remember." [And you have a bit of a Western face, don't you?]

"Yes, it's me. I went to your apartment, but no one knew where you were."

[If you couldn't find me, why didn't you call before? Oh, no

I managed to charge my phone after the accident. But you could have come to my house.]

And then, silence took over us again. How is it possible that such a close friend doesn't even know where she lives?

Furthermore, the way she was talking to me felt like a barrier, like a growing distance between us. My heart sank, but I had to be strong, because Kewalin didn't remember me.

"Sorry, it seems I've been a bad friend, Kew... Or rather, Lin, in many ways. Even when you woke up, I was the only one you didn't remember."

[It's weird, isn't it? Not only do I not remember you, but no one around me knows who you are.]

"We've been friends for a long time... Do you want to hear how we met?"

[It's not really something I need to know right now, but...]

The cold version of Kewalin, the same one from when we first met, was talking to me, and I could only smile forcefully, even though she couldn't see it.

"If you don't want to know, that's fine."

[But actually, I want to know... I think I remember you saying you were my girlfriend.]

"That..."

[Do you want to come out and meet us?]

I was immediately excited. I stood up and responded in an excited tone.

"So, where are we meeting? Kew... Or rather, Lin, where? How about the cafe we went to on our first outing?"

[Excuse me, which coffee is this?]

I smiled at the phone, feeling a deep sadness. Even the places we knew, Kewalin didn't remember. I knew that all the memories we had together were gone.

"I'll send you the location. If you have my number, it means my Line contact is still there."

[Okay, then let's meet tomorrow. I want to know how we became friends.]

The meeting was scheduled for eleven o'clock on Tuesday morning. I arrived ten minutes early and ordered an iced coffee while I waited anxiously. I had never behaved like this with anyone.

I'm usually the type of person who arrives late, because being late is a way of showing how important I am, and I always strive for that importance.

But then ten minutes passed, then thirty minutes, then an hour... nothing. I was getting impatient. When I tried to call back, Kewalin didn't answer. I almost got up and left the place, but I held myself back, because finding Kewalin after the accident was not an easy thing to do. All I could do was wait.

And when two hours had passed... finally, the phone rang. The name "Kewalin", registered as "Jumjim", appeared on the screen. I looked at the screen angry, but I took a deep breath, answered and spoke calmly, trying to show that nothing had happened.

[Sorry, Anna. I'm two hours late.]

Kewalin's slightly hurried voice softened my anger.

She was usually not late, and I was always the one who was late. In fact, I rarely waited for anyone.

"What happened, Kew... I mean, Lin? I tried calling you, but I couldn't get through to you."

[I think the battery is dead. I forgot to charge it.]

"And why are you so late today?"

Kewalin gave a shy laugh, and her agitated voice from before disappeared. The explanation she gave me made me feel even more irritated than the heat of the midday sun.

[I just woke up. Give me an hour to get ready, and then I'll go out.]

I stood there, frozen, trying to process what I had just heard. She had made me wait until noon, even though we were supposed to meet at 11 am? I couldn’t take it anymore. I’m not the kind of person who has the patience for that kind of thing. And in all my anger, I almost exploded right there in the café.

[You're angry, aren't you? Sorry. The medication the doctor gave me was strong and made me sleep heavily. When I woke up, I was a little dizzy. But it's okay, if you want, you can leave. We can meet at another time.] moment.]

"At another time..."

There was no set date. She left me waiting without knowing when we would see each other again. I closed my eyes and tried to control myself, forcing a smile, even though it was fake.

"I hope. I really want to see you, Kew..., Lin. I'll wait."

[Then, we'll meet later.]

I held the phone tightly, not knowing what to do. I, Anna, a person who hates waiting and never plays the role of the one who runs after someone, now found myself in this situation, simply waiting because I had no choice.

If it weren't for the fact that this sweet woman is sick, I would think she was taking revenge on me...

Wait a minute...

The idea that came to me is plausible. Kewalin is not the type to be late. Even though she said she took medicine and slept too much, she would have ways to wake up. And her tone of voice was very excited...

So excited, it even seemed like she had been awake for hours, but she was pretending.

Maybe I'm overthinking it.

But considering the reality, Kewalin knows I hate waiting. I'm not the type to wait for anyone. Is this a test to see if I stay or go? And why test if I'm not in her thoughts?

Unless... it's an act. Because, really... Kewalin remembers me!

# 13. Love

Finally, Kewalin showed up at the bakery at four in the afternoon... while I, who had arrived at eleven in the morning, waited for five hours without being able to do anything.

Today, she came with a relaxed look: her hair freshly cut shoulder-length, slightly wavy. Kewalin looked different, sweeter, more beautiful, to the point of making my heart race. In addition, the soft scent of cherry blossom, which she always delicately spreads on her skin, wafted in the air, attracting the gazes of those who passed by. This only made her even more stunning, multiplying her beauty tenfold, or even a hundredfold.

*I love you, Kewalin...*

*Even if this time you were five hours late.*

"I'm really sorry I'm late! I don't want to make excuses for my mistake, but look at the medicine the doctor gave me."

Kewalin held up the bag filled with enough medicine to replace a meal, with a heartbreaking expression of guilt. I gave her a small smile, unsure whether to feel irritated or blame her.

After all, it had already passed. She was already late. It must not have been something she did on purpose...

*Or was it?*

"So, how are you now? Is everything okay? Can you move your arm yet?"

Kewalin moved her arm a little, confirming that she was okay, which made me feel relieved.

"I'm fine, it was nothing serious. Otherwise, I wouldn't have come. By the way, you have a lot of patience, Anna. I arrived so late and you still managed to wait. Really, you could have left and scheduled another day."

I gave a forced smile, without knowing why, but despite the innocent tone in which she spoke, I felt the urge to grab her by the hair and slam her head against the table until it was all over.

"I didn't want to miss the chance to meet you, Kew... I mean, Lin."

"Why did you call me Kew?"

She raised her eyebrows slightly, puzzled. I didn't really know how to explain it, so I just shrugged.

"It's customary. I think everyone already calls you Lin. If I'm the only one who calls you 'Kew', that makes me special, you know?"

"If you feel more comfortable calling me Kew, go ahead. No matter what you call me, I'm still me."

It doesn't matter... Her indifferent attitude left me paralyzed. In Kewalin's eyes, I already looked like a complete stranger. It doesn't matter how I see her, we are no longer Jat J and Jum-jim to each other.

"Did you cut your hair? It looks better, very different."

"My mom asked me to cut it. When the accident happened, the blood was all stuck together. Besides, I felt like changing some things in my life. So I cut it. I'm glad you thought it looked good. But you must really want to see me to have waited this long. I guess we're pretty close, huh?"

Kewalin made a surprised expression.

"To be honest, I'm surprised too. I never thought I would have a close friend. I don't usually get too close to people. And now, when I finally have a friend, no one around me seems to know you. It's kind of weird."

"Are you afraid I've deceived you, Kew?"

"At first, I admit that I did. But honestly, I don't see why you would. Besides, the fact that you're saved on my phone as Jat J proves that we actually know each other and that we're close, at least to some extent. But then why... why can't I remember you?"

*Maybe because I'm so horrible that your brain refused to store me in its memory. Or maybe...*

*She's pretending she doesn't remember.*

I suspect the second hypothesis more. I was determined to observe every detail of her behavior today to find any flaws. But so far, nothing has escaped my notice. Her eyes looked innocent, her movements were slow and calm, and there was no sign of nervousness in her gaze.

Kewalin really didn't seem to know me. If that's a lie... it's one of the best I've ever seen.

"And do you remember how the accident happened?"

"I remember I swerved because a dog ran in front of the car, but I have no idea where I was or what I was doing before that. It's like my memories were suddenly erased." "Really?"

"Or do you know?"

Kewalin asked curiously, with an expectant expression.

"You know what happened before I flipped the car, don't you?"

She's testing me, isn't she? She wants to know how I'm going to react to the fact that I'm the cause of her suffering, which led to the accident. If this were an essay test, how should I respond?

I think it's best to wait a little longer before committing.

"I don't know what happened either, that's why I'm asking."

"..."

And then, silence took over the room. This was the decisive moment. If Kewalin showed anger or any suspicious emotion, I would have known she was faking it. But instead, she just sighed and leaned back in her chair.

"Oh, I thought you knew. So it must have been just a regular accident. But from what the police officer said, I was driving at 90 mph. I never drive that fast. It made me wonder what could have happened that day. Did I get into a fight with someone? Or was I running away from something?"

Kewalin was silent in thought, while I watched her with a mixture of curiosity and guilt.

***'The only mistake in my life was meeting you. I wish you could find someone like you, so you can understand what it's like.'***

"Anyway, the important thing is that you're safe now. Think of it as a second chance, a new life."

I changed the subject because I couldn't bear to think about the past. I couldn't stop blaming myself for causing all of this to her.

"It's true. Besides, I suddenly gained a close friend. Even though I don't remember how we met."

Kewalin looked genuinely intrigued.

"Since we're here, why don't you tell me how we became friends? I'm pretty sure we weren't classmates in high school or college."

"Of course."

I started to tell our story in a summarized way, but I tried hard to present myself as a heroine, trying to impress the charming person in front of me. My friend's words still echoed in my mind:

'***Try to win her over again.'***

And I thought of it as a form of courtship, making the other person feel special even if they didn't remember anything.

"Now I get it. That's why no one knows how we became friends. But we actually became friends really quickly. Normally, I don't approach anyone, but you helped me. Thank you."

Kewalin looked at me with a smile as we walked together on the sidewalk. She had her arms crossed, standing at attention, as if I was still afraid to get any closer. Even though we knew we were close, she still didn't seem willing to touch me in a more intimate way.

"But I feel a bit at a disadvantage, you know? You know so much about me, but I know nothing about you.

Kewalin glanced sideways at me.

"Who are you? Where do you come from? Where do you live? How old are you? Where do you study and what do you do?"

"I'm me, you know? I live in Bangkok, I'm the same age as you and I study Business Administration."

"And do you work with photography?"

"Yes, it's a hobby, a passion."

"And do you date?" ***Thump-thump...***

***Thump-thump...***

My heart raced with anxiety. I looked into her eyes, feeling confused about what I should answer.

"Yes, dating."

"I knew it! With all this beauty, how could I not?"

There was no sign of hesitation or awkwardness that could be perceived.

If this were an act, then it would be very well done. But if it isn't, then that means I don't have even a little bit of Kewalin's memory left.

When I realized this, a lump formed in my throat. Our story is something that only I remember. Is that really it?

Just because the memory is gone, has our love disappeared too? Is that it?

"Is everything okay? Why are you so quiet all of a sudden?"

"I was just thinking about some things."

"Actually, when I found out that you're already dating, I had a strange feeling. I don't know how to explain it."

Kewalin raised her hand and touched the left side of her chest gently.

"It's kind of empty... hurting... stinging... I don't know why."

"Really?"

I turned to ask, excited.

"Yes. As they say, the heart can remember things. That may be true. Like when a person has an organ transplant, sometimes. She inherits some habits from her previous owner. Maybe it's the same thing... My brain may not remember you, but my heart still does."

***Thump-thump...***

I don't know why, but I was so excited and thrilled about this. Kewalin's beautiful brown eyes met mine, and she smiled at me with irresistible charm.

"And I don't know why either, but when I heard that you were dating, I felt..."

"What do you feel?"

Kewalin looked at me with an uncomfortable expression, but soon laughed, trying to hide it.

"It's nothing. It's already quite late, actually, we met early, and now it's almost time to leave..."

"Kew... How do you feel? Tell me."

I grabbed Kewalin's arm, who had her arms crossed, making her stop and get back to the subject, as I wanted to understand her behavior strange of her. Kewalin made a face of someone who was in doubt, but, even so, she spoke directly.

"If I say it, don't get me wrong, okay? I don't know how to explain why either."

"Go ahead and say it, I won't misunderstand."

Keawlin bit his lip, as if he was thinking deeply, and I noticed a bit of embarrassment in his gaze, which made my heart beat faster.

"I don't know... but I..."

"..."

***"I feel jealous."***

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That's what love is like, isn't it? Just one little word can make me happy.

Throughout my friend's birthday party, I was just smiling slightly, playing with the plastic fork and cocktail glass in a silly way, because I couldn't stop thinking about the word "***jealousy"*** that Kewalin said to me.

My school friend, who had always been very close, watched my actions in silence. Although the environment was filled with music, my friend's silence made me stop daydreaming and look around.

"What it was?"

"What song is that?"

"What are you doing?"

"What song is that in the MV? Just watching it makes me want to vomit."

Mia Miew interrupted after seeing my expression. Now, my friend's face looked a little uncomfortable, as if to say,

"You're already so old and still making a dreamy face like you're in love with a senior?"

"What are you thinking, huh? Why do you have to interrupt?"

"I can't stand to see this anymore. Ann, the lioness, needs to look proud and imposing, not like she's always sucking on a strawberry candy. Have you ever seen a lion wearing a lion suit? Teletubbies? That's pretty much it."

"Do you remember your wife yet?"

Pupe, who already knew about the situation, spoke. I smiled awkwardly at the friends who were there, as if we were at a meeting, but the truth is that I was barely thinking about wishing MaMiew a happy birthday. All that occupied my mind was the word "jealousy."

Ah, just thinking about the tone of voice Kewalin used to say that made my heart start beating faster again.

"I have some news... Today, Kewalin said she's jealous of me."

I shrugged my shoulders and made a cute face, which made Pupe unable to hold back and throw some ice at me.

"Hey, don't do that. I want to get drunk and throw up, not look at you and throw up. They're different vibes!"

"Let me have some happiness, okay? The last few weeks, I've only had sadness."

I grumbled to my friends and then made a bored face.

"But even though she says she's jealous, Kewalin still doesn't remember me."

"You didn't update me at all? Your wife, what happened? Why do you know this alone, you cow, Pupe?"

MaMiew turned to Pupe, who was smiling as if she knew something, as if she knew more than the others.

"Her wife, named Kewalin, the one she won't let us call 'Lin', remember?"

"Ah, yes... Now that you mention it, it does sound familiar. Why?"

"Car accident, memory loss."

"Lie!"

MaMiew said immediately. I dipped my finger in the drink and splashed some on her.

"Why are you talking bad about Kewalin?"

"What disease is this? You think you're in a 'Fan Day' movie, you idiot! Tell me what happened!"

"Are you going to cut the cake or not?"

"Forget the cake, we can eat it whenever we want. I'm more interested in your memory loss story. Tell me!"

"It's a long story, remember when you guys went live... Just a minute, I have a call."

"Oh no!"

It was at that exact moment that the phone rang. When I saw Tham's number on the screen, I froze and was undecided whether to answer it or not. But last time, it seemed like I had hurt her feelings too much. Maybe she wanted to talk to me.

Even though I didn't want to answer, curiosity made me speak.

"Hello?"

[I'm in front of the restaurant where you're celebrating your birthday party, talk to me.]

I felt a lump in my throat as I realized I was being followed. The shame I felt for my broken relationship disappeared and I ran out to find the handsome guy I always blamed for making Kewalin feel confuse.

Yeah, I don't blame myself.

The tall man, in a shiny black dress shirt and tight white pants, stood next to a sports car, a true example of style. He was perfect, the kind of person everyone wanted except me.

"Are you following me? I don't like that."

"But you checked in on Facebook."

Oh, I'm so dumb, I never imagined that social media would cause this kind of problem.

"What do you want?"

"You're about to send me away, like you did the others, right?"

When I heard this, I felt like a bad person.

"Yeah, it wasn't enough for both of us, so don't be mad. That day, I thought everything was clear."

"And the time I spent chasing you, what was it?"

"Everyone has to learn from each other, and you knew that from the beginning. You knew that I'm a complicated person, that I date a lot of people until I find the right one..."

I paused, which made Tham look at me in surprise.

"So you've found it yet?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"That's not the most important thing. What matters is that our story is over. In fact, we weren't even really anything, but thank you for the good times we had."

The handsome man glared at me, but he was gentlemanly enough not to hurt me like in dramas where villains resort to force because they can't control themselves. He was superior in every way: appearance, status. There was no need to do something so petty that would make him look worthless, like an uneducated person.

"You're really smart, Anna."

He said.

"Consider that we're just not on the same level, Tham. I don't think you'd like a woman like me."

I replied calmly.

"I'll certainly find a better woman than you, Anna. You can bet on that." The almost forced tone of voice made me nod, acknowledging the situation and feeling guilty down to the last hair.

"I hope you find that person. Good luck."

There was no regret on my part, no attempt to hold on to him. His eyes, which had been waiting for me to show some consideration, flashed for a moment, but there was nothing in me but one clear thought: 'Kewalin'. The will to keep someone good to myself was no longer there, which was surprising.

He gave me one last look before he got in his car and drove off, speeding off impulsively. It wasn't the first time I'd turned a man down, but that didn't make it any less painful to know I was hurting someone.

My nosy friends, who were hiding nearby, began to peek curiously. Without even having to look, I gestured with my finger for them to leave, as I knew them too well. Pupe and MaMiew slowly appeared, lining up side by side, sighing in unison.

"It must be tiring being you, huh, you foreigner. The pain of having to reject one after another."

Pupe crossed her arms and looked at her nails with disdain.

"Meanwhile, those who want to have someone can't, and when they do, they end up being robbed. What a miserable life I have."

"Then pay for it."

MaMiew replied bluntly.

"You're rich! You can support a male prostitute. You just have to listen to stories about his poor, sick family and give him a few thousand baht to take care of his disabled parents. No big deal." "You know a lot, huh? Have you tried?"

"I've already researched. But unfortunately, I'm not rich. If you want a man, just throw money in his face, girlfriend."

She said, shrugging her shoulders.

"I'm not going to talk to you anymore. I'd rather focus on Anna."

Pupe turned to me, ignoring MaMiew, and asked:

"What about you, huh? Are you serious about Kewalin?"

My two friends leaned on my shoulders, curious. I sighed and admitted:

"I'm serious."

"Are you sure you won't regret it? Because you just dumped a handsome, rich, Porsche-driving man because of someone who was in a car accident. Are you sure this isn't just guilt? Think about it."

Pupe's warning was something I had thought about before, but after talking to Kewalin and hearing her say "I feel jealous," those words pierced my heart in a unique way. It made me even more certain that my feelings were right.

"It's love. I know it is. I've never felt this way with anyone, not even a man."

"Now I want to meet this person. What is so special about her that no one else has?"

I looked at my two friends and replied confidently: "Because I love her. That's what makes her special."

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After that day we met, Kewalin kept making appointments with me. This time, she wasn't late. We both arranged to have lunch and go shopping to get to know each other better.

Today, her cherry blossom perfume was so soft that it hypnotized me. Maybe it was because I was falling even deeper in love with her, and that's why everything seemed perfect.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing..."

I, who had approached and breathed the perfume on her neck.

As she picked out a few items, I was completely taken aback when she noticed.

Kewalin looked at me with an amused smile as she saw my surprised expression and the blush taking over my face.

"Sorry"

I stuttered, which is rare for me.

"It's just that your Cherry Blossom scent is so good that I couldn't resist getting closer to smell it."

"Do you even know the name of the perfume?"

"Of course. It's your signature scent."

"Few people know that. I think we're pretty close, then."

Kewalin smiled and, without much thought, put her arm around my waist.

Unlike me, who was a little paralyzed by the gesture that seemed like a hug.

"We're so close, but no one knows anything about us, right? It almost feels like a secret."

"Maybe it's because it's strange for two women to always be together, stuck together."

"Strange why?"

"Well, women date each other these days, don't they?"

I tried to hint at something. Kewalin made a slightly confused expression, as if she didn't quite agree.

"Can't people be close without everyone thinking shit? Just because we're together, does that mean we're a couple? What? is this mentality?"

"It's just that nowadays people "ship" a lot."

"Speaking of which, I remembered the first time you came to find me and said we were girlfriends."

She smiled as she looked at me.

"To this day you haven't explained why you invented that."

I was silent for a moment, trying to find a convincing excuse.

"It was to test your memory."

"A different test, huh? If you were a man and said that, no one would think it was strange. But, being a woman, it seemed a little suspicious. I confess that I had been thinking about it for a while, but I let it go."

"..."

"Or are we... really girlfriends?"

She gave me a charming look with her brown eyes, as if was teasing me, which made my heart race. To keep my composure, I held her gaze and smiled back. In the end, she looked away first.

"And what do you think about that? If we were really a couple?"

"I think it's impossible. I've never thought about having a girlfriend. Even though I accept women who date each other, I never imagined that this could happen to me. Maybe because I've never thought about having a relationship, you know? If I ever do, it will be something natural, like a man and a woman..."

Kewalin paused, hesitant.

"Sorry. I don't know why I brought this up."

"It sounded a little bold, didn't it?"

I looked at her tenderly and, without realizing it, touched the ends of her short hair.

"Why do you have to be so adorable?"

"What?"

She looked at my hand playing with her hair in surprise. When I noticed, I quickly pulled my hand away, smiling awkwardly.

"Your hair is beautiful. I think I'll cut mine like that too."

"When you said I was adorable, my heart skipped a beat. Weird, huh?"

"..."

"..."

We remained silent, not knowing what to say. I have never been one to beat around the bush. As I have already mentioned, if I like someone, I clearly show my feelings.

But in the case of Kewalin, who seemed so closed off, I knew I needed to go slowly so as not to push her away.

"Have I ever told you I had a girlfriend before?"

"You never told me. I'm surprised."

"What do you think about this?"

"I don't think anything about it."

"Why?"

"Because I don't feel anything. Should I?"

I shouldn't have asked something that would hurt myself. Her indifference was like an icy dagger piercing my heart.

"I asked just to see if Kew would be uncomfortable or disgusted by me."

"Of course not. I just find it curious that such a beautiful woman would date another woman. Have you never dated men?"

"I had."

"Oh, so you like both of them?"

"I think so, but I prefer women."

"Interesting. As for me... I don't think I've ever liked or loved anyone. It seems like I have no heart, doesn't it?"

Kewalin continued talking as she walked through the store, and I followed her, trying to see if she was giving anything away in her gestures or words.

"Maybe you haven't found the right person yet. Or maybe you don't believe in love."

She gave me a cold, empty look before replying:

"Exactly. I think people are born alone and die alone. Love only brings pain. Even in friendships I'm careful, afraid of getting too attached and ending up suffering when the friendship ends."

"Don't judge the whole world just because your family didn't work out."

I replied without thinking. But I received a sharp look back.

"I'm not as naive as you."

Kewalin's harsh tone left me speechless. Noticing my silence, she touched my arm with a sigh.

"Sorry. I just always get sensitive when talking about my family. Have I told you about my parents?"

"Actually, I know almost everything about you."

"We're really close, huh? By the way, don't you think I'm pretty?"

"Hm?"

She blushed slightly as she asked.

"You like women, don't you? Have you never thought about flirting with me? Or were you already dating at that time?"

Was that an opening question? I suddenly felt nervous and thought carefully before answering.

"I thought so, yes."

"And did you try?"

"To try?"

"I guess I must have done something wrong. That's why you're just my friend."

Kewalin looked relaxed as she continued walking.

"Back then, I probably rejected you. I wonder what I did. Did I call you crazy or did I get angry?"

I smiled sadly.

"Yes, you hated me."

But I wasn't talking about the first time we met, but the last time, when she found out I had cheated on her.

Ah...

Before, Kewalin loved me more than anything. Now, that feeling no longer existed.

"But today is not like back then, is it?"

Her soft voice caught my attention as she looked directly at me.

"Hm?"

***"I think now... I love you."***

# 14.Coincidentally

I took Kewalin to our old "love nest," an apartment we had rented as a meeting place for the two of us. Since the university and our living places were quite far apart, we decided to rent a space that was neither too close nor too far for either of us.

Unfortunately, today I am the only one who remembers this place as something special.

As she entered the room, her scent filled the room. Kewalin looked around with an expression of admiration.

"It's compact and organized. Few things, I like it."

"It's just that I hardly come here."

"Oh, really? And where do you usually stay?"

"In Rangsit."

"And why did you rent this place, then?"

"To meet my girlfriend."

"Ah... And where is your girlfriend?"

***'Right here, in front of me'***

I thought, but of course I couldn't say that. Mainly because I was trying to observe every detail of her, waiting for some sign that would confirm what she had said before:

***'I think now... I love you.'***

The words Kewalin said at the supermarket keep echoing in my mind, not leaving me alone. When I heard her say it, it was like I was looking at a reflection of myself. It was a phrase that sounded like a flirtation, a promise of hope.

Something that I myself used to say to seduce or attract attention.

But now, I'm not sure if Kewalin is using that same strategy with me. From what I know of her, she's someone who rarely shows clear feelings. To this day, I still wonder if what happened between the two of us was just the result of momentary circumstances and emotions.

"She forgot me, didn't she?"

I said with a melancholic tone, partially honest. But at the same time, I wanted to see how she would react. Kewalin looked at me with curiosity, without fully understanding what I meant.

"Forgot? What do you mean... She found someone else?"

"Forget can have many meanings."

I replied as I put the groceries in the fridge, taking the opportunity to strike up a conversation.

"What do you think, Kew? Are love and memory related?"

"In what sense?"

"For example... If she forgot me, would it still be possible for her to love

me?"

"Hm... Well, I think love and memory go hand in hand. If we don't have memories in common, how can we have love? Even those who have many memories together can destroy each other because of betrayal."

An uncomfortable silence hung between us. Her tone of voice at the end caught my attention. Could she be referring to the period when I was with Tham? If so, maybe she remembers.

"It's like my father."

She continued.

"He had many memories with his wife, but in the end he ended up having an affair with my mother, and then I was born. To this day, we are a secret to his family. His wife never knew about our existence. See? Memories and love come together... and die together too."

***'I love you so much, Jat j.'***

Suddenly, the love phrase Kewalin once wrote on a cake came to mind. My heart sank, but I smiled to hide it.

"And that idea that the heart remembers even when the mind doesn't? Isn't that true?"

"Maybe that's true in some cases, but not in all."

She diverted the conversation and asked me:

"Do you love your girlfriend very much?"

I was taken aback. My hands stilled for a moment as I put things away in the refrigerator. I answered carefully, controlling the tone of my voice.

"I love her."

"What is love to you?"

Kewalin propped herself up on her arms and laid down on the bed, watching me as I organized things.

"Explain it to me. I want to understand what this feeling is like."

"To be honest, I guess I'm like you. I don't really believe in love. That's why I've hurt so many people."

I smiled, trying to make it seem like it didn't matter.

"For me, love is like air. It can't be held or measured. Since I was born, I've always had people interested in me, and I never understood why. Was it just because they wanted something from me? Was it because of my looks?"

This question has always haunted me, but no one has ever asked. Kewalin was the first to hear my thoughts.

"My parents, for example, only love me because they brought me into the world. They have a bond with me because they fed me, they gave me life. My father has always seen me as part of him because I am the fruit of his sperm. But what about other people? Why would they love me, even if they don't know me? Just because they see me and decide to say: 'I love you'?" Kewalin remained silent as I continued:

"So, I ended up understanding that love always comes with desire. People want something from me. When they see me for the first time, they ask for my number, they send me messages, even without having exchanged words. And I accept... I give them the chance to get closer. But no one was able to create memories good enough for me to feel true love... Until one day I met what I thought was my first love..."

I paused for a moment, but then quickly skipped that part.

"And I was disappointed. That's when I stopped believing in love. I went out with several people, gave them all a chance, until I met the one I considered mine second love."

I looked directly at Kewalin, remembering our history. I smiled. softly, as if I wanted to convey an "I love you" just with my gaze.

"That's when I met my girlfriend."

"Was she your second love?"

"Yes. But I messed up."

"Did she know you loved her?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure I was able to show her that. In fact, I think I only realized how much I loved her when it happened..."

"What happened?"

"She forgot me."

Kewalin still seemed confused about what I meant by "forgot." Even though I tried to decipher her, I couldn't pick up on anything revealing. So I decided to change the subject.

Whether she really forgot me or not doesn't matter. I will bring our love back.

"But it's okay. I've already decided that I'm going to win her back. If she really forgot me, I'll make her remember. Or... create new memories."

I smiled confidently. Kewalin raised her eyebrows in surprise, but soon smiled back.

"I'm rooting for you. Hearing you talk about love is inspiring. I think I need to open my heart too. I want to know what that love feels like. But, you know, I still have a bad view of men... I think it's because of my father."

She sighed deeply, as if love was something too complicated. I took the opportunity to tease her and create a chance for myself, however small it was.

"Love doesn't have to be with a man, you know?"

"What do you mean?"

"You can also love a woman. You can fall in love with someone of the same sex."

"What an absurd idea!"

Kewalin laughed, feigning shiver.

"Two sockets of the same type don't connect, you know?"

"Have you ever heard of *'double plug'*?"

"You are impossible!"

She laughed and tried to hide her blushing face.

"How do you know these things?"

I laughed along, teasing:

"You see same-sex love as something so normal, don't you?"

"Of course."

I replied firmly, looking directly into her brown eyes.

"Love can arise between any gender. I myself date and have dated several women. That's why I told you to open your mind."

As soon as I finished speaking, silence took over the room between the two of us.

Kewalin looked straight into my eyes and smiled.

"I'll think about it, okay? If my heart really doesn't accept men, maybe I can try liking women."

If this were an act, it would be flawless. There was nothing out of place, no room for me to catch anything wrong. The surprise on her face was so genuine that I started to feel uncomfortable.

"Are you disgusted by me?"

"What nonsense! Why would I be disgusted?"

"If you really decide to like women, choose me first, okay?"

I took the opportunity to immediately insinuate myself. Kewalin was silent for a moment and shrugged.

"You wouldn't be a bad option, you know."

"And what did you mean that time at the mall when you said you loved me?"

I started to press her, wanting to understand the meaning behind what she had said. I remember that after saying that, Kewalin just took her things and went to pay for the groceries, as if what she said was something fleeting, a random idea that soon disappeared. But I won't let this be forgotten.

If I get a chance, I'll take it.

I won't accept being just friends and never achieving anything with her.

"It means exactly what I said."

"..."

"It is a love like the one you feel for your parents, your siblings, your friends. It is still a form of love."

"OK."

If you want to dodge, dodge, Kewalin. I won't rush anything.

I've already opened up about how I feel, both in relation to my sexuality and the interest I have in it. Now, it's the perfumed one's turn to decide what she wants with me.

"You look disappointed."

Kewalin tilted her head and smiled sweetly.

"How did you expect me to love you?"

"Whatever way you feel is good. I just want it to be love."

"Why are you being so flexible with me?"

"Because I love you too, you know."

So I changed the subject, as if nothing had happened.

But I'm sure my declaration of love is etched in Kewalin's mind now, by the way she froze.

You're not the only one who knows how to flirt, dear.

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After that day, we started talking every day. I would even say more than before Kewalin's accident. We texted each other every morning, shared our day, and sometimes even met up, to the point where we seemed like a couple on a date.

I had even forgotten that Kewalin didn't remember that we were once girlfriends, because, apart from that detail, everything we did was practically the same as what we did before.

"Ann."

"Yes?"

Today, Kewalin wore a short white lab coat, with her hair tied back, giving her a clean and determined look. She smiled shyly as she prepared to begin speaking.

"We're pretty close, right?"

"Absolutely!"

I replied immediately, wanting to affirm it. Among all the women, Kewalin was the person I was closest to, and I wanted to be the only one in this place.

"So, can I ask you for some advice?"

"Sure, tell me."

"I remember you saying that being in love is a good thing."

"I didn't say it was a good thing, but that I felt good about it."

I said with a smile, and Kewalin quickly nodded in agreement.

"That's right."

"Why?"

"I was thinking about trying to fall in love."

Her smile was so sweet that it seemed to light up her eyes, and my heart raced. It seemed like my efforts to get closer to her were finally paying off.

"That is great!"

"It was because of you, you know? You made me think about it. I'm trying to change my view on love, and now that I think about it, what you said makes sense. I can love anyone, be it man or woman."

Great! I managed to get Kewalin to open her mind. It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. If I hadn't been trying to hide my excitement, I would probably have licked my lips in celebration.

Today, she's going to come up to my room with me...

"So I decided to open my heart to that man."

"What?"

My heart stopped. The gender Kewalin mentioned was far from mine, and at that moment, I felt like someone had pulled my shirt from behind, stopping my steps.

"I met a guy a while back. He's a friend of a friend. I think we have a good connection, so I thought I'd give it a try, but I wanted your opinion first. I can ask for your advice, can't I?"

Still in shock, I felt her scented hand touch my arm.

"Ann... Are you listening to me?"

"Yes, I am listening."

I woke up and forced a nervous smile at Kewalin.

"How well do you know him?"

"Not really. But I don't think I want to close myself off. Especially with you as my best friend. Help me out, will you?"

"Who is he? Where is he from?"

"He studies at the same university as me. He has it all: good looks, a rich family, an amazing car, an intelligent way of speaking, good thoughts, and he's close in age to us. When I make an appointment with him, I'll invite you to go too."

"Really..."

My mind was completely blank. Every word I said seemed to be carried away by the sweltering Thai heat.

"What's his name?"

I asked just for the sake of asking. Even though she said his name was Dog, Cat or anything like that, it wouldn't change my mental confusion.

"Tham."

***"Tham?"***

It can't be... My reasoning came back immediately upon hearing such a familiar name.

Kewalin looked at me as if she was relieved that I finally seemed interested.

"What's his name again?"

"Tham."

It can't be... It can't be a coincidence!

# 15. I Love You

I've never believed in coincidences, and I believe them even less now that I see Tham sitting right in front of me, with an expression like he's trying to swallow something unpleasant - as bad as what I was just feeling.

Meanwhile, Kewalin, oblivious to everything, didn't seem to suspect anything about him or the two of us.

The world may be small, I get it, but not like this. It just makes me think that maybe the "perfumed one" remembers everything and is just playing some kind of game. I wonder if Tham is aware of this too?

"This is Tham, who I told you about. And this is Anna, my best friend."

We both stared at each other in complete silence. We didn't know whether to act like acquaintances or complete strangers. But Tham was quicker and, with a forced smile, he pretended it was the first time we had met. Seriously, why does he have to lie? I can't understand.

"Hi, Anna. Lin has a pretty friend, huh."

"Hi, Tham. And you're just as handsome as Kew said."

Okay, since we're going to lie, let's lie until the end. I was sure that after this, the two of us would have to talk alone. I needed to find out how these two met or if they were conspiring together to take me down.

In my head, the classic *Channel 7 TV* theme started playing automatically. What a soap opera-worthy situation!

"Kew, how did you meet Tham?"

"We study at the same university. As I told you, he is a friend of a friend. A few weeks ago, he went to talk to a friend in my department and, by chance, we ended up talking."

"But you're not the type to strike up a conversation with just anyone, are you?"

"Tham is very talkative. He had just ended a relationship and came to talk to me. We talked and got along well. Since then, we exchanged contact details and started talking until we set up this official meeting."

Lie. That's the biggest invention I've ever heard. Exchanging contacts? Making small talk? Kewalin? As soon as I heard that, I closed my eyes and, irritated, stood up suddenly.

"I'm leaving."

"Huh? Why?"

Kewalin grabbed my arm, but I quickly shook it off. Now, everything felt like a trap, and I wouldn't accept being made a fool of.

"If you want to play this game, play it. But I'm not going to participate."

I got up and left the table, leaving the restaurant immediately.

I don't believe in coincidences, much less in this "amnesia" story that makes Kewalin pretend not to remember me. This is all as cliché as the script of a cheap soap opera. Now, nothing seems reliable anymore.

"Anna, what's going on?!"

Kewalin ran after me and stopped in front of me, now visibly irritated.

It was rare to see her like this. Her usually calm expression was filled with tension, and her eyes held a pressure I wasn’t used to seeing.

"You remember everything and you're trying to get revenge on me, aren't you?"

"What? What are you talking about, Anna?"

"You're pretending you don't remember me and then suddenly you're Tham's friend? Did you see that I cared and decided to make me look like an idiot? Want to play? Play alone. I love you, Kewalin, but I won't be made a fool of!"

I raised my hand and hailed a passing taxi. As soon as I got in, I asked the driver to leave, completely furious. When I looked in the rearview mirror, I saw Kewalin standing on the sidewalk, looking at me with a sad expression.

Oh, please don't look at me like that! You started this, not me!

. .

About 20 minutes later, the taxi stopped in front of the apartment I had rented to live with the "perfumed one". For a moment, I hesitated between going back to the university dormitory or going in here, but I ended up choosing the apartment because of its proximity. All I wanted to do was throw myself into the bed and let my thoughts wander. But of course, the drama wouldn't end there.

The phone started ringing. It was Tham. He called three times before I, irritated, answered. "What it was?"

[We needtalk. Now.]

"I have nothing to talk about. Go play with Kewalin."

[Playing? Are you crazy? Just knowing that you two are friends is freaking me out! We need to talk now. You made Lin cry!]

"What?!"

[That's right. You made her cry. She doesn't understand why you got so angry. I also can't explain anything because I lied from the beginning. We need to clear this up. You're being too obvious with this jealousy.]

"Are you crazy? Why would I be jealous? I'm the one who broke up!"

[Then come talk.]

"I'm not going to talk or listen to anything! I'm not a pawn in this game and I'm not going to participate, understand?"

I hung up the phone immediately and decided I needed to get away from them both as soon as possible. I'm the type of person who, when I cut something off, I cut it off for good.

When I say I don't want to, I mean no. I've always believed that loving myself comes first.

Pain can't bring me down. Luckily, I only fell lightly from this passion — there's still time to get out. If it was something deeper, the wound would probably be much bigger.

Or rather, no... it already hurts too much like this. If it goes any further, I won't be able to take it.

But, apparently, the love I'm trying to run away from desperately doesn't seem to want to cooperate with me.

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***Knock, Knock, Knock***

About twenty minutes after hanging up the phone, I heard a knock on my bedroom door, which made my heart race. I jumped out of bed.

In this room, besides me, only Kewalin is allowed to go up, and of course, the reception of this place knows her well enough to let her pass easily.

When I opened the door, there she was, the person with the unmistakable aroma, with a sad expression on her face. I quickly looked away, afraid to give in to my weakness. "What's up, Kew?"

"Why are you mad at me?"

"For trying to make me look like an idiot."

I gave a sarcastic laugh, but I froze when Kewalin suddenly hugged me and buried her face in my neck. Instinctively, I returned the hug, stepping back a little under the weight of her body. The soft cherry blossom scent emanating from her made me slightly enchanted. It's a scent that always awakens something in me, especially coming from her.

"And me..."

Why did my voice suddenly become weak? Kewalin pulled back a little and looked at me with her brown eyes, clearly hurt.

"What did I do wrong for you to be so angry? I don't understand anything that's going on."

"Kew..."

Why can she do this so well? Those brown eyes, shining like tears are about to fall down her face. Is this pretend or is it real? I can't let myself get carried away!

"Do you remember what happened between us?"

"What happened between us?"

"You made an appointment with Tham today to hurt me."

"Why do you think it would hurt you?"

She won't admit it! Worse, she's acting so convincingly that I'm starting to doubt her again. But I can't believe it.

"Look into my eyes, Kew."

She stared at me, just as I asked. Our gazes locked for so long that it felt like I was being hypnotized. Before I knew it, her face was so close that our noses were almost touching.

"Your eyes are beautiful too, you know?"

Kewalin said, breaking the silence.

I pulled away quickly. There was something strange in the air between us, but she clearly said that to lighten the mood. I watched her closely, but I couldn't spot anything out of the ordinary.

"If you don't want to admit it, that's fine. Go ahead, date Tham, do whatever you want. Just leave me out of it, okay?"

"Why does it seem like you don't like Tham?"

*Because I love you, you bitch! And I'm trying to figure out if you're teasing me or not.*

"He seems like a good person. If you like him, go for it."

I turned away, trying to control my irritation. If she was trying to provoke me, then let her do it until she got tired of it. No man had ever successfully provoked me. And of course, no woman had either.

"It seems like you're being ironic."

Kewalin said, hugging me from behind.

I flinched slightly, surprised by the gesture. When we were together, physical closeness was part of the relationship, but that was because we were girlfriends.

However, the Kewalin I know, even as a friend, never allowed that kind of contact easily. She was always very reserved.

What's going on now...? Is she trying to seduce me?

"It's not irony. If you think it's good, then it's good."

"Then I'll date Tham, right?"

Suddenly, I felt irritation rise inside me. Is this a test? But I held myself together enough to answer.

"Ok...go date."

"Okay."

She accepted easily and walked away to pick up her phone. Watching her type a message, my heart began to pound. Jealousy took over me, and I couldn't hold it in. I grabbed the phone from her hand and held it up high.

"Why did you take my phone?"

"You were going to tell Tham that you two are dating, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Who says they accept a dating request and say "I love you" via text message?"

"So how do you do it?"

"This kind of thing has to be said face to face. Otherwise, what's the point?"

"I don't know if it's a good idea... I'm not someone who says things like that. Just opening your heart to someone is hard enough. Even being your friend was something that surprised me."

Her expression looked genuinely uncomfortable, and it made me smile.

At least I managed to buy some time before she agreed to Tham.

"That kind of thing only has meaning if it's said face to face."

"And how would I say it?"

"Just say, 'Tham, I'll go out with you,' something like that."

"It sounds so lame."

Kewalin laughed at my suggestion.

"Have you ever said 'I love you' to anyone?"

I laughed along with her. We sat on the bed and started talking about different subjects.

"To be honest... I've never told anyone before. But the other day, I told you I loved you, in case you haven't forgotten."

"But you said you love me because we're friends, right?"

I moved closer until our noses were almost touching again.

"Are you sure that was how I felt when I said I loved you?"

"But didn't you say you love your girlfriend? That woman?" o

"Yes, I do. I love you very much."

As I said this, I felt a weight on my chest, because it seemed like all this time, it was Kewalin who was talking about love, not me.

"I want you to know that I really love you."

She looked at me with a confused look and said:

"Why are you telling me this? What are we even discussing? What do you want me to tell Tham anyway? Teach me, expert."

She tugged my cheek playfully. I sighed and pulled away a little.

"If you want to date him so much, I'll teach you. No, better: I'll tell you what I'd like to say to my girlfriend who forgot me. Then you can use the words, if you want."

"Interesting. I want to see how you would do it."

Kewalin looked at me curiously, and I wanted to take the opportunity to vent, even without knowing if she really remembered or not. At least, I would have said what I felt.

Just once... I just want to try.

"Then..."

But when it came time to speak, I was completely lost. Kewalin laughed and shook her head.

"You're trying too hard. No need. Right now, your face looks so funny!"

She raised her hand and lightly slapped my cheek, as if to say "cute."

"It seems like I've never actually said 'I love you' to anyone."

"Well..."

My voice came out low, because, really, it wasn't that I had never said it. I just chose not to answer. And that was for the best, since Kewalin didn't insist any further.

"And how did you start dating your ex?"

"She seduced me."

I replied, as if I was joking with Kewalin in front of me. Even if she didn't remember, or if she did, she was definitely embarrassed.

"But even if she hadn't seduced me, one day I would have found a way to win her over for myself. Will I ever have that chance again?"

"How sad... Don't worry, I'm rooting for you."

Kewalin looked at me empathetically and nodded.

"I love her."

"..."

"Did you hear, Kew? I love this person. I really do."

"Then you should tell her that, Ann. There's no point telling me."

I smiled sadly. It was almost as if she was rejecting me, albeit indirectly. But that was okay. It was just the beginning. I couldn't rush things, especially after everything that had happened. Maybe it was just the price I had to pay for my past mistakes.

"Kew, you can help me, yes. At least let me try saying it to you first. Think of it as an exercise: you help me by being my 'practice', and I'll show you what it would be like. That way, you can also prepare to tell Tham whatever you want. Sounds fair, doesn't it?"

"It's OK."

I placed my hands on her shoulders, making her turn completely towards me.

Our eyes met. Kewalin gave an amused smile, as if she was trying to hold back her laughter, but, upon noticing the seriousness on my face, she adjusted her expression, becoming more neutral.

"I've never felt this way about anyone before. Or if I have, it's been so long I can't even remember."

I swallowed hard, trying to prepare myself. I took a deep breath and gathered all the courage I had before continuing:

"The word 'love' never had any meaning to me, until I met you, Kew."

"..."

"I love you. And I don't know if I'll ever be able to feel that way about anyone else. I love you so much that I can't look at anyone else. I love you so much that I'm willing to spend my whole life trying to make up for the mistakes I've made. Please, give me a chance... Stay with me."

The silence that followed seemed forced, as if someone had pressed the mute button on a remote control. Our eyes were fixed on each other, and time seemed to have stopped. Without realizing it, my hand moved on its own, gently touching the side of Kewalin’s face.

My fingers slid along her jaw, which tensed at the feel of my touch.

"It's OK."

Kewalin finally responded, breaking the silence. With both hands, she held my face between her palms, while her brown eyes looked at me stared deeply.

"..."

***"Let's stay together."***

## 16.I can't give in

There was a moment of silence between us. Kewalin’s serious face made my heart race, and I was so afraid that the sound of the knocking could be heard clearly. The light brown eyes stared at me fixedly, and slowly, a satisfied smile appeared on her face.

"So? What did you think when I said 'yes'?"

"..."

"Did that give you any courage to talk to your girlfriend directly, Ann? I confess that when you spoke just now, I really got involved in the situation."

The person with the charming aroma placed her hand on the left side of her chest.

"Could I do it like you? But I still don't feel that strongly for Tham. If you asked me to confess my love now, I don't think I would be able to."

My heart, which was racing, gradually calmed down and returned to normal. Then, I smiled as if nothing had happened.

"Take it easy. There's no need to rush."

"But what about you, Ann?"

"Yes?"

"Do you love your girlfriend that much?"

Kewalin asked in a sweet voice that made anyone who heard it feel like she was genuinely curious, more than just asking a casual question.

I looked her in the eyes and smiled.

"And from what you heard just now, it seems like I love you that much?"

"Sometimes, words aren't as convincing as actions."

I leaned closer to Kewalin and stared at her intently.

"Then I will show you with actions."

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I just said it out loud. In my life, I've never had to prove my true love to anyone. And now, all of a sudden, I've ended up with a rival who happens to be my ex-boyfriend.

Coincidence? I don't believe it at all.

I told the whole story again to my wise, awakened, and enlightened friends because there was still Ma Miew, who didn’t know anything. After hearing everything, she remained of the same opinion:

"That's a lie! I don't believe it! Not even if you swore by the most sacred temple. I would only believe it if it was Mew Nittha in Fan Day, because she's pretty and won an award for that film."

I snapped my fingers loudly: BAM! Totally agreeing.

"But Kewalin really doesn't seem to remember me. You know how good I am at detecting lies. All it takes is one little lie and I can tell. Remember Pupe? In high school, she stole my bank card to buy lingerie, and I found out pretty quickly."

Pupe looked like she was eating dog shit when I brought up her shameful past. All because she forgot her lingerie at her boyfriend's house. And, by the way, the lingerie belonged to her sister, who had just bought the item.

I explained everything in great detail, just to make her even more uncomfortable...

"If Kewalin really hasn't lost her memory, then this is all a very wellplanned revenge."

"What if I didn't call Kewalin from the beginning? This revenge would have no effect on me."

"But you've already shown that you 'care'. You ran to visit her the day she woke up, remember?"

"Argh! What a headache! Why do things have to be so complicated? Can't you just be direct? Love? Then say you love. Hate? So say you hate it. That way it's easier to apologize."

I messed up my own hair in frustration. Why do people have to complicate things so much? If you hate me, then come and beat me up! Why do you have to pretend you don't know me and then involve Tham in this, just to drive me crazy?

Oh, and just for the record, it's not jealousy of Tham, okay? Don't get things mixed up.

"As your friend, Anna..."

Pupe crossed his fingers, propped her chin up, and stared at me.

"You are a direct, sincere, beautiful, charming friend, and someone who is a pleasure to be around."

"Look, apparently I'm awesome."

"But as a girlfriend, you're a disgrace."

I showed her my teeth, but didn't say anything and let her continue.

"Why am I so bad?"

"You give hope to everyone who comes near you. You accept anything they give you, save the gifts and still spread smiles around."

"I just don't want to hurt people. Making someone suffer is a sin."

"And isn't giving them hope a sin? Kewalin probably felt the same way as everyone else you gave false hope to. From what I heard, she never opened her heart to anyone. You were her first love. The first person she was with. The first woman she never imagined she would have in her life."

"..."

"And you destroyed all of that by physically cheating on her - even though you said it wasn't from the heart. But you hurt her so much that she lost control of the car, flipped over and fell into the ditch, almost dying! What a horrible person you are, huh, friend?"

I was blown away when I heard her analysis. I used to watch everything superficially, but after that I started to feel like a real wretch, as she had said.

"W...what should I do then?"

"Apologize. As much as you can. But before that, you need to have sure if she really lost her memory or is faking it. Only then will you know how to act. And in that case, you have no right to keep it anger if she is really taking revenge on you."

"I don't know how to apologize. I've never done it before."

"So learn. The first time you had something with a woman, you didn't know what to do either. You needed someone to 'guide you', remember?"

I bared my teeth at her again. Pupe seemed to be having fun reminiscing about my past.

"Hey!"

I sighed and returned to the main topic, trying not to lose my patience.

"But maybe it's already too late. Kewalin is about to date Tham."

"Then stop it!"

"As?"

"If it were me..."

Pupe smiled, pleased with herself.

"I would seduce Tham and make her come running back to me."

The thing I hate most in life is having to eat my own words. My friends' advice made me reconsider whether what I was about to do would have any positive results. In the end, I ended up arranging to meet Tham at a restaurant where we used to go back when he used to bring me flowers to try to win me over. But today, the mood was completely different.

Tham's handsome face was impassive, showing no signs of excitement to see me. As for me, I wasn't in the mood to seduce or charm. However, I had to do it. Anything to make him leave Kewalin alone.

"Tham... consider this my request. Please stop getting involved with Kew."

It was the most direct request I had ever made to a man. Tham chuckled, almost mocking me, and raised his eyebrows.

"Why would I do that? Are you jealous? Or is it just possessiveness? You're the one who left me, you know?"

If my stomach hadn't been empty from skipping lunch, I would have thrown up in his face. But out of consideration for my own gastric juices - which still had some use for aiding digestion - I controlled myself.

"To be honest, I don't feel good about this. Kew is my close friend, and now you, who tried to win me over, want to start a relationship with her?"

"And what does that have to do with anything? We had nothing, really. You just deceived me and took everything I gave you. Do you know how much money I spent trying to conquer you?"

"So now you're putting a price on things? How absurd!"

"You can insult me all you want. We two have no reason to be polite to each other anymore."

We both crossed our arms and stared at each other. What a terrible way to start the conversation. I had planned to ask calmly and politely, but I ended up making the situation worse. I took a deep breath and decided to try again, this time more gently.

"Tham... for us women, there are some sacred rules. First: don't mess with a friend's boyfriend. Second: don't mess with a friend's ex. Third: don't mess with a friend's current boyfriend. Fourth: don't mess with someone who tried to win over your friend. And you fit into the fourth case. I really don't want to fight with Kew."

"I see. But we already pretended not to know each other before, so why can't we keep pretending? If you don't say anything and I don't either, no one will know."

Tham leaned his face closer to mine, his eyes shining provocatively.

"Unless you arranged this meeting because deep down you still have feelings for me."

His overconfidence made me want to poke my finger in his eyes.

I hesitated for a moment, then looked at him with a gaze that deliberately left doubt in the air. This made him hesitate slightly.

Of course... men are so vulnerable when they feel like they still matter to someone.

"It's nothing like that."

"Anna..."

I stood up and looked away. Maybe making him feel insecure would be a good start. At least I could shake his feelings a little.

Men are so easy to manipulate.

"I'm leaving."

Tham grabbed my wrist. When I turned to him, I saw that his expression was slightly downcast, which almost made me laugh. He seemed to be finding the most desirable man in the world.

"What it was?"

"I know... you're shaken."

"No."

"You've always been stubborn."

"Think what you want. I'm leaving."

"I'm dating Lin now."

"What?!"

My voice, previously sad, immediately became hard at this. But I quickly lowered my tone, remembering where I was. I gave up on leaving and sat down again to talk about the matter.

"Since when have you been together?"

"Today. I asked Lin out, and she agreed to start dating me... I'm sorry for making you feel bad. If you had recognized her feelings for me before..."

I stood up abruptly and left the restaurant, completely irritated. What the hell, why did things happen so fast? As if, without a boyfriend, Kewalin couldn't even breathe!

Wait... that's Kewalin. I'm being cruel by criticizing her, even though I'm madly in love with her. Damn it! This is crazy!

"Anna!"

Tham's voice called to me, and he grabbed my arm again. His guilty expression only irritated me more. I wanted to run far away, because now I realized that my problem had nothing to do with him.

"What it was?"

"It hurts a lot, doesn't it, to see everything happening like this?"

He didn't know how to react or what expression to make. Tham ran his hand through his hair, looking equally frustrated.

"To be honest, I still like you. But you took too long. When I asked for your love, you never cared. Now, you're acting like you regret it."

"Tham, fuck you!"

"Anna..."

Now they are a couple. What will happen from here? When two people are together, what do they do? Just imagining it made my mind filled with impure thoughts.

Kewalin's body... being touched by a man. The woman with soft, perfumed skin that only I had the privilege of knowing so intimately.

Kewalin is mine.

I won't accept this!

.

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Right now, I'm drinking beer like it's water, in front of a friend who agreed to strip herself of her emotions. She set a meeting a new man to come to me, and now we are talking about our problems in my room in Rangsit.

Today Pupe came in with a "catwoman" set, which left me with no sexual desire whatsoever. I don't know why men like these prints, they look more like people with syphilis than something attractive. But I'm not going to criticize what she wears. Now, everything I see makes me angry.

"I think karma exists, you know, foreigner! Since you broke so many hearts, now you're screwing yourself over again. You're going out with your exboyfriend, who is with your ex-girlfriend."

"But we've never dated."

"Have you ever kissed?"

"Does this count as dating?"

"Bitch!"

My friend, as straightforward as ever, cursed me cruelly, but that didn't shake me. I admit that I'm giving Tham a chance, there have even been some touching, but nothing more than a kiss.

I'm very cautious, despite being open and free about my preferences, both for men and women.

"Now my head is a mess, I don't know what to do. Just imagining the two of them walking hand in hand, kissing, my heart..."

I put my hand on my chest, unable to take it anymore.

"It even looks like a music video."

"Ah, that's jealousy. But are you jealous of him or her?"

"Of course I'm jealous of Kew. I told you, Tham means nothing to me."

"If this is her revenge, it's a very well thought out plan. She succeeded involve Tham in the game to hurt you. Tham is very weak, he falls if anything happens."

"It could just be a coincidence. Kew isn't a bad person, not like that. Besides, she's sick and doesn't remember me."

"I still think it's all a lie. I bet she'll play the good friend and then stab you in the back."

I looked at Pupe, who always has a plan in mind, and who, as always, was full of hope about my situation.

"What do you suggest?"

"You're supposed to be Kew's love advisor, while also hitting on Tham and breaking them up. You see? It's a dirty move."

It really is very dirty...

I nodded, not quite agreeing. If Kew pretended not to recognize me, and I did something like that, she would see me as a person cruel, no turning back. I needed a better plan, but I was completely lost.

How could I win back my ex-love?

I was lost between whether she was really sick or just pretending... and it was making me lose control.

"No, I want her to see that I'm being sincere. If she's pretending not to remember me, I want her to see that I approached her because I truly love her, without any plans that would make her doubt. I don't want to be the villain, with a thousand plans behind it."

"It's over. You've become a villain since you caused the car accident. If she finds out about your past at school, she'll want to stay away."

I glanced at Pupe, who kept talking about "it," which started to irritate me.

"Don't talk about it anymore."

"You can't forget it, it's unforgettable. Your first love was even more important than Kew."

I didn't want to know what she thought, and I wasn't going to tell anyone about it, because it was a part of my past that still had a special place in my memory, but that I was trying to forget.

I wanted to start over with someone, whether it was a woman or a man. And now, I was in love with Kew, the person I wanted to start a new story with.

Kew was the only one!

"I think I can only be a very good friend."

"There are other types of friendship, you know?"

"What kind?"

"Those who get deeply involved."

I looked at Pupe, not understanding what she meant by "getting deeply involved."

She grimaced, seeing that I was too naive.

"You've already picked up a lot of people at school, why wouldn't you be able to do that? Be the good friend and slowly but surely intrude until, suddenly you end up in bed. Do you think you understand?"

"You want me to do this with Kew?"

"Yes, it's what you do best."

I then remembered when I was more bold and confident, when this kind of game was something I had mastered. But now, I felt uncomfortable just thinking about doing this with Kew. She was a more reserved person, who didn’t let anyone get too close. Could I do it?

Of course... I'm a tigress. Kew would eventually have her weak moment, or as I like to say, she wouldn't know what to do.

She could try to protect herself, but I knew she would eventually succumb to my approach, the same way a sheep surrenders to a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Will it be as easy as before? I don't know, I'm still confused whether she's really sick or just pretending."

"Is she jealous?"

My friend suddenly asked, and I didn't really understand why, but it made me smile as I remembered when we were in a bakery and a man at the next table started flirting with us.

"Very."

"Let's see if she's really sick or pretending not to remember you. Leave it to me, I'll be the organizer."

"What?"

"I'm going to organize the birthday party."

"But you already had your birthday. Why so many parties?"

"Well, actually, today's birthday is the first anniversary of the day my mother conceived me. I've never celebrated that before. It's going to be the first event of its kind, a party to celebrate the conception, the birth of the fetus, and it's going to be called... 'Fetus Party'."

"Are you crazy?"

But I watched her, completely excited by the idea, and suddenly I found myself a little excited too, even though I didn't know what she had in mind.

"You're very excited."

"I'm having fun. And your mission is two things. First, invite Kew to the party. Second, stop her from getting together with Tham. Can you do it?"

"There's no way I'm letting that happen!"

"Good!"

# 17.Know the Story

Kewalin has been really dedicated to her studies lately. The only time we get to see each other is around eight at night. Even though we're far away, I make a point of going to her, attracted by her perfume and driven by my usual jealousy, afraid that Tham will take the opportunity to gain more points with her than I do.

Have I really come to this? Getting jealous of my ex-girlfriend because I don't want my ex-boyfriend to get involved with her? Does anyone have a chart? I need to draw this graph to understand...

On days when we can't get together, we usually do we video call or text. Most of the time, she asks me for advice about love, which only serves to poke at my heart.

I often look at her questions and roll my eyes, as if Kewalin was doing it just to tease me.

If I find out this is a lie, she'll regret doing this to me, because I won't let her sleep in peace!

"The other day, Tham tried to hold my hand while we were watching a movie."

"So you guys went to the movies together?"

My voice immediately turned hard, but Kewalin didn't notice. She just nodded and sighed.

"Honestly I don't like this stuff. It feels forced, like I'm was forcing me to do something I didn't want to do. In fact, I wanted tell him to get it over with. It's not something that suits with me, this thing about watching a movie and touching myself. I really don't like it."

I smiled internally. At least that hasn't changed yet: Kewalin is still the reserved and careful person I'm used to.

"You want to understand love, but you don't like what it brings. Why did you start dating then?"

"Because you said love is a good thing."

"It's good when you like the person too."

"But there's nothing bad about Tham."

"So what made you agree to date and talk to him?"

"He told me he had his heart broken by a woman he loved a lot. He can hardly believe that love still exists in the world. No matter how much he tries, it all seems empty to him."

I was surprised and started to make an uneasy expression. Apparently, Tham told her about me.

"He's a very sensitive guy. His view of love is so pure that it's surprising, especially considering that he's handsome, intelligent, well-off and has a positive idea about love, like you. But still, he was rejected. So I thought... if I gave him a chance for him, maybe I could have a good relationship."

"So you decided to try dating him?"

"Yeah."

*These two are together because of me!*

I was silent for a moment, drumming my fingers on the table as I thought. What could I do with this situation? Be a terrible advisor and tell her to break up with him right away? Or should I be a good advisor and help her act appropriately in this relationship?

I'm good at things like that... better to hide it.

"Maybe you're just not used to it because you've never been close to anyone. But now you have me."

I said, straightening my posture and raising an eyebrow confidently.

"Besides, I'm a woman too, so you don't need to be embarrassed."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You can practice with me first what it would be like to be with someone. Then try with Tham."

I reached out to her.

"Give me your hand, Kew."

"Huh?"

"Hold my hand. It's just a rehearsal."

Kewalin looked at me as if she was thinking about it, but then extending her hand as I asked. Her warm hand brought me a feeling of longing, as it had been a long time since I had touched her. I shook her hand firmly.

"So? What does holding my hand make you feel?"

"Well... it's okay, I guess. I'm kind of embarrassed since I don't usually touch anyone."

"It's okay. We're close. If you want to try something with Tham but are shy..."

I leaned towards her, looking directly into her beautiful brown eyes.

"You can practice with me first."

Holding hands more loosely, Kewalin began to intertwine her fingers with mine and also leaned forward, without hesitation. Her voice came out sweet, almost seductive:

"Having a close friend is really wonderful."

. .

She's so naive, I was ready to devour her at any moment.

As I accompanied Kewalin home using the subway and then a pickup truck to enter the alley (I didn't bring the car today), all I could think was:

***'How can I get closer to her tonight, that girl who smells so good?'***

And as I was wandering, I suddenly realized that we were already in front of her house.

"Um, where are you going?"

When I heard Kewalin's voice, I stopped immediately. I had walked past the gate of the house. She pointed to her house with her thumb, which made me a little confused.

"Is this your house, Kew?"

"Ann, you've never been here? And you say we're close?"

I was a little embarrassed by the question, but Kewalin smiled slightly and beckoned me with her finger, as if she were joking.

"I'm just kidding. I've never invited friends over to my house. Almost no one knows anyone here. No need to be scared."

"Oh, that's right. I only know the apartment near the college. That's why

I've never been here. But don't you live there anymore?"

"I still have the rent, but my mother has been worried since the accident and forced me to move back home for now. Once this period is over, she should relax more. Do you want to move in or do you want to come in or are you leaving now?"

"I don't know..."

I made a doubtful face and sent her a suggestive look, as if I wanted her to insist that I come in.

But...

"It's already late..."

"Well, it's really late. How scary, especially with you, so beautiful. Too dangerous."

She was clearly trying to get me back home. But not today. Either way, I needed to find an excuse to spend the night here.

Kewalin chuckled softly and waved me in.

"Then come in for a bit. Then, when you leave, I'll drive you."

I looked at the medium-sized, two-story house and couldn't help but smile. The house looked like radiate a feeling of warmth and coziness. I hadn't seen anything like it in Bangkok for a long time. The second floor was made of wood, while the first was made of concrete, painted light gray.

We walked past the front of the house, where there were lots of bushes and the smell of Indian pine trees, until we entered. Despite the Thai heat, the house was surprisingly cool. A sweet, but slightly older voice came from inside, shouting when it noticed our arrival.

"Have you arrived, daughter?"

A middle-aged woman appeared, looking at me in surprise, but soon smiling.

"Did you bring a friend home? Is that the one who visited you in the hospital?"

I clasped my hands together in bow to greet Kewalin's mother.

It seemed like she was already a little used to me. But, surprised expression, she didn't expect her daughter to bring someone home.

"I'm surprised, you brought a friend home."

"Ann just came to bring me home, but I'll take her back later. We're like this, taking care of each other."

Kewalin spoke in a relaxed manner, but the words warmed my heart.

It was as if there was a hidden affection in her voice and the words she said.

But... I had no plans to go home.

"Have you eaten yet?"

"Yes, mom. I'm going to show Ann the house. When friends come over, we have to show them the house, right?"

Kewalin turned to me, looking uncertain. I nodded in agreement.

"That depends on the lady of the house. What do you have to show here?"

"Oh, nothing much. Just my room."

"Then let's go to the room."

I smiled innocently and let her lead the way. After all, when you visit a friend's house, it's normal to go to their room, right? Stay in the living room with your mother is very uncomfortable. This is the case everywhere. In fact, that's exactly why I came here...

Kewalin led me to the room on the second floor. As soon as she opened the door, the scent of cherry blossom enveloped me, leaving me momentarily enchanted. I smiled at her.

"Even here the smell is so characteristic of you, Kew."

"I don't know. I like that smell. Whenever someone smells it, they say: 'Kew is here!' It's like the smell came before me."

Kewalin's room was white and simple. Even the sheets showed that she was a practical but organized person. The furniture was all modular, and some of it didn't even match the space. But who cares? The bedroom is for sleeping, not for rehearsing extravagant soap opera scenarios.

I looked curiously around the 4x5 meter square room until I stopped at the dressing table. A small bottle of brown body spray caught my eye.

I picked it up and turned to her.

"Can I try it?"

"Depending on the person, sweat can change the smell."

"It's true. You suit that perfume. I know it."

I looked at her and commented on the sensations:

"Did you know that smell affects emotions? I once talked to the owner of a perfume store, and he said that almost all the girlfriends he had were because of the perfumes he wore. If you want to win Tham over, you have to use smell to your advantage."

"But I already have my signature scent."

"I mean you need to wear perfume in the right places, where men like it."

"What places?"

"Like in the neck, for example."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I've had girlfriends. I like necks."

I answered honestly, curious about her reaction. Do you remember our first time, Kewalin? I spent so much time on your neck. Although, to be honest, I started somewhere else...

It was not at all hygienic.

"Is there something that interesting on the neck? If it were on the chest or lower..."

Kewalin looked at lower areas, with a provocative look.

"Want to try?"

I took the body spray, sprayed it on my wrist, rubbed it in, and gently applied it to my own neck.

"Come closer and feel it. It might make you feel something."

Kewalin hesitated a bit, looking at me as if she were evaluating me. I held her gaze and laughed.

"Oh, you won't have the courage? And you still want to have a boyfriend? I'm just teaching you how to win over Tham."

"I'm not afraid. I'm just a little hesitant... But I'll try. I'm not one to be afraid of anything."

It seems my provocation worked. Kewalin slowly approached and lowered her face towards my neck. I stood still, waiting, but a shiver took over me when her cold lips touched my neck and went up to bite my ear.

"K-Kew..."

"Yes?"

"What are you doing?"

She gave my ear a gentle bite and pulled away, smiling mischievously.

"I guess necks don't have that much of an effect on me... It seems like they have more of an effect on you."

My mouth fell open, but I quickly closed it. I felt like a tiger that had just been tamed. Anger at being provoked coursed through my body like a shock.

"I admit I felt like it."

I replied casually.

"It's a weak point of mine. But, Kew, you're very good. Even without experience, you know how to provoke me."

"..."

"Do you remember anything?"

There was silence between us. Kewalin looked at me for a moment and shrugged.

"Should I remember something?"

"I don't know. I asked just to ask."

"Are you leaving now? I'll take you."

Kewalin changed the subject immediately, even when we were talking well before. I noticed that the atmosphere had changed, and I liked that.

Something out of the ordinary always leads to unusual situations!

"Can I not leave?"

"What?"

"I want to spend the night here."

"I've never spent the night with anyone."

"Then try spending the night with me."

"..."

"Let's see what happens."

# 18.Kiss

To be honest, Kewalin is pretty easy to get along with. When I asked to sleep here, she didn’t even frown or complain. Although she seemed surprised, she accepted without any problems. I think she was also curious to try it out.

The perfumed girl took out a neatly folded T-shirt and shorts and handed them to me along with a towel that smelled like freshly washed fabric softener.

What a caring woman, my God.

"Will it work?"

"Our bodies are similar. It will fit, yes."

"Do I need to wear underwear to sleep?"

Kewalin asked with a naive expression.

"I don't have any other clean ones to lend you, just mine. Do you mind?"

"Who wears underwear to bed? But even if you did, I wouldn't care."

I've already explored every inch of her body, so why would I care? Besides, I wasn't even planning on wearing clothes to bed from the beginning.

Kewalin, did you know that my permission to sleep here came with very malicious intentions?

I just smiled and went to take a shower in the bathroom outside on the second floor.

I'm not the type to worry too much about cleansing rituals, because I already consider myself clean enough, so it didn't take me long. When I was done, it was Kewalin's turn, who spent more than half an hour in the shower. This made me curious: what on earth does this perfumed girl rub so much into her body?

Meanwhile, I threw myself onto the bed, breathing in the soft scent of cherry blossoms on the pillows and bedding. Suddenly, I heard Kewalin cough, which made me jump, as if I had been caught doing something wrong. She smiled and narrowed her eyes at me, with a look that said, *'You're kind of weird, aren't you?'.*

"You look like one of those old perverts in Japanese anime, burying their faces in schoolgirl underwear!"

"How absurd! Your room smells so good that I ended up smelling everything around here."

Kewalin sat down next to me. The scent of soap mixed with a hint of Cherry Blossom on her body made me want to bring my nose closer again.

The girl, who was already ready to sleep, even applied some body spray.

If it weren't for the fact that she supposedly had amnesia, I would have thought she was taunting me, wanting me to attack her right then and there.

"Funny how you only compliment the smell of the room."

"I want to compliment you too... so beautiful, so fragrant."

I looked at her with a teasing smile, the same look I usually use when I want to flirt with men for fun. Kewalin gave a small smile and pushed my face back with her hand, making me almost fall.

"What's that look on your face, player?"

"Do you think I'm a player?"

"Very much! If you were a man, I'd run away. I'm sure you'd be the type to use it and throw it away."

As she spoke, I shook my head, like a desperate man trying to convince a woman that she is not a scoundrel.

"No way! I already told you that I love my girlfriend very much."

"Well, I already told you that I believe in actions more than words. I'm that kind of person."

"So what do I need to do to make you believe?"

"You don't have to do anything. You're not even my girlfriend." Those words were like a punch to the stomach. I was speechless.

Noticing my silence, Kewalin changed the subject.

"It's the first time a friend has come to sleep here at my house. It's a strange feeling. My mother even asked me several times if you were really just a friend. She doesn't understand why I let someone sleep here, since I like my privacy so much."

"And why did you let me, then?"

"I don't know how to explain it, it felt like a challenge. Like, if I didn't let you, you would look at me with disdain, thinking I didn't have the courage. It's just a friend sleeping over, after all. But, I don't know... I didn't want to lose."

"What a strange reason."

"That's right."

"Think of it as a new experience. Who knows, maybe you'll even like it, and then I'll come sleep here more often."

I took the opportunity to slide my hand lightly down her white arm.

"You have such soft skin! What do you use?"

But Kewalin still looked alert. She pulled her arm back and began scratching it, as if in apology. It's okay... we still have all night.

There is no one I want... and can't have.

Oh, I almost forgot... I've had her before. She just doesn't remember.

"It's just a regular moisturizer."

"So soft! Different from mine. Look, I even have a lot of hair on my arms."

I raised my arm to show her, looking innocent. Kewalin looked at my arm and then at my face.

"You're mixed race, right? They're usually hairier."

She leaned back with her arms behind her, relaxed, and began to ask more about me.

"I never really asked... what are you half-breed?"

"You asked, but you forgot."

"And after all, what?"

"Half human, half ghost."

I laughed and waved my hand.

"Can we not talk about this?"

"Why?"

"Because I don't know where I'm from either. The first time you asked, I already felt uncomfortable."

Kewalin stared at me, curious. This made me look away.

"If you don't want to talk, that's fine."

When I realized she wouldn't insist, I looked at her again. What an incredible woman... She doesn't insist, she doesn't ask more than necessary.

That's why I chose her.

"I didn't say you can't ask."

"But it seems like you don't want to talk about it."

"Do you want to know?"

"I want very much."

The words spoken by the sweet girl from the dental school made me laugh.

I shrugged lightly and began to talk.

"I don't know what country my father is from. My mother doesn't know either... I mean, it's... hmm... I try to make things about myself not seem so serious."

I repeated the sentence.

"My mother's profession has a lot to do with men. She deals with many and makes money..."

Suddenly, someone with a perfumed body hugged me and pressed her face against her collarbone, making me smell the sweet scent of orange blossoms. Suddenly, the weakness I never thought I would show surged in my chest. Trying to laugh only made my body tremble more.

"I don't want to know anymore, you don't need to say anything."

"Well, when someone asks me what ethnicity I am, I will say that I am half

English, Danish, Portuguese, German, French... haha!"

I hugged her back and laughed involuntarily, my voice muffled against the neck of whoever was hugging me. I realized my lips were touching her soft skin, but it wasn't something that made me want to seduce or make my heart flutter.

"You're disgusted by me, are you?"

"Why would I be disgusted? We're talking like close friends."

Kewalin pulled away from me and cupped my face with both hands. It was the first time we had been this close since she recovered.

"Why do I feel so comfortable around you like this?"

"What do you mean comfortable?"

"It's like we've been this close before, but... never mind."

Kewalin smiled.

"Well, I guess I know you a little better now, to be fair. You're not the only one who knows me."

"No, I don't know much about you. You don't tell me much."

"So that means we're not close?"

"Then let's get intimate. Tell me, Kew, is there anything you've never told anyone?"

Kewalin thought for a moment and shook her head.

"No, I won't tell."

"That's not fair."

"I'm afraid you'll look at me strangely."

"I think what I just told you must be stranger than what you're going to say."

I sat cross-legged and stared at Kewalin.

"So, tell me, is there a secret you've never told anyone? Secrets should be shared with close friends."

"Oh, is that it? You're my close friend, right? So... it's okay."

Kewalin looked at me hesitantly before speaking.

"But it's a secret just between us."

"Ah!"

I felt excited like a child, although this secret might not be that important. Kewalin looked at me, after a brief moment of hesitation, and said:

*"I want to have sex."*

Silence immediately fell between us. I began to hear the sound of crickets outside, something I had never noticed before. We stared at each other, and I was the one who broke the silence.

"That's normal. Our age is full of hormones. We want to explore."

I smiled inwardly. She suddenly started talking about it, as if she was giving me an easier path to get closer. It would be easy to act like she meant well and take it slow, taking off Kewalin’s clothes. Just thinking about it gave me shivers of excitement.

"Have you ever had sex?"

"Yes, I used to have sex with women."

I said it directly.

Kewalin looked interested.

"And is it the same as having something with a man?"

"I managed to get her there, maybe even better than a man."

I tried to show that having something with a person of the same sex was no big deal, but Kewalin still seemed hesitant and didn't think it would work.

"Nature made us for men and women to relate to each other."

She said.

"Many relationships end because of the bed. Women leave their husbands to be with a lesbian, and husbands leave their wives to be with a gay man." Kewalin nodded in agreement.

"Nowadays, society is more open, and everyone knows that, in the darkest corner, these things happen."

"Since I'm dating Tham, should I have sex with him? I want to know what

it's like."

"..."

"I want to try."

Kewalin's words made me tense, both with anger and jealousy. Just imagining her throwing herself into Tham's arms, being undressed by him, I couldn't hold it in any longer.

"What makes you want to try so hard?"

"I've had dreams... like, salesmen, you know? I dreamed I was having sex and it felt good. But when I woke up, it was gone. If I went with a man, it would be a sweet dream, but... being a woman, it's..."

"You don't know how to deal with this, do you?"

I spoke directly, approaching her gently.

"Here's what we can do, as close friends. I've helped women experience pleasure before."

"..."

"Why don't you try me first?"

"You idiot!"

Kewalin pushed my face and laughed.

"Who tries things like that with friends? I was just telling you that this is my secret, not saying we're going to try it now."

"What if you're with Tham and something unexpected happens?"

"Then let nature take its course."

"Just touching your hand at the movies, you don't like that, do you? And you know what happens in sex. There's a lot to do. Having a close friend like me would give you a good opportunity."

Kewalin looked at me and smiled.

"You're teasing me, aren't you?"

We were silent for a moment. What was I supposed to do to not seem so eager? Yes, I was here for this. If it didn't happen today, I would miss the golden opportunity. When I wanted something, I never failed to get it.

"Feel free to think whatever you want. But I'll warn you, this isn't an opportunity that comes around every day. A lot of people would like to kiss someone like me."

"I believe you. You're beautiful. I bet you attracts both men and women."

Kewalin tilted her head, studying me.

"You have a charming air that makes any woman sigh."

"Wouldn't you like to have me, Kew?"

Now it felt like we were playing a game. Each sentence seemed to be followed by a pause to think before answering, and then Kewalin said in a seductive voice:

"I would like."

My heart raced at what she said. Kewalin was sitting normally, but she moved closer to me until our noses were almost touching.

"Try..."

I swallowed hard and quickly summarized the situation so we could be straightforward.

"What do you want to try?"

"Kissing."

"Oh, I'm good at that."

I leaned forward, ready to invade her personal space, but Kewalin held up her hand to push me away.

"But if I kiss you, what will happen? I just wanted to know what it would be like with Tham."

Kewalin seemed to want to pull away, as if she had realized what was happening.

But I wasn't going to let the chance slip away. I pulled the collar of her blouse to bring her closer and said quickly:

"What if I was the person you loved? Then you would know how it would feel."

"Is that something you can imagine?"

"Yes, imagine that now..."

I approached and kissed her lips softly, without forcing anything. Kewalin seemed surprised, but soon gave in. I already knew her well and knew where to touch to make her give in. My hand went up to the top button of the silk blouse she was wearing, and I realized she wasn't wearing a bra. Before I finished what I was saying, I said quickly:

"I'm Tham."

But before the first button was opened, I was pushed away.

***"Rascal!"***

The slap was so hard that my head snapped to the side, and a sharp pain shot through my face. I blinked, not knowing how to react. Kewalin clenched her hand tightly, scared, before running to hug me, speaking quickly:

"Sorry, Ann. Are you okay? I didn't mean to."

"You didn't mean to, but you hit me hard."

I gritted my teeth in anger as I replied, but Kewalin hugged me, using a gentle tone:

"I was imagining Tham touching me, and when I thought about it, I felt sick. I'm sorry."

"Did you hit because you felt sick of Tham?"

My heart felt lighter, and I stepped back a little, looking at Kewalin.

"You didn't hit me because you found me disgusting..."

"How could I be disgusted by you?"

"..."

"I don't feel anything for you."

# 19.Kewalin's Power

I'm not sure if I got slapped by her hand or her foot... Now my cheek is so swollen that even the friend I had arranged to go out with made a point of commenting when she saw the abnormality. Seriously, a simple slap should have already reduced the swelling, right? But look at that... it almost looks like an inflamed wisdom tooth!

"I think your ex took a hit on you. Pretending to forget, she used a little charm game, gave you a kiss and, right after, slapped you in the face, before hugging you and apologizing. So what? What kind of emotional state did you come to meet us in? So angry that you're going to faint or so hungry for her that your chest is going to explode?"

"Both! So much anger and desire! My God, I've never slept over at someone's house and had to endure so much. This was the first time I went after prey and came away with nothing!"

It was the biggest blow to my dignity. We were almost kissing and opening the buttons of her shirt when the smelly person slapped me so hard in the face that it felt like I was in a boxing ring! It was so hard that I almost passed out.

The whole mood was ruined, and even though she kept trying to comfort me with hugs all night, it didn't make me feel any better.

But most of all, when I woke up in the morning and saw Kawalin still sleeping soundly, with that soft snoring so adorable, and the sunlight illuminating her face in such a charming way, I ended up leaning over and giving her a light kiss... completely forgetting that the night before I had been slapped.

Contradictory, right?

Oh, and of course, I didn't tell my friends about this little romantic moment.

It doesn't suit me. Even I think it looks like a scene from a soap opera.

"So, what's up? Have you given up yet?"

Pupe asked, taking a sip of the iced coffee she had just received, sighing in satisfaction shortly after.

"Give up? No way! A person like me, Anna, never gives up. She's my girlfriend, you know?"

"Girlfriend? Normally you prefer to call it '*close friend*'."

"But she's special."

"And what are you going to do now? Are you going to sleep at her house again?"

"I'll find a way to get as close to Kew as possible. That also means getting in between Tham and her. At least yesterday's slap showed me that Tham won't be able to get to Kew that easily."

"Maybe she hit you just to get revenge, but with Tham maybe she'll even accept taking off her clothes..."

I glared at MaMiew, who let out a mischievous giggle like a lizard.

"I've never seen you jealous before!"

"Jealous, me?"

"Ah, so you didn't see your own face when you were staring mortally upon hearing that Kewalin could be touched by another man."

"Be quiet!"

My voice was so loud that the entire cafe turned to look, and I found myself surprised by what my friend had said.

"Wait, is that jealousy?"

"It is!"

"AND!"

Something new always happens to me, even this silly feeling of jealousy, which I never understood in people, whether men or women, when they made this kind of drama because of me. But now... just imagining Tham reaching out to touch Kewalin, pulling her in for a kiss...

*Thud!*

"What it was?"

I banged the table hard, so caught up in my imagination that I scared my friends. I took out my cell phone and sent a message to Kawalin, even though I was frowning at her that morning.

**Anna**:

What are you going to do today?

**Kewalin**:

I have a lunch date with Tham. I was going to invite you.

**Anna**:

I'll go.

**Kewalin**:

Aren't you even going to ask where it is?

**Anna**:

Wherever it is, I'll go.

Okay, I've already gone through ten chapters of this story and only now have I realized that I'm incredibly jealous. Kewalin arranged to have lunch with Tham near the university, because they study together.

I'm the only one who seems like a fish out of water, coming from so far away, since I study somewhere else. Tham, in turn, he kept looking at me, with a smile that said he was loving my presence, as if I had come all this way because of him.

No way.

Oh my God... I'm going to throw up!

"Anna, you seem pretty busy, don't you have class?"

Tham asked as he chewed. I looked at that handsome face and grimaced slightly.

"I'm calm now. I've sorted everything out, I'm ready to graduate."

"Even so, you came all the way here."

"Of course, right? A close friend is calling me and I can't miss it."

"Are you that close, friends?"

Tham looked at Kewalin.

"It must be someone who doesn't have many friends."

"Actually, most of them are boyfriends."

I snapped, making Tham straighten up in his chair, clearly irritated by what I said. Did he want to provoke me? Of all people, he's dating Kawalin, but still has feelings for me? How pathetic! He still has the nerve to think that I have feelings for him.

Poor guy...

Today's conversation was just me and Tham teasing each other, while

Kewalin remained silent, seeming to have been in a bad mood since he arrived. I couldn't resist asking my sweet, sweet-smelling, short-coatwearing darling, whose sight never tires me:

"Kew, is everything okay? Why are you so quiet?"

"I'm irritated."

I immediately put my hand to my cheek, but Kawalin shook her head.

"It's not because of that."

"Then why?"

Tham was the only one who didn't understand what was going on, and I had no intention of explaining it either. Kewalin glared at the table behind him, before calmly standing up, picking up the glass of green tea with syrup.

Tham and I watched in surprise as Kewalin poured the contents of the cup over a student's head, drenching him completely.

The noise in the cafe immediately stopped, as if someone had pressed the "Mute" button on the remote control, as everyone watched in astonishment as the attitude of my sweetheart.

"What are you doing, Kew?"

I stood up abruptly and went to her, while the boy who had having just had water thrown on his head, he remained motionless, as if he already knew why he had been targeted.

"Can you stop stalking me, okay? This is sick and visually assaulting. It's pathetic. What kind of person needs to hear more than ten times that they don't love you back, but insists on continuing? You passed the entrance exam for a good university, you have knowledge, but you act like someone with no common sense. If, after all this, you continue to follow me, next time I'll bring a knife to stab you. Or a gun, and I'll shoot you.

Remember this well."

Kewalin’s firmness left me speechless. She walked up to Tham and held his hand, leaving everyone in the room stunned.

"And this is my boyfriend! I already told you I have a boyfriend, but you don't believe me and you keep insisting. If you don't have a sports car, a coefficient above 3.8 or millionaire parents, don't even think about coming near me."

"..."

"Know this!"

Kewalin and Tham walked out of the café hand in hand, while I stood there, stunned, watching the scene. The friends of the boy who had been doused with water also fell silent, clearly shocked. Trying to remedy the situation, I grabbed a napkin and began to dry the student's head, trying to help him without showing contempt, since I felt a responsibility for what Kewalin had done.

"Are you okay? No, wait... Of course you're not. But don't cry. If a woman hurts you, just accept it and move on. Crying will only make you seem more pitiful. I'm saying this for your own good."

The young man looked at me with red eyes, holding back tears that seemed about to fall, and asked with a trembling voice, while looking at my university pin:

"Who are you? Kewalin's friend?"

"Yes."

"Why is she so cruel?"

"Everyone is different. We are all created differently. But remember: the saying 'money buys everything' does not apply to all women."

As I spoke, I felt as if I was talking to myself, as if I was trying to remember that this was a side of Kewalin that I didn't know. Before the accident, I only knew the good side of her: a kind person, with a sweet smile, who always did what I wanted, spoke pleasantly. I had never seen such a cruel side before.

"Is liking her such a big mistake?"

"There are so many women in the world. If you can't get her, just look for someone else."

"Do people's hearts change so easily?"

I reached out with the napkin to wipe the dejected boy's face and smiled at him.

"Of course it changes. A person's heart can change at any moment."

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Was today the end of the world or what?

I had planned to disturb Kewalin and Tham, but I ended up creating an opportunity for them to calmly leave the restaurant hand in hand. And as I was walking to the car, which was parked to take me back to my apartment, someone was already waiting for me.

"Did it again, huh."

Tham's voice made me close my eyes briefly before I turned to face him. Kewalin wasn't with him, which puzzled me.

"Where is Kewalin?"

"She went to class, she has another one now."

"And why are you here waiting for your 'girlfriend's' friend?"

"I want to talk. I don't understand why you seduced that idiot."

The derogatory tone he used to refer to the student I had apologized to just now made my lips curl immediately. Who does Tham think he is to control me like this? But, oh well...

"I didn't seduce anyone. He was emotionally hurt, I just went to apologize on Kew's behalf."

"It's not your responsibility to do this, Ann. Don't you realize how attractive you are? Doing something like this makes men think you're insinuating yourself."

"You can think what you want. If I was insinuating myself, would I have gotten anything out of me? No... So, enough nonsense. Go study. I'm leaving."

I made to open the car door, but Tham pushed it closed again, determined to continue the conversation.

"I don't like this. If you don't feel anything for me, then don't show up in front of me so much. That's just trying to get in the way. Why do you get so involved with Kewalin?"

*Because she's my fucking woman!*

"Kewalin and I are friends. She invited me to eat, so I came. Don't complicate things."

"You complicate everything. If you like me, just say so. Are you ready if I break up with Kewalin right now!"

Tham's proposal made my eyes widen. I stared at him, seeing how serious he looked, and I almost wished he would break up with her right then.

"Then it break up with her."

"And will you date me?"

"Never."

"Then I won't ended it."

Your problem!

I almost blurted out this reply, but was interrupted by my cell phone ringing.

It was an unknown number, but I was grateful for the interruption, as this conversation was becoming unbearable.

"Hello?"

[H-hey... I'm the guy who got water on his head at the restaurant...]

I frowned slightly, looking at Tham before taking about four steps away to answer the call. I think his name was... Sap?

"Oh, hi. What's up, Sap?"

[I wanted to call you to thank you. You made me feel better.]

"No need to thank me, but I'm curious. How did you get my number?"

[Well... My friend works as a waiter at the restaurant where you was. You used your loyalty card to pay, so he gave your details to me. You're not mad, are you?]

*I am yes!*

I could get that clerk fired for leaking customer information like that. But considering what Kewalin did to this guy, I figured that was the least of it.

"Okay. But you're feeling better now, right?"

[Yes, I am. Your words made me think.]

"What did I say?"

I had said so many things that I didn't even remember. All to keep him from thinking about taking revenge or suing Kewalin.

[You said people's hearts can change. I think I've managed to change mine.]

"Impressive. Usually, people don't change so quickly."

[I changed because of you. Your words, your gaze...]

Please don't say that.

[People's hearts really can change. And now... I've changed. From liking Dr. Kew to liking you, Anna Hokki.]

I hung up immediately, feeling a chill run down my spine. Tham, who had been watching my call the whole time without knowing who I was talking to, seemed curious.

"What's wrong? Why that face?"

"Nothing. I'm going to leave now. Oh, and you don't even need to come talk to me alone again. I don't like it."

*Tiring!*

I pressed the button to unlock the car, quickly got in, started the engine and accelerated. What a bizarre situation! It felt like I was being chased by a madman. Maybe Kewalin acted that way because he was at his limit.

What about me? I was just picking up the stick she left behind.

# 20.Almost

But I still remain myself. I always turn crises into opportunities. I quickly called Kewalin to consult about "*Sap*," the man who called me, harassed me, and left me completely scared.

"Would it be a problem if I asked to spend another night there?"

"Of course not, staying togetheir is safer. If something happens, we can help each other."

I won't let it slip away this time...

To be honest, the man called "Sap" really gives me the creeps. After he got my number, my contact information automatically appeared on the messaging app, even without me wanting it to. And from then on, he started sending stickers and messages non-stop, asking:

*'Where are you?'*

*'What are you doing?'*

*'Are you home yet?'*

Not even my mother cares that much!

I started to feel a slight irritation. I think Kewalin had been accumulating this kind of discomfort for a long time, but it ended up exploding on the day I was with her.

"You shouldn't have messed with that guy. When you saw me leave, you should have gone after him. You stood there trying to comfort him, like you were a good Samaritan."

Kewalin looked at me with a smile on the corner of her mouth.

"Always throwing charm around."

I felt a little uncomfortable, like I was being teased. But somehow, something about what she said made me feel good.

The perfumed girl now spoke more playfully to me. That means we've become more intimate, doesn't it?

"I just wanted to help a colleague. It has nothing to do with charm. What you did today was very aggressive. Think about it, what if Sap..."

"I didn't even know his name. You're so good at dealing with people that you already figured out his name. Such a womanizer, huh?"

Why do I feel like every word the perfumed girl says seems to hurt me today?

*Is she jealous of me?*

"I haven't even finished talking. Think about it, what if this guy takes what you did seriously, files a complaint or takes it to the university? What will happen to you?"

"I would tell the truth, that he chased me. I was just defending myself."

"But he never hurt you."

"But he harassed me. And now, it seems like you're being targeted by him... Look, he keeps sending these annoying, nosy messages."

The word "nosy" used by Kewalin left me wondering if she was either cursing at me or cursing at the sender of the messages. But the constant sounds from the app were unbearable, so I turned off the notifications with a sigh.

What the hell, am I never going to get a moment of peace?

"Am I bothering you by sleeping here tonight?"

"Why do you think that?"

"You look irritated."

Kewalin looked at me for a moment and then sat down on the bed, as if trying to contain her emotions. She patted the mattress next to her, telling me to sit down-practically forcing me. I obeyed, like a docile kitten.

"Sorry. I'm stressed out about studying."

She didn't say anything, but I could tell that wasn't quite right. Maybe she was worried about me, or maybe she was bothered by my "playing the charm," as I had mentioned before. How interesting. This girl with amnesia can't fool me...

"No problem, I can leave."

I crossed my arms, pretending to be afraid.

"I don't want to make you uncomfortable."

I stood up, but Kewalin grabbed my elbow, forcing me to sit down again.

"You're not bothering me. I already told you that you can sleep here with me. What kind of friend do you think I am?"

"Close friend."

I replied smiling. Kewalin shrugged and told me to go take a shower.

"Another night we'll sleep together. Two nights in a row, huh."

"That's right. Yesterday I got slapped, what will happen today?"

The perfumed girl had a surprised expression, as if she felt guilty. I laughed, mocking her.

"Are you still mad at me?"

"If I don't get slapped today, I won't stay."

"Silly. Who slaps their friends all the time? I promise it won't happen today."

I smiled, satisfied. That meant today would be easier. I planned to pretend to be scared so the perfumed girl could comfort me a little. When we look vulnerable, everyone wants to protect us.

Even though, deep down, I'm always the one controlling the game...

And everything went back to the same cycle. We both took a shower and threw ourselves into the bed with white sheets, white blankets, in a white room. Am I in a temple or a convent? All I can think of in my head are scenes from adult films.

"Today you held Tham's hand. It seems like you're starting to get used to him."

I commented first. Kewalin nodded slightly, as if she had remembered that as well.

"Yeah, but as soon as we left the restaurant, I let go of his hand. It's still weird."

"And Tham didn't say anything?"

"He didn't seem to care. In fact, I feel like he's empty, like he doesn't feel anything for me. To tell you the truth, his gaze towards you has more meaning."

"You're thinking too much."

I tried to change the subject.

"We've only met twice. How could he look at me meaningfully?" "Actually, it was Tham's idea to invite you to eat with us. It seems like he wanted to see you more than have dinner with me. Does he like you and is pretending to be interested in me?"

"Don't think about it."

"That's right. If it's true, he's a player."

I felt a little uncomfortable with Kewalin's last sentence, but at the same time, I felt like she wasn't talking about Tham, but about me.

"You're jealous, aren't you, Kew?"

"Very."

"Do you like Tham that much?"

"What do you think?"

My heart sank a little, but part of me thought she didn't talking about Tham, but about me. If Kewalin is really faking amnesia, then this is a game she plays to provoke me and have fun seeing how I deal with it.

"I feel strangely alone."

I murmured, getting her attention.

"Why?"

"My best friend has a boyfriend."

I looked at her with a hurt look.

"You said you wanted to have sex, didn't you? You know that for us women, when we have sex with our partners, it's hard to separate love from sex. When you get involved with Tham, you'll get attached to him and forget about me."

"How absurd, how did you come to that conclusion?"

"It's just that for most women, it's like that."

"Have you ever had sex with men?"

"No, but most of the women I've been involved with have ended up getting attached to me."

"Are you saying you're like a man to them? And you've never gotten attached to any of them?"

"I hadn't found the right person yet. When I did, it was already too late." I was silent for a moment.

"But I tried everything to stay close to her, and I think what I did wasn't that bad."

"Who will be your girlfriend? Next time, introduce her to me!"

"You will definitely meet her."

I leaned closer to Kewalin. We both stared into each other's eyes for a long time, until the sound of a message on my Line rang about four times. We didn't even need to look to know who it was, both the smelly person and I could guess right away.

"It's him again, right?"

"I say this guy has some mental problem. I'm really scared now."

I huddled closer to Kewalin.

"He must be right in front of your house now."

"But from what I've been through being followed by him, he hasn't gone that far yet. You don't need to be afraid."

Kewalin reached out and patted me gently on the back as a way of comforting me. Then, I hugged her and pulled her closer.

I have to get it... tonight, I have to get it.

"Will you be able to sleep? Suddenly you have to deal with this. I don't know what to do."

"What if I can't sleep, what are we going to do? Do you want to watch a movie?"

"My room doesn't have a TV."

"We can watch it on our cell phones. There are lots of movies on the internet. What do you want to watch? I'll watch it with you, but I'm the type of person who falls asleep while watching it."

"So, it has to be an exciting film, so we stay up until the end to watch it together."

I smiled slightly and then thought of an American movie, always in the style of women falling in love with other women. "Chloé", the story of a young woman who falls in love with an older woman, married with children, but who feels lonely because her husband and children do not pay attention to her. The protagonist is stunning, with beautiful eyes and full lips.

The plot is well-paced, without being over the top, but still engaging, as everything is told from Chloé's perspective, as if it were a first-person narrative. The film defines the concept of eroticism well. As I watched it, my heart beat a little faster. I was really looking forward to this movie would make Kewalin feel...

The nearly two-hour film, which Kewalin was watching attentively, made me start to snuggle closer. I reached out to play with the button on her shirt collar, like a child playing with a towel, until the important scene arrived... The sex scene.

In fact, the film has several scenes like this, but the scene of two women making love is the only one. The bodies of the doctor and Chloé touch in a way that beautiful, with light and shadows, soundtrack and the expressions of the actresses that the director tries to convey. I could hear Kewalin's heart beating, not so loud that it almost exploded in my ears, but I could still feel that she was excited by this scene.

"That was really beautiful"

Kewalin said, after the scene had passed. I nodded and 8I secretly observed the reactions of those around me to see how involved she was, and then I couldn't help but smile.

That's right... She's involved.

"A woman's body has curves, nature created it to be attractive. We might like to look at men with a little more muscle because they look more defined, right? But it's the same thing... We have curvy breasts and hips, which are interesting. And that's without even mentioning the skin, which is smoother than men's."

I ran my hand over Kewalin's cheek.

"Your skin is also smooth." "Your hands are also gentle."

Now it was my turn...

I slowly slid my hand from Kewalin's cheek to her jaw, before moving down to her shoulder. So as not to scare her, I slowly brought my face closer and used my breath to touch her neck, without letting my skin touch hers.

Kewalin's breathing began to get heavier and heavier, without she realized why. The perfumed person's hands began to touch my body awkwardly, gripping the hem of my shirt tightly. This gave me the confidence to turn around and climb on top of her, using my nose to slowly move down her neck, past her clothes. I had to be slow...

She was so involved that she didn't even realize what was happening. I didn't allow my palm to touch anywhere, letting Kewalin couldn't hold it in anymore and ask for it herself. In the end, it was the fragrant person who used her hand to gently pull my hair and raised her face to stare at me.

Silence...

Not a word was spoken between us, not even a kiss.

*'Do something...'*

Kewalin's eyes said so. So, I slowly went down, lifting her shirt slowly.

A perfumed person's weakness is here... in the belly. I gave Kewalin a soft kiss on her belly button and used the tip of my tongue to caress around it, teasingly. A sigh came out of the perfumed person's mouth, and that made me lose focus, starting to want to do something more intense. My hand slowly went down the person's pants, but she held my wrist.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't you want to know what Chloe did to the doctor?"

"That's kind of weird." "Think this is just Tham, okay?"

***Push!***

Suddenly, my body was thrown backwards, falling off the bed, and my head hit the edge of the writing table. I was there for more than thirty second suntil I realized I had been forcefully pushed out of bed. Then I heard the sound of drops falling to the floor.

"Ann!"

Kewalin's scream left me confused, wondering why it was so loud, until I smelled the rusty scent of blood that was running down my forehead, dripping onto the floor, staining it dark red.

"Um, your head..."

***Knock....Knock....Knock***

The sound of knocking on the door made Kewalin hesitate, not knowing what to do, until she went to open the door. Her mother, seeing me sitting and confused about the blood that was flowing, made an expression of surprise.

"I heard a noise. And why is the blood like that?"

"Ohhh.... "

"Ann fell out of bed."

Kewalin quickly interrupted with a response, but the more she spoke, the more suspicious it seemed, because the direction of the fall was not from the side, but from the foot of the bed. Fortunately, her mother did not suspect much, and focused on my condition.

"Did you hurt your head? Are you going to need stitches?"

Kewalin leaned over to see the wound on my head and smiled.

"But let me stitch it up. I've learned, it's my specialty."

"Then I'll get the first aid kit."

After the door closed, a silence fell over us. What happened before was real and we couldn't deny it. Kewalin stared at me before asking:

"I'm sorry I kicked you so hard. You're not mad, are you?"

I was almost freaking out!

"What can I say? I already warned you that I would be mad if it was a slap, but this wasn't a slap... it was a kick, instead."

"When you said it was "Tham", my legs felt like had springs. I guess it was because I'm not used to it, or something. I'm sorry."

How could I complain about her explanation? This doctor is smart. She even made me bang my head.

"Well, think of it as a good lesson for today. Now knowing that having sex... isn't so bad." "But it's not that deep yet."

Kewalin said with a smile.

"Ann, you are a very good friend. You even teach me about this."

"..."

"Do close friends do that? I just found out."

We stared at each other, and before I could say anything, her mother came in with a first aid kit and handed it to me. Then, the girl took the control of the situation. Her mother watched Kewalin stitching up my wound, but she couldn't stand it and ran away before she could finish. I could only bite my tongue, I couldn't scream. I couldn't cry, I couldn't look weak, I couldn't stand it.

"What good patience, she didn't scream at all."

"I wanted to save my voice to scream in other situations."

"No."

Kewalin quickly declined, which surprised me, before adding something that made my heart skip a beat.

***"I want to be the one to scream."***

# 21.Scream

The words we exchanged had a deep meaning, but we let it slide as we slept until the next morning. Today, Kewalin didn't have class, while I woke up late due to the pain medication I took.

"Anyway, you'll have to get your tetanus shot today."

Kewalin said as she waited for her mother to bring the food she had prepared. Kewalin reached out and looked at my wound with concern, like a good doctor... even if she was from another field.

Today's lunch had three or four dishes, which was plenty for me.

Normally, I would eat just one dish until I was full. When I saw so many options, I was surprised, thinking that since it was just mother and daughter, they wouldn't need to eat so much.

"I got used to had a lot, since my father likes a variety of dishes. So, my mother always makes a lot of food, it became a habit."

Kewalin explained.

"OK I understand."

"Did your mother make it all by herself? That much food?"

"Yes, this one doesn't know how to do anything other than study. Oh, she once tried to make a cake, but it was on the day of that accident."

More...

I swallowed, feeling a mixture of guilt and discomfort. The cake was probably the birthday cake Kewalin had made for me.

Kewalin made a surprised expression when her mother mentioned the cake.

"I made a cake... um... I kind of remember a cake, but why did I make it?"

"It was probably for a friend's birthday, right?"

"But I don't have many friends..."

Kewalin looked at me and said:

"Or did I make the cake for you, Ann?"

I was speechless, I didn't know what to answer, but the person next to me spoke before me.

"But if it was your birthday, you would have told me, right? Or did I forget something? That day wasn't really your birthday, right?"

If this was an attempt to test me, I should answer truthfully.

"What day was the car accident?"

"August 21st."

"So it was my birthday."

"So I made you a birthday cake, Ann?"

Kewalin looked surprised.

"We must be really close for me to have done something like that. But if it was your birthday, why didn't we meet up?"

"If we had met, I would have remembered."

"Yeah, maybe I had an accident on the way to meet you... hmmm."

Kewalin nodded thoughtfully, but didn't ask anything else. After that, the three of us continued eating until we were satisfied. Since I didn't help make the food and I still spent the night at her house, I figured that at least I should help wash the dishes, out of politeness.

And it seemed that this task also fell to Kewalin, so we ended up having more time together while we washed the dishes.

"Does the wound hurt a lot?"

"It's starting to hurt a little."

"It's going to hurt even more. I'm sorry about last night." Kewalin said smiling at me.

"When I heard Tham's name, my leg automatically lifted."

"So next time, I won't say someone else's name."

"Ah, so there will be a next time, right?"

There was silence, and we finally started talking for real, which made me a little embarrassed, but I felt good about finally to be able to clarify what was between us.

"Do you usually do this with all your friends?"

"No."

I replied in the softest voice possible, playing it charming.

"I want to do this with just you."

"Even though I don't have many friends, I know this isn't something friends do."

"And did you enjoy doing this to me?"

Silence...

Now it was my turn to test the person next to me. Kewalin continued washing the dishes, and the sound of the dishes hitting the tap water made the silence even more striking.

"I liked."

I almost smiled, but held it back.

"So, let's do what we like."

"But we're friends."

"Have you ever heard of 'Friends with Benefits'?"

"I've heard of it, I think it's the name of a movie."

"In the film, the man and woman are friends, but they can have sex without commitment."

"So we're basically saying we're going to have sex even though you already have a girlfriend? Is that what we're agreeing to?"

Kewalin stopped washing the dishes and looked at me directly.

"I liked the two of us being together like this, but if we're going to have sex, it'll only be with my boyfriend."

*I, who am your girlfriend, but it's okay, patience, slowly but surely you'll get there.*

"Then let's take it easy."

"You're talking about touching yourself, right?"

"Yeah, do you like it or not? I'll do it any way you want."

"That sounds fun."

"And you'll find out how much fun it is."

.

. .

How did we end up having this conversation? After washing the dishes, we both went upstairs to our room without saying a word. And when we got to our room, we both stood there in silence, looking at each other, not knowing what to do next.

***Creak...***

The sound of the lock being turned by the thumb pressing the handle with Kewalin's delicate hand made my heart beat faster. Although was just an ordinary sound, it gave the strange feeling of being invited in a peculiar way.

The person with the gentle aroma slowly turned around to look at me with her light brown eyes and smiled shyly. "What are we going to do now?"

"What do you want it to be, Kew?"

"I'm new to this... so I'll let you decide and 'lead'."

I approached Kewalin, staying very close to her, without rushing, but It felt like I wanted something, even though my heart was racing like a child going to an amusement park for the first time.

"It has to be slow..."

I leaned my face towards hers, ready to use my lips and touch her, but Kewalin pulled away, which surprised me.

"What it was?"

"First agreement... we won't kiss."

"Why?"

"For me, a kiss is something profound."

"But what we're about to do is even deeper than a kiss."

"I won't kiss."

Kewalin's serious tone made me pause for a moment, and then I nodded, giving up.

"Right."

I changed the position, from my lips to her cheek, using my nose, making a gentle touch like someone who already has experience, and then I went down to Kewalin's neck.

She breathed harder, like someone who was letting herself go, and then took a step back, falling onto the bed with the grace of someone who knew what she was doing.

"No kissing... I can do other things."

I tried to pick up where I left off the night before by swiping down, but it was a little too fast. So I slowly started to I tried to lift Kewalin's shirt to take off her blouse, but she used both hands to stop me.

"Rule number two. No taking off clothes."

"Hm... so how are we going to do this?"

"We do this just for pleasure, don't we?"

I don't understand! What's going on here? But I couldn't get angry and losing my patience at this crucial moment. So I nodded and reached under my shirt, since at least I could still do everything even with clothes on. "Rule number three."

"Is there more?"

I stopped what I was doing, starting to get irritated, not knowing what I had done wrong. Kewalin chuckled as she noticed the frustration I was feeling.

"Just two more rules."

"What?"

"We can't mention other people's names."

"That's easy."

I smiled contentedly before moving down to caress the stomach area, which Kewalin always seemed to be the most sensitive.

"Because that would make me confused."

I was about to pull her pants down when her hand grabbed me tightly.

"Our rule is not to take off our clothes."

"I didn't take anything out. Everything is still in the body, nothing came out."

"But what are you doing..."

"I'm just going down a little further."

"Ah..."

Kewalin had to grab the nearest pillow and cover her face to muffle the sound, and it made me smile. Although the rules were a bit much, they allowed me to get closer to her fragrant body faster than I expected. I had high expectations for this, right up until the last step.

"The fourth rule..."

Kewalin gasped and lifted the pillow covering her face, pulling her body up with difficulty.

"What?"

I, who was starting to lose my mind, was really getting irritated.

How many rules are there? We're almost there...

"You can't put it inside."

"Why?"

"Because this isn't sex, we're just caressing each other."

I bit my lip hard and tried to force a smile, not wanting the person in front of me to notice that I was getting irritated. Okay, there are many ways to pet yourself.

"It's just with my finger, right? Is there anything else that's forbidden? Now, even if an elephant comes to pull me, I won't stop."

I asked about the limitations. Kewalin nodded and smiled.

"There's nothing else. Now, do whatever you want."

I licked my lips and leaned in...

"Put the pillow right on your face. Now, you're going to scream for sure."

# 22.Sex Doll

The five senses — sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing — are the basic senses that all human beings have. But for me, the one that affects my mind the most and stays in my memory the longest is smell.

Kewalin's scent, which makes me think of her all the time. I'm really obsessed, more so than before, when we were together, dating and with a clear couple status.

Now, I only think about her, the fragrant person. I want to see her every day, I want hug, caress, touch. I want to hear that peculiar sound that no one else has heard, right next to my ear...

"You're obsessed, huh?"

Pupe, seeing that I was smiling to myself, commented. I jumped and adjusted my face, as I knew my friend was teasing me.

"What it was?"

"Your girlfriend is good, huh? She makes you think about her every second, even when you're with your friends. Do you usually think about anyone other than yourself?"

It sounded selfish, but I dipped my finger in the water and splashed it on my friend.

"I told you, right? I feel special with Kewalin, and now this is more special than ever."

"You've already had sex, right?"

MaMiew asked smiling, as if sex was something normal, especially among women, since we studied at an all-girls school. Doing something with someone of the same sex was like asking 'Have you eaten today?'.

"It's been a while."

"Oh, so what's with that smile? It's typical of someone who just had sex and is showing off. I know, I studied it."

Pupe said, surprised to see that I was acting so eccentrically.

"And someone like you has never had this kind of reaction before."

"Sex isn't that important in love, is it? Why do you have to keep bringing it up? What do you think of me? That when I meet someone, I have to have sex with everyone?"

"Yes."

I remained silent, looking at my friends and grimacing.

"That's how I was before, but never with men."

"You hate men, don't you?"

Pupe said, knowing me well.

"I don't hate. If that were the case, why would I have so many boyfriends?"

"You just like to manage the charm and abandon them, as a form of revenge. They already stole your first love, remember?"

When she mentioned my first love, my posture straightened.

It felt like the memory was still fresh in my mind, as if it had happened yesterday. But the pain was already starting to fade, almost like any other story.

"Let's stop talking about this. I started over. If you keep saying it, I'll never forget it."

"Then you'll find a way, and then you'll forget how your ex forgot you."

MaMiew joked, pleased. I shrugged.

"Now, I like Kewalin more than before, when I was confused."

It was a seductive, irresistible feeling, something I couldn't explain. Maybe because, before, our love was too easy, everything became boring. But now, after Kewalin recovered and didn't remember me, I was on the search, doing everything I could to get closer to the fragrant person.

Just thinking about us caressing each other makes my heart race. And we weren't even that deep yet. The sound of a message on my phone made me jump and grab the phone. When I saw it was from Kewalin, I opened it immediately.

**Kewalin:**

I want to hug you.

.

My heart raced. I raised my hand to cover my mouth, trying to hold back a smile, before quickly replying.

**Anna**:

Do you want me to come to you? Where are you?

**Kewalin**:

I'm in college.

**Anna**:

Then I'll come over.

**Kewalin**:

What will you do if you come?

**Anna**:

Many things.

I said goodbye to my friends and ran to Kewalin College. After agreeing on a time, we met up and went to a more private place, the women's bathroom. "I didn't think you'd do this, but you look pretty comfortable."

"There aren't many seats in an all-girls school, so... the bathroom is the place."

"But this is a college."

"It's just a bathroom."

"It's not very hygienic."

"We're not doing anything special, Doctor. Just petting each other."

"Yes, just petting each other."

Kewalin's smile and eyes were always captivating and made me feel mesmerized. We threw ourselves into each other's arms, still following the rules.

No kisses.

Without taking off your clothes.

Without sticking...

I didn't know if this was torturing me and her more, but we were happy, and it seemed like it would only intensify. I liked it when Kewalin's hand touched my body and she sighed close to my ear. I liked it when my lips touched her ear, and she tried to hold the sound so that no one would hear, whether at home or outside.

We were careful not to be noticed. Even when we held hands, it seemed normal to friends. But to us, it was different. It was our sign of charm, like running our thumb across the palm of our hand, indicating that we wanted more...

More...

It wasn’t long before Kewalin started visiting me at the apartment we rented. And as always, the rules still applied, even though she was still with

Tham.

"It's weird, right? Tham never tried anything with me."

Kewalin commented as we watched a series together. Don't think too much about it, we both liked to caress each other, but we also did other things. It was just a friendship... a slightly strange friendship.

"It's not good, is it? Because if Tham had done that, you could have hit him or kicked him, like you did to me."

"Maybe not."

I looked at her, who was still fixated on the TV. What did she mean by that?

"What do you mean?"

"Well, since I've been trying new flavors, I admit, for both of us, caressing each other is like taking a step into the world of sensuality. We understand each other, don't we?"

"Ah"

"Now the curiosity about the next step has arisen... since when I did with a woman it was so good, what will it be like with a man? That's what I've been thinking about for the last few days."

"Men are one of the components to generate, but when it comes to pleasure, it is not necessary. Have you heard that in the movie Wonder Woman?"

A wave of anger rose in my chest, but I had to keep it bottled up. Was she testing me? Did she want to see if I would give in or what?

"With women it's good, but it's not fair if you don't give men any opportunities."

"So, how about we start by holding Tham's hand?"

When I said that, I had to force myself to stay calm and speak normally.

We're friends, right? If I pretend I don't want her while I'm all clingy and messy with her, it's going to be too contradictory.

"I already held his hand when I fought with that psychopath."

"And after that?"

"Never again. We barely touch each other except to eat together. We never go beyond that... I guess I'll have to get closer first."

"You just want to hold hands, huh?"

"I also want to try other things, like kissing."

Kewalin gave a small smile and looked up at the ceiling of the room, which was good, because if she looked at me, she would see that I was showing my teeth.

"But that would be too fast. Besides, you need to have courage. Even you, I don't have much experience yet, so if it were with a man, I would be quite uncomfortable."

"Men find it cute if they don't know how to do something."

"And when you did something with a man for the first time, did you pretend you didn't know how to do it?"

"I've never done anything with a man. I've held hands, hugged, kissed, but it's never gone any further than that. And most of those things happened because of drink."

Because drinking is the factor that makes us lose control or, in other words, allows us to be who we really are. Our primitive instinct is unleashed unbelievable way, and I'm not sure if what I showed after drinking is really my nature or not.

"I'm going to have to drink, right?"

Kewalin laughed.

"But I don't know how to drink. And I also don't have the opportunity to go out and party with others. It's going to be hard to find an opportunity."

Then we fell silent, as if the world around us was completely silent. Maybe it was the anger I was feeling or the mood that wasn't very good, but Kewalin stopped watching the series and looked straight at me.

"Why do you look like you're mad?"

"I'm not."

"Your voice is higher pitched."

Kewalin leaned over to look at me with a smile.

"It almost seems like you're jealous. Friends don't get jealous, Ann."

Kewalin nuzzled my neck affectionately, it seemed like the person smelling like that was naughty again while I was still irritated, but I did nothing to stop it. I let her do whatever she wanted.

"I'm not jealous, I was just a little upset that you wanted to kiss Tham."

Kewalin paused for a moment and lifted her face to look into my eyes.

"I can kiss Tham, he's my boyfriend, right?"

"Well..."

I started to hesitate.

"I guess I'm just jealous. I do so many things with you, but I've never even gotten a kiss."

"Ah... are you jealous of even a kiss? But you've done a lot more things with me than Tham has. Can't you replace that?"

The fragrant person raised her hand and gently touched my face with the back of her hand.

"So, how about this, in a few days there will be a party, something my friends will do and you will be my guest, ok? Fetus Party"

What day is it? I get nervous just trying to talk about it.

"Okay."

"On that day, you're going to kiss me. To celebrate the fact that my friend was able to be born."

.

.

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"You're being manipulated, Ann."

MaMiew interrupted with her voice while I was on Skype, talking to my friends about how upset I was about the kissing story today.

As soon as my friends noticed my mood, they became grumpy too.

"You have been deceived since the moment your 'wife' said she had amnesia. And you are still accepting being deceived by her, staying irritated like that. Wow... you get so involved, but nothing ever happens. You didn't even get to see her breasts. She's very smart."

"I've already seen it."

I interrupted as Pupe was talking about breasts.

"That was when you were dating. Now what are you? 'A friend who rubs shoulders'? My God, that's karma. You like to say that the people you have things with are just close friends."

I immediately cringed when I heard the word “karma.” Come to think of it, even with Kewalin, when we were together, I introduced her as my close friend. I never used the word “girlfriend” with anyone.

"Ah, now I can't think of anything else. It's like Kewalin is getting close to me to make things intense, but never going over the edge. She makes it seem special, but not really. It's like she's teasing me to practice and then use it on someone else. She's treating me like a sex doll!"

That was the feeling I finally realized I was carrying. My two friends on the screen shook their heads, seeming more to mock me than to feel sorry for me.

"Let me ask you, while you're together, does she do anything for you?"

Pupe asked, curious.

I nodded firmly.

"No. Kewalin doesn't know how to do those things."

"And you weren't angry or frustrated?"

"A little."

"You made her feel satisfied, but you yourself received nothing but her moans? Now that's being a sex doll. Your ex-girlfriend is getting back at you in a brilliant way."

I started thinking about it, already irritated. It was true. I am not and never have been just active. My desires are never met, only hers. MaMiew, who was on the screen, laughed through her nose before speaking in an ironic tone:

"You've made other people into sex dolls for so long. What's it like now, finding someone just like you?"

***'I hope you find someone like you.'***

Tham's words when I told him to stop chasing me automatically popped into my head, making me sigh even more.

Okay, I surrender. You can bring the knife and stab me, I'm ready to die!

"I want to meet this Kewalin of yours."

Said Pupe, my close friend.

"You'll meet her soon. At your Fetus Party."

"So you're really going? Great. I want to test a few things that day."

"What are you going to test?"

"Bring her first, and then we'll talk."

"The Fetus Party is going to be by the pool, right? It looks like something from a soap opera. In your house, only the pool is good. The rest looks like a Chinese warehouse full of dildos. Everything is really messy."

MaMiew made a fascinated expression, while Pupe complained with a sound of disgust about her house being compared to a dildo factory, but let it go.

"It doesn't matter where it is. I just want to meet your 'wife'. This time it will be fun."

"What are you planning?"

I asked my friends, who were talking in a way full of ulterior motives. Even MaMiew was curious and paid attention.

"I'll manipulate Kewalin just for you to see."

# 23. Fetus Feast

And finally, it really happened. It was perhaps the first event of its kind in the world: *The Fetus Party.*

An event... where Pupe, my friend, celebrated the moment she was fertilized in her mother's ovary, becoming an embryo that evolved into an alien-looking fetus.

The party was held by the pool at Pupe's house, which was incredibly wealthy.

To be honest, she was the only one in our class who was absurdly rich. But her personality and behavior were that of someone from the lowest suburbs possible: she spoke rudely, and treated her body like it was a deposit of cum, both local and imported. I really don't know how to describe this creature, but as a friend, she was a generous and kind person in equal measure.

I loved Pupe... and the *Fetus Party*. If you have money, you can throw any kind of event, and your parents wouldn't say anything, since they were rarely home.

"Just look at the picture of the embryo. It's so..."

Pupe pointed to a framed photo of an embryo. I was sure it wasn't hers.

"So hideous."

"You chose that picture yourself, didn't you?"

MaMiew looked at her with disdain while Pupe made a face like he smelled something horrible.

Pupe just shrugged.

"The photos on the internet only had this. Besides, when I was born, there was no cameras to put inside my mother and take pictures of me inside."

"Did you really have to go that far? You could be celebrating your 100th birthday or the day your parents met. Why a fetus party?"

"It's an event that people want to come to just by hearing about it. At first, I thought about calling it the 'Fertility Festival', but it seemed so vulgar, as if a dog had just mated. So I decided to use an English term, Fetus. But then it gets annoying having to explain what a fetus is. Some people don't even know what it is, and when I say it's an embryo, they look at me as if I were a tadpole."

Pupe shrugged.

"But regardless of the name, today will be fun."

"You're so needy. Rich kid, but full of problems. Your parents are never around, so you take it out on yourself by doing these things."

"Those who have money, spend it as they wish. Those who don't, keep quiet."

"Then I won't give back the money I borrowed from you."

"Try it, if you're a bit cheeky."

MaMiew, who always spoke without thinking about other people's feelings, made Pupe roll her eyes. Our friendship was so close that even cursing at each other's families didn't offend us. We knew everything about each other, without secrets or half-measures.

That was it: friendship.

For better or worse, they were still my friends.

People who came to the event brought gifts, which made me curious.

What kind of gift does someone bring to a weird party like that? Of course I didn't bring anything, since it was a made-up party.

Pupe looked at me sideways and spoke loudly for everyone to hear:

"Ungrateful! I organize a party for you and you don't bring anything as a gift!"

"You having fun with my life is already a special enough gift for Festa Fetus."

"Hmm, good excuse. I'll forgive you."

But it seems I underestimated the fun Pupe had planned. I never realized the real purpose of the party until, one by one, my ex-boyfriends started arriving: men and women.

"Wow! I can't believe it!"

I was already cursing, and my face turned pale as I saw each new guest.

Pupe snapped her fingers and laughed, clearly pleased with my reaction.

"This is the special gift for the Fetus Party. I wanted to see your face like that. But what about it? Where's Kewalin? Did you invite her? She's the most important guest."

"What are you trying to do?!"

I asked, looking at my ex-boyfriends as I tried to hide, afraid of being seen. Of course there was no way to escape.

"How did you manage to gather them all? When did you meet these people?"

"I'm a spirit that accompanies your life, didn't you know?"

"Seriously."

"Well, when you were flirting, you added everyone on Facebook, right? Once you were done, you disappeared into thin air like the wind and sunshine of Thailand. And those people? When they couldn't get a hold of you, who did they go to? Me, of course."

"These people also sent me messages."

MaMiew commented, agreeing with Pupe. I never knew my exes did that.

"But Kewalin never gave us any contact."

Said Pupe.

"We agreed not to add each other on social media. We wanted to keep our personal spaces, to avoid discomfort."

"Kewalin is interesting."

MaMiew commented, shaking her head.

"She thinks differently. I agree that couples shouldn't add each other on social media. It can cause fights over posts or photos that aren't liked."

"Not interesting at all. I can't interfere in her life like that."

Pupe shook her head in annoyance.

"Until now, I don't even know what Kewalin looks like. Ah! Look, Tham, her latest ex, has arrived. And he brought someone with him." Hearing this, a shiver ran down my spine. Who else could he bring?

Kewalin, of course.

"I won't even ask if you invited Tham."

"You can ask... I invited him. But who's with him? How pretty."

"Didn't I tell you that Tham and Kewalin are dating?"

At that moment, my posture became rigid. There is no coincidence in the world.

For Kewalin to be with Tham here, she had planned everything. She was teasing me, but with what intention? That I still don't know.

"Channel 7: The TV for you!"

My friends started chanting the Channel 7 slogan, something that played in my head like an annoying soundtrack. These were actually my friends, who had known me since high school. Where else would I would you find friends like that?

"Pretend you don't know Tham."

"Why?"

"Tham and I pretended we didn't know each other in front of Kewalin."

"Ah, dividing roles like that, she already knows. That's pure falsehood."

"Tell a lie, hear another. Who lies first cannot complain."

Pupe said before turning around and smiling at the new guests.

"Ann."

"Kew."

I turned to smile at my beloved, hiding a deep pain behind a cheerful expression.

"Hello, Tham."

"Hello, Anna."

Pupe and MaMiew observed the tense atmosphere with curiosity. To ease the situation, I introduced Kewalin to the host of the party and MaMiew. "This is the host of the party, Pupe, and this is MaMiew, my close friend."

"Happy birthday, Pupe."

Kewalin handed Pupe a gift with a smile so charming it could make any heart flutter. Or was it just mine that reacted like that?

Meanwhile, MaMiew, who was nearby, sniffed the air like a police dog.

"Does that smell like perfume? It sounds very familiar... I think I've smelled that before."

Her face almost touched the perfumed person.

"It's my perfume. It's called Cherry Blossom. Ann loves it and always says it has an enveloping scent."

I didn't know if Kewalin meant something with what she said, but my friends, who already knew the story, exchanged knowing looks and smiled at me.

"Well, come on in and join the party. Make yourselves comfortable. Hey, Anna, take your friends to see my luxurious house. Show them what my parents do to be so rich. Oh, what did I do in my past life to deserve this?"

"Idiot."

I cursed Pupe's joke before leading Kewalin and Tham into the party. Naturally, the place was full of familiar faces, which made me lower my head and cover my face with my hand to avoid stares. But like a celebrity trying not to be recognized by wearing sunglasses at the mall, the effort only attracted more attention.

"Hi, An."

A woman's sweet voice called me. I couldn't remember exactly who it was, but it felt like we had something for about two weeks now.

"Have you come, Mind?"

"My name is Mint."

Shit...

Her tone as she introduced herself was clearly irritated. I tried to force a smile, while Kewalin watched our interaction with interest.

"If there's nothing else, I'll be leaving..."

***Splash!***

The handful of punch in Mint's hands was thrown hard into my face, so much so that some of the liquid went up my nose and almost made me choke. Everyone at the party looked at us. Some were laughing, probably because they had been wanting to do the same thing for ages.

Are all my enemies here?

"Why did you throw that at me?"

I asked, irritated and embarrassed in front of my beloved. Mint crossed her arms and replied with a sarcastic tone.

"That's still not enough for what you did to me. You treated me like a doormat and then discarded me. Did your parents raise you to be like that?"

"You can insult me all you want, but don't involve my family..."

***Splash!***

The second glass was poured over my head, this time by a tall man I had known for a long time, named Khem. He smiled after he emptied the glass of whiskey over my head.

"That's for me, Anna."

"Khem, you're a man. Doing that isn't mature at all."

I tried to control my tone as I spoke, but he shrugged, not caring.

"Why should I care about someone I hate? Nowadays, men and women are equal."

"Do you hate me that much?"

"You weren't left behind. You wouldn't understand what it's like."

Now I was soaked in punch and whiskey, but most of all, I was mortified that Kewalin had witnessed that. She remained silent, just watching. Tham, however, couldn't stand watching any longer and came to intervene, standing between me and Khem, who were exchanging hostile looks.

"If it's over, let it go. Doing so is not dignified at all. Anyone who sees it will only feel sorry."

"That's none of your business. You don't understand why you weren't the one who suffered."

Khem pushed Tham, who, being smaller, stumbled and ended up bumping into Kewalin, who fell to the ground.

"Kew!"

"Enough, both of you! You hate each other? Great. But stop getting involved. After you get your revenge, move on."

Pushing myself away from everyone, I walked towards Kewalin, but before

I could reach her, I felt my body being pushed hard by someone. It wasn't Khem, nor Tham.

When I looked to see who it was, I was startled to see Key, who was also there.

"Now it's my turn. You've had your fun hurting people. Let's see how you like it."

With all his strength, Key pushed me into the pool. The sound of the impact echoed. There were whistles and applause from former enemies. Knowing how to swim, I managed to stay afloat, but the water had invaded my nose and mouth, making everything sting. I swam to the edge, and then I felt a soft hand, accompanied by the familiar scent of cherry blossom. It wasn't hard to guess who it was.

"Need help getting out?"

But the voice... was different.

My heart skipped a beat, and I felt a chill run through my body, despite the warm water. I looked up and saw the smiling face that remained etched in my memory, even after so many months and years.

***"Teacher Lin..."***

"I'm glad you still remember me."

I was wrong. Despite the cherry blossom scent, it wasn't Kewalin. It was the woman who had always shaken my heart. The reason I became who I am today... the person who ended up being pushed into a pool.

*My first love.*

*Teacher Alin.*

# 24.Boomerang

I touched my old crush's hand without realizing it, thinking it was Kewalin's hand at first, and quickly shook it off, swimming to the other side of the pool to sit on the edge. Pupe and MaMiew ran in.

I looked towards her, worried, bringing a towel. I glared at Pupe, the host of the party, for having set up such a situation behind my back.

"How could you do this, Pupe? Why did you invite her?"

"It was out of politeness."

Pupe responded with an uncomfortable expression.

"Besides, it's been so long. I thought you might overlook it..."

"Forget what? I had already decided that I would never see that person again in my life! But you brought her here! What crazy plan is this of yours?"

"Calm down, friend, look..."

"Why so angry, Anna? When you meet your teacher, you should at least smile, don't you think? It's been so long... I missed you."

Teacher Alin’s sweet and calm voice said, making my heart feel as if several needles were piercing it. Despite the years that have passed, why does she still affect me so much? Why does it hurt so much?

Her smile, as if nothing had happened, only increased my anger.

MaMiew, noticing the tense atmosphere and fearing that the situation would get out of control, intervened to break the silence:

"Wow! I haven't seen Teacher Alin in so long! Still as pretty as ever, huh?"

Then, like a professional sniffer, she began sniffing again.

"Now I understand why the scent was so familiar to me. Teacher Alin's perfume is the same as Kewalin's!"

Kewalin, who had been observing everything closely, looked at me with a rigid gaze. Someone who never showed emotion now seemed to be angry.

That furious look made my heart race.

"Who is this Kewalin?"

"Oh, it's A's girlfriend..."

Pupe quickly covered MaMiew's mouth and intervened:

"A friend of Anna's!"

Pupe gave Kewalin a discreet glance as she said that. Kewalin, who had been mentioned, walked towards us along with Tham. However, the handsome young man stopped in his tracks, almost paralyzed, while Teacher Alin also looked at him with something different on her face.

"Tham."

"Teacher..."

"Why does it seem like you two know each other?"

Pupe, the incorrigibly curious one, asked as she looked at the two with interest.

"Did you already know each other?"

Teacher Alin, who had been silent for a moment, cracked a smile.

"Yes, we've met before. I was Tham's private tutor... So, is he your boyfriend?"

Kewalin bowed politely to Teacher Alin, showing that he recognized the difference in age and experience. The atmosphere between the four of us now it was strangely uncomfortable. I couldn't say anything, I just stared at the ground. Kewalin also remained silent, while Tham seemed to avoid any eye contact. The only one who the one who kept her composure was teacher Alin.

"So, who here is Anna's friend?"

"I am, teacher."

Pupe replied, taking advantage of the opportunity.

"And look, the perfume is exactly the same! No wonder Anna always compliments how nice Kew smells. In the end, it's because she smells just like Teacher Alin!"

"Shut up."

I said, almost whispering, trying to get Pupe to stop talking about perfume. Teacher Alin looked at Kewalin with a smile and started talking.

"It seems we have similar tastes. Both in perfume and in the type of people we associate with."

"I'm not feeling very well."

Said the handsome boy, turning to Kewalin with a forced smile.

"Would you mind if I left first?"

"If you don't stay, there's no point in me staying either. I'm going with you."

Kewalin replied.

"Excellent."

As the two of them prepared to leave, I, who was already extremely uncomfortable with the whole situation, also took the opportunity to make up an excuse and leave.

"I'm not feeling well either. So... I guess I better go..."

Suddenly, Teacher Alin placed her hand on my forehead and then on my neck before I could react. My body tensed from head to toe, and a warm sensation washed over me, leaving me paralyzed.

"You just got out of the water and you're already feeling sick? When you were younger, you were so strong... Why did you become so fragile after you grew up?"

I forcefully pushed away the hand of a beautiful person in front of me unintentionally, and that made the atmosphere between us even worse. Of course, everything was still under Kewalin's gaze.

"Don't make it like we're so close, please."

"But we are close."

"That was a long time ago."

"You're so sensitive, aren't you? I thought that after you grew up, you would have stopped being so sensitive."

The sweet voice that seemed to hold me captivated me and made my eyes fill with tears. Teacher Alin placed her delicate hand on my head, almost as if she felt sorry for me.

"It's still as cute as before."

Without waiting, whether out of a need to protect myself from the pain or for some other reason, I turned to the person closest to me and threw the drink in their direction with force. The room fell silent after the commotion and everyone began to watch.

"That's not pretty, Anna."

The teacher's voice, which sounded a little stern, made me feel embarrassed, almost like old times. But when I realized it, I straightened up and fought back like someone who wasn't going to submit and wasn't going to lose like in the past.

"If you don't love me, then hate me, but don't do that!"

"Anna."

"You don't understand what it's like to be left behind, so don't act like it never happened, don't do it!"

I walked away, but Pupe grabbed me by the arm, but I pulled away because I wasn't ready to talk to anyone.

"I'm leaving too. Thanks for the work, but it was horrible!"

After saying that, I left the event without caring if Kewalin and Tham were still there or had already left. I drove away like someone trying to escape.

During the journey, I tried to hold back the tears, but when one fell, the others followed and showed no signs of stopping.

I thought I was strong enough, but it seemed like I was still far from it.

I still felt shaken by every action of that person. If everything is over, why does it still hurt?

"Shit!"

I parked the car on the side of the road and rested my head on the steering wheel, crying like someone who couldn't take it anymore. Over the years, I thought things were getting better, but they weren't. As soon as she showed up, the pain ancient returned, like an incurable disease.

While I had been crying for years, Teacher Alin still acted the same way, smiling... Without showing any feelings, as if nothing bad had ever happened between us.

After more than an hour of sobbing in the car, I finally felt that I had released some of the pain and started driving back to my apartment, where I lived with a very smelly person. Today, I felt like a bird with a broken wing, without the strength to fly, but still

I could walk, although staggering, without knowing what I was doing.

No, at least I knew it was taking me back to a safe place, away from the teacher, who was my first love.

But then...

As soon as I turned on the lights in the apartment, Kewalin's body, sitting on the bed, made me stop in surprise. At first, I even thought I was seeing a ghost.

After trying to get Teacher Alin out of my head, Kewalin appeared, making everything stop for a moment.

"Kew... how are you here? I thought you were going home."

"This place is closer than my home."

"How did you get in?"

"The doorman gave me the key."

"Really?"

I looked at the smelly person in surprise, but I was so tired that I didn't want to keep asking questions, even though what Kewalin did was quite suspicious.

"Are you going to sleep here tonight?"

"Can't I?"

"I didn't think you would come, so I should go back to my home in Rangsit."

"Why can't you sleep here?"

Kewalin's firm voice made me hesitate a little. I had never seen her like this and I didn't know what to say.

"I'm very tired today. I want to sleep alone. Besides... I'm embarrassed about what happened today. Many people threw drinks and water at me."

"Are you getting embarrassed now?"

The smelly person spoke with an ironic tone, something she had never done since we started dating, except before the accident. Today, I saw her fury, the aggression in her eyes and the reason why I had backed away before: I was afraid of having to deal with something like this.

Today, Kewalin seemed full of doubts. She was here, in this place, at this time, probably because she couldn't contain her curiosity and came to my apartment to wait for me.

"Don't come picking a fight, Kew."

"Go take a shower, it will make you feel better."

The smelly person went to the clothesline to get a towel ok handed it to me gently before walking away and sitting silently on the bed. I, who had said I would return to Rangsit, now felt as if I had been forced to sleep here today.

It was okay. I was so tired that I didn't want to drive to Rangsit anymore.

I took a quick shower, lasting about ten minutes, just enough to wash myself and brush my teeth, because I wanted to lie down and rest. But when I came out, I found Kewalin in the same place, looking at me with a intensity that seemed like it was ready for a confrontation. I wasn't prepared for that...

"If you want to talk, talk."

I sighed and prepared myself for what was to come. Her brown eyes were on me, filled with anger, which made my heart beat faster, something I had never felt before, even though I was never afraid of her.

It was as if I had made some mistake, but I didn't know what it was.

"Who is Teacher Alin?"

The conversation got straight to the point.

"She was my teacher when I was a senior in high school."

I went to the fan to dry my hair, making a loud noise, and even though I couldn't sleep, I talked to Kewalin while I dried my hair.

"Why were you so surprised when you found her?"

"Because I hadn't seen her in a long time."

"She's the reason you don't call me 'Lin', isn't she?"

I stopped and slowly turned to look into the eyes of the perfumed person.

And as I remained silent, Kewalin, who noticed this, soon asked, pressing:

"You like the smell of my perfume because it's the same as Teacher Alin's, don't you?"

"..."

"Your first love is Teacher Alin, isn't it?"

Okay, I've been cornered. Kewalin is good at connecting things quickly and get everything right. But anyone could easily guess, based on the name, the smell and the body language I was displaying at that moment.

Everything seemed to fit together.

"Yes, but it's over now."

"If it's over, why do you still look so sore?"

"I'm not sore."

I firmly denied, not accepting and definitely not being able to accept this.

"It's been a long time, I've already forgotten her."

"When you talked to me, it didn't seem like that at all."

"Don't pressure me... I'm tired, I want to sleep."

I stopped the conversation, turned off the fan, and threw myself onto the bed, which was cool with the air conditioning, turning on my side so that my back was facing the fragrant person. Kewalin looked at me for a moment and then lay down next to me. Although I said I was tired, my head couldn't fall asleep, because the silence of the person next to me made me feel colder than the temperature of the room.

"Ann..."

Kewalin's sweet voice sounded beside me, followed by a nibble. My eyes widened in surprise in the darkness, but I didn't refuse anything, I just said:

"I'm tired."

"Then sleep."

"Kew... why do you..."

Kewalin turned me around and straddled me. She took off her own shirt and unhooked her bra.

"I'm really tired... I want to..."

"I also want."

"I wanted to say that I want..."

And the rule we had established was immediately nullified when the person above leaned over and kissed me passionately, sliding her hand under the collar of my blouse. Although I tried to refuse, I felt too ashamed to do so, so I responded, touching her soft body, but Kewalin pushed my hand away.

"Be quiet, today I'll do everything."

Both the tone of voice and the intensity with which these words were said could be interpreted in two ways, as something scary and sexy at the same time. My clothes seemed more like they had been ripped than removed. The person, with her perfumed body and breathing heavily, used her wild instinct to surrender himself to me in a surprising way.

"Slow down, Kew. Let's take it easy."

I tried to answer, but was rejected by Kewalin repeatedly. My body was covered in marks, bites, but at the same time, it gave me a strange feeling that excited me. Now, my mind was empty, there was nothing about Teacher Alin in my thoughts anymore.

"Ah..."

I didn't have time to prepare for Kewalin's invasion, which It left me surprised and slightly uncomfortable when something was inserted into my body. But soon it turned into an exciting sensation, and I ended up letting out an involuntary moan. The person with the perfumed body looked at me intensely while her hands continued with their function.

"Kew... Kew..."

"That's it. I like seeing you defeated like that."

I let Kewalin do whatever she wanted, until my body reached its limit.

All my muscles twitched slightly before shrinking back. However, the person with the fragrant body did not want to stop, as if she wanted to torture me to give me what she wanted, I got bored seeing Kewalin act like she had won. So I had fun throwing Kewalin's body down and forcefully took off her clothes.

"You're getting too aggressive, Kew. Relax a bit."

"No!"

One of Kewalin's hands pulled my hair and made me look up, like someone who wouldn't give up, making me go back down.

"This game is mine!"

Love that comes with hate is so intense. From the beginning, I thought about challenging, but seeing that the sweet-smelling person's anger was still there, I ended up becoming softer.

I lay down and let Kewalin bite me here and there, patiently enduring the pain. To be honest, this was the most intense sex we had ever had. It was full of new feelings, both good and bad mixed together.

The small person's thin fingers penetrated without even asking if I was ready. The tip of her soft, slippery tongue that was moving back and forth suddenly stopped, as if she wanted to torture me, preventing me from reaching climax, satisfying herself with it.

"Today, if you are angry, you can take it out as much as you want."

I raised my hand and covered my face, not knowing how I should feel. I wanted to cry because I was hurting, but I also understood why I was going through all of this.

"Okay... Now it's your turn to make me cum."

The sweet-smelling person spoke, pulling my hand that was covering my face, lifting it and positioning herself on top of my face, pressing her intimacy against my face while moaning. I opened my mouth and sucked in that sweet taste, knowing very well what Kewalin liked and how things should happen.

"Hmm... That's it, eat it all."

The sweet-smelling person spoke, as she grabbed my hair under her body, giving orders. I held her hips with both hands and started moving, helping to increase the pleasure of the one who was angry, trying to make her feel better.

"..."

"Don't leave even a drop."

And then it all ended... More than three hours in which I was humiliated, like a toy for Kewalin to vent her emotions. We remained silent, each of us not knowing what to say. Today I was the only one who was attacked, while Kewalin didn't let me touch her body. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore and I was the one who started the conversation.

"Why did you suddenly break all the rules we made?"

The fragrant person, lying on her side with her back to me, fell silent, as if she had fallen asleep. But it wasn't long before she answered in a disinterested voice:

"It must be because of the drink."

"But you didn't drink anything."

"..."

"Are you mad about something?"

"Why would I be mad?"

"About Teacher Alin, right? But we had agreed that we would be friends and trust each other, even in bed."

"And what does this have to do with Teacher Alin?"

"I'm wondering if you're jealous."

The fragrant person quickly stood up, picked up the clothes that had been thrown aside, and put them on. I looked at her in surprise and quickly pulled her arm.

"Kew, where are you going?"

"I'm going back home."

"But it's late, and you didn't bring a car."

"Don't you want to be alone?"

"Now I want to be with you."

I replied smiling.

"Sorry I said earlier that I wanted to be alone, I was a little stressed. But having you here is nice."

"So I helped you relax, right? Do you see me as a sex doll or something?"

I couldn't understand what was happening to Kewalin. That night, she had attacked me, but now she had a tone of voice like she was angry, just because I said that she helped me relieve stress.

"That's not what I meant."

"And what did you mean?"

"I..."

I bit my lip. Now I felt like a shy girl with a crush on a senior.

"I'm glad to see you jealous."

"..."

"It's not a bad thing, I'm not complaining about anything."

I said quickly, raising my hands as if to apologize, not knowing if what I was saying was good or bad. But I really wanted to that Kewalin understood that I was happy.

"Actually, I've always liked you, from the beginning. When I saw you like this, I was happy."

"Do you want to date me?"

"U-huh?"

My heart was pounding when the fragrant person asked me this. Kewalin, who had her back to me, slowly turned around and looked me in the eye, smiling at me.

"Do you want to date me?"

"But you already have Tham, don't you?"

"That's no problem at all."

And Kewalin's next sentence left me speechless, as if a boomerang that I had thrown myself came back and hit me hard in the head.

"Now I have Tham as my boyfriend, but I don't have any female girlfriend. So if you want to date me..."

"..."

"What's wrong with that?"

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# 25. I'm Sorry

Today I truly understood the meaning of *"getting even".* At first, I thought it was a coincidence, although deep down I didn't really believe it.

But from Kewalin's actions tonight—the look, the gestures, as if she wanted to reduce me to something insignificant, like a sex doll—and from the sharp words I had said myself during one of our fights, everything became clear to me.

I took a deep breath, composed myself, picked up the clothes that were lying on the floor and put them on in silence. I tied my hair up in a practical, determined way, and then turned to confront that perfumed person as soon as I had the chance.

"I already imagined that this amnesia talk never really existed. Or, if it did, you certainly didn't just forget about me, right?"

I said, staring at her.

"..."

"Have you had enough fun with this little play you're putting on?"

Kewalin looked at me with a crooked smile. She didn't try to justify herself, nor did she put on her usual innocent face. It was as if she wanted me to know the truth, as if she were saying,

*'Whatever happens lets happens.'*

I should thank that traitorous friend who detonated the bomb inside Kewalin. The arrival of my former love made the real Kewalin finally emerge, unfiltered.

"I got bored. I've played with you enough and I'm tired."

"So the mask has fallen, huh? Did Teacher Alin's arrival really affect you that much?"

***Plaf!***

A pillow was thrown violently at my face. If it had been a rock, I would probably have died. But since it was soft, it only made me stagger, taking me by surprise.

"It has nothing to do with that!"

She screamed.

"But the fact that you dominated me earlier doesn't mean anything else, right? Let's talk calmly. We don't need to fight. You know I love you..."

***"SHUT UP!"***

She interrupted in a firm, hard voice, so different from the sweet intonation I knew.

I fell silent immediately, listening to her. I had already seen Kewalin angry before the accident. We had a huge fight because neither of us would give in, and that's what got us to this point. Now, I needed to stay calm.

I've made too many mistakes. Now I need to learn to give in.

"Sorry, Kew."

"Why is it so easy? Where did that proud and determined "Anna" from before go?"

This time, the one who was angry was Kewalin. She couldn't stand seeing me so passive.

"I'm not going to argue with you, Kew. I know I was wrong about everything. You have every right to get back at me. I'm not mad at you." "Are you trying to drive me crazy, is that it?"

She pushed me away as if she was on the verge of a breakdown. My acceptance seemed to make her even angrier.

"I'm not trying anything, Kew."

"Stop talking to me like I'm a child. I hate that!"

"It seems like nothing I do pleases you now?"

"Yeah... and right now I hate you even more!"

Kewalin clenched her fists, threatened to hit me, but stopped.

"It's unbearable to know that your first love had so many similarities to me."

I widened my eyes, understanding what was weighing on her mind. This was what had been bothering Kewalin until she exploded.

"It was just a coincidence..."

"Coincidence? Damn, weren't you the one who said coincidences don't exist?"

Kewalin spent so much time with me that she was even starting to swear.

Before, she wouldn't even use the word "idiot" without apologizing afterwards. I tried to reach out to touch her and explain, but I was rejected.

"Don't touch me!"

"Listen to me, Kew. Let me explain about the smell..."

"Ah, so that's why you know the perfume I wear so well. Because it's a familiar scent. A scent that reminds you of your first love that you've never forgotten!"

Her anger made me so remorseful that I wanted her to really punch me. But all I could do was stay silent.

I couldn't deny it. That smell... I really knew it very well.

"Did you feel desire for me because of that? In bed, you didn't even think you were with me, right?"

"No, Kew! Never! When I was with you, I only thought of you."

"And the fact that you never call me "Lin" like everyone else is because my nickname is the same as your ex's? This is a joke! Why not print out teacher Alin's face and stick it on my face at once?"

Her cold and distant tone made me hug her immediately, trying to calm her down.

But she didn't cooperate at all. Despite being smaller than me, she had surprising strength, but I continued to hold her, not giving up.

"I love you, Kew. I really love you."

"Stop lying! I'm not anyone's replacement!"

"Kew, please don't cry."

Hearing her sob made my heart sink. The last tears I had seen from her were before the accident, and now they were back. I wouldn’t let Kawalin go home tonight. We needed to figure this out. Even if it was a high price to pay, I would accept it.

I could only accept. There was no other choice.

"I hate unfaithful people, but I ended up falling in love with you. I never wanted to date a woman, but I agreed to be with you. And what do you do? You treat me like I mean nothing. You compare me to your ex, by smell, by name... What else? What else do I have that is the same as her?"

"You have nothing to do with that woman. She doesn't even come close to you."

"Liar! How many times have you hurt me? What do you say is true, after all? You even hid the fact that you're Tham's ex from me!"

I had no excuses to give. Why did I lie about this? Thinking from Kewalin's side, I finally understood what she felt. No matter how many truths I told, a single lie was enough to destroy all trust.

And I lied about Tham...

"That story is wrong. Do you think I really don't remember that, Kew? This is about... caring about feelings. If you I really liked Tham and found out that he was once my ex, that wouldn't be good at all."

"And where's the sincerity in that? I just wanted to test that story, but you failed miserably!"

Kewalin took my hands off her and pushed me away.

"Don't touch me, I'm disgusted."

"Kew..."

I sighed.

"So why did you pretend from the beginning that you didn't remember me? If you hate me, you could just come and hit me once and for all, you didn't have to keep hitting me so much."

"Because I wanted you to feel a little bit of what it's like to be hurt by the person you love. And look, what I did isn't even half of what you did."

"Does Tham know he is being used?"

"Yes."

"So Tham agrees with this?"

"We both hate you!"

The words gave me a pounding headache. I covered my face with my hands, trying to compose myself. I didn’t know exactly how many hurt feelings I had caused, but considering what had happened today—someone throwing me into the water during the event—it seems there are a lot of people who hate me. Kewalin and Tham are certainly no exception.

*Why am I so terrible?*

"You can grab a gun and shoot me already, if that'll make you stop hating me, Kew."

"There are ways to hurt you even more than that."

Kewalin said coldly, her eyes flashing with anger. Her attitude made me so uncomfortable that I took a step forward, but she immediately retreated.

"What are you going to do, Kew?"

"I will destroy everything you love."

"I love you, Kew. You're not going to destroy yourself, are you?"

"Maybe sleeping with a man won't be so bad."

"Kew!"

My jealousy and worry exploded instantly. I ran to her and pushed her against the closet.

"If you want to get revenge on me, please choose another way. Don't devalue yourself."

"Just talking about it makes you react like that. If I actually did it, I bet you'd die. Ouch!"

I bit her nose hard. Kewalin tried to push me away while breathing through her mouth.

"It hurts, you know? You're doing it again!"

"Don't say things like that anymore. I'll bite your nose off. Think of another way to get revenge, but don't do impulsive things like a rebellious teenager."

"If it was a teenage thing, you wouldn't be so affected."

Kewalin held her nose and glared at me.

"Do you want me to kneel down and apologize? Would that make you forgive me?"

I sighed and knelt down on one knee. She looked away.

"I'm trying to apologize, you know? I've never done this for anyone."

"Have you heard of the Equality Act?"

"..."

"If you can do it, so can I."

"I've never slept with a man."

"Then I'll sleep with a woman."

I got up from my kneeling position and looked at Kawalin, who was just scoffing, before approaching her.

"Don't come any closer."

"You're going to sleep with a woman, aren't you?" "Don't touch me. How disgusting. Get out of here."

My hands began to move like tentacles, slowly rising.

If this was the usual Kewalin, I knew exactly where her weakness was.

It doesn't matter if it's the same person or a new version, the weak point is still the same.

"Come on, practice with me first then."

"I've already done it!"

I stood in front of Kawalin until she looked at me and kissed her, but I was bitten, having to quickly pull away due to the pain and the taste of blood.

"You're more aggressive today."

"It works for you."

"No need to kiss on the mouth, then."

My hands went down under her blouse and began to unclasp her bra.

"There are plenty of other places to kiss."

"This isn't a soap opera, where they fight and then make up with sex. That's not how it works. If you don't feel like it, then don't touch me."

"But this is... You're mine."

I whispered into the ear of the person in front of me and used my tongue to slide from the ear to the neck.

"When I think that you are still the same person, that you came back, I missed you so much."

"No..."

"I like your voice when you want me to do this or that... You seem to be in pain, but you're happy. Won't you let me hear it?"

"I already told you, no!"

I ripped Kewalin's blouse and bra over her head as she went weak, then bit the sensitive spot that defied gaze and was a weak spot, a place the sweetsmelling person would never deny.

"Sorry."

"I won't forgive you."

"I love you."

"I don't believe."

"I'll tell you I love you all night long."

My hand unzipped her pants, and skillfully touched her sensitive parts and I could feel that she had been keeping this in since she got mad at me last night.

"I love you."

"I can't believe it."

"I love you."

"I can't believe it..."

"I love you."

"Anyway, I don't believe it... but we're already here."

Kewalin bit her lip, looking angry with herself.

"Get it over with, damn it! Why does it have to be like this?"

I lifted the sweet-smelling person up with my arms, as if I had already won.

Kewalin jumped at me and used her legs to wrap around my waist before being thrown onto the bed.

This is how it had to be... here is the tigress Anna. There is nothing that cannot be finished.

This sex wouldn’t be like our first time, when Kewalin wasn’t ready, nor would it be like our last, which was filled with anger. This was the return of a couple who were reconciling. It was an opportunity for both of us to use our bodies to apologize, and Kewalin had a responsibility to use hers to forgive.

My lips gently brushed Kewalin's ear, where her scent was more intense and her whisper more sensual. Although initially reluctantly due to her irritation, Kewalin gave in, as she had already consented.

My hand slid under her underwear, finding her sensitive spot and stirring Kewalin's emotions like fire.

"Take off my shirt."

I asked.

Kewalin looked at me with her brown eyes, then pulled my shirt up and off. I sat on top of her, unclasped her bra and removed it.

She admired my body for a moment before reaching out to touch me.

"Kew, you make me so horny."

I said, encouraging the person beneath me so that we could enjoy this love game even more.

"And you know, when I'm really excited like this, that's when my love becomes even more intense."

"How far will this go?"

"We'll see."

I started the game by pulling Kewalin's body to sit down and forced the sweet-smelling person tasting my breasts. The little person who saw this seemed a little surprised, but accepted it willingly and started doing it herself, forgetting everything. I tightened my grip on Kewalin's head, while grabbing her hair and pulling her head back before order, knowing she could do it.

"Take off my pants."

Kewalin, lost in pleasure, pulled my pants down while taking hers off, with my help. I licked her belly, then removed her panties and began licking between her legs, making her arch her back and moan.

When Kewalin was about to reach climax, I stopped, leaving her almost desperate.

"Why did you stop?"

"To do this."

I placed my hands under Kewalin's thighs, lifting them, and then moved closer, pressing my sensitive part against her wet region.

Kewalin moaned in pleasure.

"That's also possible... I never knew... Ah!"

"Yes... let's cum together."

I moved, rubbing, pressing from slow to fast, according to the rhythm of the emotion that was igniting. Our climaxes didn't come at the same time, but we were very close. Kewalin, who came first, her body writhed and she moaned in pain, while I still hadn't finished.

"I can't take it anymore, Ann... I can't take it anymore."

"A little more... a little more... more..."

So I quickly followed her, before laying down on her perfumed body and using my lips to kiss her jawline, moving up to her sweat. It seemed like our teasing had come to an end, and I received a kind of forgiveness in the arms of the one below me, who hugged me and fell asleep.

Ah... a really good welcome for the memories that came back from Kewalin.

The next day, my friends and I arranged to meet at a coffee shop in the mall. When I saw Pupe's face, she looked remorseful, and how I was in an exceptionally good mood,

On that day, more than any other, I decided not to hold a grudge against my friend. So, I made a gesture with my hand, signaling that everything was fine, and let the matter go.

"No need to cry, enough, I'm already sick of it. There's no point in getting angry with you, in the end, I'm not going to cut off our friendship with you. Let's continue being friends, no matter how annoying it is."

"Wow, she's looking good today, huh? Last night she looked like she was about to explode, ready to throw a hurricane in everyone's face. There must be something good going on."

MaMiew commented, looking at me and smiling, even though she didn't know anything.

"Come here, tell me."

"Don't come with that know-it-all attitude, it's not like that."

I replied.

After waking up, I didn't find Kewalin. It felt like I had been used and then left alone. But... when I think about what happened in the night before, until I can understand.

The body language, the smell, the sound, the feelings... you could tell how involved she was.

"So what happened? We're waiting to find out."

Pupe asked impatiently. But when I looked at her, my friend lowered her head, as if she still felt guilty.

"Sorry, friend, I won't press any further, as much as I'd like to know."

"Kewalin came to my room last night." I spoke.

"Oh, look at that... your fingers are wet."

Pupe scoffed. I almost threw the coffee cup at her, I was so angry about it. I forgave her in less than two minutes, and she was already full again.

"Fuck you."

"You're not feeling guilty, are you? I think I hit the right spot last night."

Miew commented.

"You overreacted. You should have warned me before, not let me face everything without preparing."

I replied.

"If I had warned you, not only would you be prepared, but it would have ruined my job, since you weren't going to show up. Seriously, at first I was really curious to know what Kewalin would say when she met the love of her life."

"Well, she really did say that."

I replied, raising an eyebrow, almost complimenting my friend.

"It all seemed like a play. Kewalin remembered everything and even pretended to do things to make me angry."

"See? Anyone who has memory loss is lying."

Miew grimaced and rested her chin on her hand.

"The plot is ridiculous, it seems like one of those cheap stories that only readers of Chaoplanoy's short stories like. Everyone is already tired of this story about memory loss."

"Are you still reading Chaoplanoy's lousy stories at this age?"

I replied.

"It doesn't go off topic."

Pupe interrupted, seeing that the conversation was straying from the point.

"The important thing is that you now know that Kewalin remembers everything. That's a good thing, but the person I really care about isn't your wife, it's you."

"And what are you worried about?"

"I'm worried about you."

"..."

"Did you know how you were acting yesterday when you met Teacher Alin?"

I sat up straight immediately upon hearing Pupe's comment. She looked at me, sighing like a concerned friend.

"What did I do? How did I act?"

"You've shown that you still feel a lot for your first love."

Miew answered for Pupe, as if she was there watching everything.

"The way you looked at the teacher was no different than the way you looked at her 6 or 7 years ago. You were hurt, confused, full of anger." "You still love."

Pupe completed the final sentence, which made me immediately shake my head, as if I had touched something hot.

"It's not true, I don't love Professor Alin anymore!"

Both friends looked at me silently, before always mocking, now quiet, as if they wanted me to reflect on myself, and that only made me more irritated.

"Are you trying to pressure me, why?"

"You know very well what you feel. Even us outsiders can tell. Your gestures made Kewalin realize your feelings, and that's why she revealed everything. Do you think you were normal last night?"

Pupe spoke as if she wanted to destroy the barriers I had put up.

"You are like a bird with a broken wing, trying to fly but unable to. Teacher

Alin is that bullet that hit your chest. That is what you are."

"No..."

I tried my best not to accept this, but the notification sound from my phone interrupted the moment. I pretended to look away from my phone, and when I saw a message from someone who wasn’t a friend, my heart skipped a beat. The feeling of weakness I had felt the night before came back with a vengeance.

The bullet, again... Teacher Alin.

*'Anna, accept my friend request. I want to be your friend.'*

My phone fell to the table as if I had no bones left in my hands. Pupe quickly picked up the phone, without caring about privacy, and sighed as if she already knew everything.

"It's going to be difficult, right? Look, she just sent a message wanting your friend, and you're already like this."

Miew took a tissue from her bag and wiped away the tears that were falling from me, before sighing.

"And you still say you don't feel anything, huh, Anna?"

"I..."

I let my head fall onto the table, sobbing silently in shame, because crying in public was not good at all. My friends let me cry in peace, and I spoke up, finally accepting the truth.

"I still feel something."

"What do you feel?"

Pupe asked, as if she wanted a more direct answer. I was silent for a while before looking at the two friends.

***"I still have feelings for Teacher Alin."***

# 26. 6 years ago

***Six years ago....***

I can say that it was the period of the most memorable moments of my life, both good and bad. I was a high school student, and my mother happened to marry a rich man who made her pay for my tuition at an extremely expensive international school.

She wanted me to have a good education and be part of a good social circle, not knowing that when I went to school, I did things that she had no idea about.

I would skip at least two classes a day. I would hide playing cards and gamble at school. I would... smoke cigarettes in the girls' bathroom. I would do anything that was risky, as a silly way to get attention, thinking that if I did it, I would look cool, hip. I wanted people to think,

***'Wow, she's so amazing!'***

And my old friends were two: Pupe... a troubled girl, because her parents didn't have time for her, and Ma Miew... an insecure girl, who always did what others told her.

The three of us would sit in the ladies' room, smoking, trying to dissipate the smoke quickly to prevent any teacher from catching us. But no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't escape, because the smell stuck with us.

"I don't understand how cigarettes can relieve stress."

Ma Miew looked at the cigarette in her hand and exhaled smoke through her nose.

"It's very expensive, you know. We're just throwing money away, aren't we? Why don't we try marijuana or ecstasy instead of smoking cigarettes?"

"There's no need to take so many risks with things we know are bad."

I said rationally. Pupe looked at me and smiled sarcastically, recognizing the contradiction in my words.

"You know how bad cigarettes are, but you're still smoking. Look, you're trying to teach others a lesson, but you're here stuffing yourself with nicotine. And about drugs, marijuana or ecstasy are more expensive, right? If money isn't a problem, why not give it a try?"

"Yeah... There's no need to worry about money, right? You're rich, you can buy whatever you want. If you get addicted, you can even buy for your friends too... But I don't think you'll want to."

Ma Miew said.

"Because I know that in time I will become ugly, so I'm not going to take any chances."

I replied.

"By doing this you're trying to be tough, right?"

Ma Miew interrupted.

"But cigarettes are cancer, you know?"

"It's going to be a long time before my lungs turn black. And besides, I'm not addicted yet."

Pupe said, looking at the cigarette and grimacing.

"But I don't see what's so great about it. I think I'll quit smoking."

"If that's what you thought, that's a good start."

I spoke, but I continued smoking, as if my words had no value. Smoke came out of our mouths as we talked, as if what we were saying was carried away by the wind.

"So you're like this because your mother is a woman of the night, right?"

Pupe, being very direct, asked the question, which made Ma Miew choke on smoke.

"Please, Pupe, there are things you don't need to know."

I said, trying to keep the situation from getting any more complicated.

"But we're friends, there's no need to hide it. I'm not loved by my parents either, in fact, they only had me by chance. They just wanted a child, and I was an unwanted surprise."

"But your parents love you, you're the one who gets into trouble."

I spoke.

"I just wish I had something in common with other people, like books to read outside of class. When my teacher tells me to read, I'm like, 'Why do I have to do this?' It seems like everyone has books to read, and I just feel like I'm wasting my time."

I heard my friend talking, smiling, without saying anything. Pupe, who hadn't gotten an answer, asked again.

"So, your mother was really a woman of the night?"

"Ah, Pupe..."

Ma Miew said, touching her head as if she no longer had the strength to stop the conversation.

"Yes."

I responded calmly, trying not to let the subject escalate. Although it was a sensitive topic for me, I was trying not to make a big deal out of it.

"My mother was that kind of woman, but now she's not anymore. She ended up finding a good, rich man, so now we're fine."

"You talk about it like it's a soap opera romance."

MaMiew looked at me with a pitying look, but I just shrugged.

"Weakness is a way for others to hurt us. I will not do that."

"So, you think smoking cigarettes in the bathroom is being strong? Don't you realize that you're behaving like a problematic person?"

MaMiew said, making an observation. Pupe and I looked at each other, pondering what she said, then we looked at the cigarette and threw it on the ground, stepping on it.

We knew we were weak and just seeking attention from adults, but we didn't want to admit it. Acting rebellious while projecting an image of strength was the way to show others that we were tough and that no one could bring us down.

"Saying that and then stepping on a cigarette? I think I should be a counselor."

MaMiew said, and at the same moment we heard the sound coming from inside the bathroom. We were startled and looked towards the source of the sound. Pupe raised her hand and slapped her forehead in frustration.

"Shit, who's inside?" "If I knew, what would I do?"

MaMiew said.

"I would slap the person and tell them to be quiet, not to tell anyone about what they heard here."

Pupe, as the leader of the group, headed to the bathroom where someone was. The three of us stood with our arms crossed, waiting for the door to open. Our hearts were beating so hard, as if they were going to burst out of our chests.

Who's inside? Get out now!

***Creak!***

The door creaked and slowly, someone’s figure appeared before us. We, who had our arms crossed, immediately relaxed and our expressions turned pale, as if we had seen a ghost.

"Are you going to hit the teacher?"

The person's sweet smile made all of us take a step back, ready to run away.

"I'm leaving."

Pupe ran ahead, while MaMiew didn't need to warn anyone, as it would have been a waste of time. Now there was only me left, who was about to run away, but was pulled by the collar of my shirt from behind.

"Hey, foreign girl, where are you going?"

Damn! I was so surprised that my friends had already run away.

"Teacher... I didn't want to do this."

"That's always the excuse for those who do something wrong, right? I didn't mean to... What are we going to do now?"

"You're going to take me to the principal's office, right?"

"Hm... Let me think about it first."

Teacher Alin reached up to my skirt and found a pack of cigarettes with a picture of a person with cancer as evidence.

"What about the lighter?"

"Teacher..."

"Give me the lighter."

I reached deeper into my skirt and pulled out the lighter from my pocket, handing it to Teacher Alin. She smelled good and waved to the door.

"You're going to close the door properly."

"What?"

"Close!"

*Click...*

The sound of the lighter went off, and Teachy Alin put the cigarette in her mouth. I didn't understand what she was doing, but I closed the door and locked it, as she asked.

*"Cough, cough."*

The sound of Teacher Alin's cough made me smile involuntarily. I bet she was smoking for the first time, but she was trying to sound experienced.

"Why are you doing this, teacher? Do you think it's Onizuka, trying to use psychology and pretend to be friends with the students?"

"I haven't thought that far ahead. I'm just a little worried."

I looked towards the bathroom further back, where Teacher Alin had been hiding for a while, starting to wonder what she was doing.

"Teacher, what are you doing in the students' bathroom? And why have you been quiet for so long without speaking?"

"I was crying. I was scolded by an older teacher. And you... Teachers have their problems too. Now, can I smoke with you or not?"

"But you are a teacher, how can you do this in front of your students?"

"I was once a student too, but I never strayed from the path. Now, I'm no longer a student, but I live in the same environment and with a new position. I'm going to take advantage and be a little 'bad' today." "..."

"It's not wrong, right? That way you can blackmail me later. If I go to the board, just tell them you saw me smoking, simple."

"No one will believe a rebellious student like me if I tell this, teacher."

"So, are we just going to keep quiet and do something bad together?"

The teacher, who was a little taller than me, reached up and ruffled my hair.

"That easy, right, good girl?"

*Steps...*

*Steps...*

My heart was pounding when she messed up my hair like that.

Sometimes I think the situation made me excited, which changed the mood around us.

I remember that day I was silent with Teacher Alin and we smoked together, as if it were a relaxed moment.

It was like I was helping the teacher, listening to her problems. It was the first time I felt like I was doing something useful for someone.

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And since that day, Teacher Alin and I started getting closer. No, better to say that I was the one trying to get closer to her, as a student who secretly admires the teacher.

To be honest, I never identified with stories of love or admiration, like the ones I read in novels or mangas. I never knew what it was like really admire someone, because there were always people who loved and adored me, but I looked at them superficially.

Why do you like me? That question was on my mind the whole time.

Is it because I'm pretty? Is it because I look like a foreigner? Is it because my voice is sweet? Is it because I'm tall?

But when I met Teacher Alin, even though I had seen many beautiful women before, none of them had left such an impression on me as she did.

It was as if there was something mysterious and interesting about her. And most importantly, I was completely obsessed with the teacher's perfume.

"What perfume is that, teacher?"

I, who was waiting to go home with the teacher, asked as I helped carry the heavy bag full of books. It seemed that the teacher had a very busy day.

"There's no brand, it's just any perfume."

Teacher Alin replied in a soft voice, smiling at me with a loving look.

"Do you like the smell?"

"Yeah, I've never smelled anything like that before."

"It's a perfume made by Thai people. I like the smell of cherry blossom."

"It's really wonderful."

"Maybe sweat and that perfume go well together, don't you think?"

Teacher Alin approached me, and my nose almost touched her skin. I jumped back in surprise.

"Sorry!"

"What's wrong? Why are you so scared?"

"..."

"What happened? Why are you so quiet?"

I felt my face heat up without being able to control it, my heart beating fast, afraid that the teacher would think something wrong.

"I... my nose touched your arm."

"So what?"

"You didn't care?"

"Well, it's just the arm, not the mouth. If it was the mouth, then I would be upset."

Teacher Alin laughed and then we continued walking to the bus stop near the school. Since I started studying there, I had never paid attention to the distance to the bus stop, until I started getting to know Teacher Alin.

Suddenly, I started to hate the distance, because it prevented me from talking more with the teacher.

"We're here. See you tomorrow."

"Yes."

I replied sadly, handed the bag to the teacher and stared at her with an anxious look. Maybe my gaze was too intense, because

Teacher Alin turned to look at me before getting on the bus. The bus passed right in front of me.

"Anna."

"Hm?"

"Do you want to spend the night at my place?"

"What?"

We remained silent, looking at each other. I didn't know what the teacher was thinking, but I admit that my heart was racing.

"I heard from a friend of yours that you live alone in the apartment because your mother went to Japan with your new father."

"Ah..."

Pupe... too talkative.

"I thought you were feeling lonely, so I wanted to invite you to sleep over at my place. What do you think?"

"But I won't bother you, okay?"

Actually, I was a little afraid of bothering Teacher Alin.

I didn't really like sleeping at other people's houses, even if it was at a friend's house, because I didn't feel comfortable and I didn't know if I could behave as if I were in my own house. But the person who was inviting me was different. When I was invited, my heart skipped a beat.

"You're not a messy girl, are you?"

"Y... yes."

"Then you can come sleep with me."

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How it all came to this, I don't know. Before I knew it, I was standing inside a small, cozy wooden house, which Teacher Alin rented it. She looked like a character out of a Thai soap opera. With the teacher's income being so low, everything had to be very economical. There wasn't even air conditioning. Can you imagine?

"The house is really cute, teacher. Do you really live alone?"

"Of course... Better not, don't call me teacher outside of here. It makes me sound old. Call me P'Lin, okay?"

I shook my head quickly. It was like my mind was blank, not knowing how to react.

"Oh no... It'll just become a habit."

"What habit? I thought we were already close."

"..."

"If you don't want to call me 'Phi', that's fine. I can just be a teacher."

Teacher Alin laughed and went to the fridge, getting some water to offer me.

"But look, outside of school, we are not teacher and student, okay? You can take off that mask, it's heavy."

"If you say so, fine."

"It's funny, isn't it? Suddenly we're so close that I let you sleep at my house... It must be the cigarette's fault, with certainty."

I felt embarrassed just remembering the cigarette that day. That's what it really made me start talking to the teacher, even though it was kind of a weird thing to admit.

"Now that I think about it, I'm still surprised to see you smoking like that.

To be honest, your beauty doesn't match the cigarette. You'd better not smoke anymore."

"Are you teaching me now? You brought cigarettes to school yourself."

"I quit smoking, I just wanted to try it... When I saw you smoking that day, I thought it didn't fit the image, but I'm not judging, okay? I just don't think it fits with this."

"You don't suit cigarettes either. Don't smoke anymore, okay?"

We looked at each other for a moment and laughed, but a strange feeling of silence settled between us, as if something unspoken hung in the air, but was still something we could feel.

What could this feeling be?

"Uh, have you ever had a boyfriend?"

"Huh?"

The question, which had nothing to do with what we were talking about, took me by surprise. I blinked a few times, trying to process it, and shook my head.

"No, I never have."

"What do you mean, with all your beauty, you've never had a boyfriend?"

"How could I? Our school is all girls."

"Yeah, that makes sense."

Teacher Alin laughed.

"But I see a lot of girls at our school having relationships with each other, it seems like something that's quite common."

"I know that in an all-girls school there will always be this kind of thing.

Even in mixed schools, there are girls dating. But... I don't know, I think the girls at our school are more into it because of fashion or curiosity. At our age, it's all about experimenting."

"Maybe you haven't found someone you really like yet. Haven't you ever had someone make your heart skip a beat, even a boy?"

"No, never. But there is someone I secretly like."

Teacher Alin, who was standing, sat on the sofa and looked at me sideways with a cute smile.

"It is me?"

"What?"

I thought she was going to ask "who is it?", but suddenly she asked directly if it was her, and I was speechless, completely taken aback.

"You like me, don't you?"

Teacher Alin asked while smiling, as if she was having fun with me.

"Pupe told everyone. She couldn't stop talking about you."

"When did she say that? And where was I?"

"You were at school. Pupe was in the girls' bathroom, calling her boyfriend, and found me. She told me that you like me."

*I wanted to kill her... Did I really say that?*

"It's because you're beautiful, that's why I like you."

"Pupe said you've never liked anyone like this before. I'm the first." "..."

"You must be in love with me, then. That's why I'm asking you, to know how true it is."

I was about to faint. Luckily, I was close to the couch and ended up sitting down. Now I felt like a thief caught in the act, being pressured to confess. This thing about liking the teacher seemed very wrong.

"Uh... I like you, teacher, but in love isn't quite it..."

"Why are you crying? I just asked. No need to cry."

Teacher Alin stood up and came to me, gently wiping away my tears. I was shaking because I felt like I had done something very wrong. I wished she wouldn’t turn away from me because of this.

"I made you uncomfortable, didn't I? Yeah... I like you, teacher. But I don't expect anything in return. I'm just happy being around. No adult has ever given me as much attention as you, and that's why I..."

"It's better to have someone who likes you than someone who hates you."

"Aren't you mad?"

"Why would I be mad? A pretty student liking me is great!"

Teacher Alin took my face in her hands and forced me to look into her eyes.

"I'm not bothered at all."

"..."

I didn’t know what to say. The situation was so confusing. To prove that she really thought so, Teacher Alin hugged me and patted me lightly on the back.

"No need to worry. I was just talking."

"I'm afraid you'll hate me..."

I rested my face on Teacher Alin's neck and felt the sweet scent of flowers and the warmth of her body. We were so close that I could hear each of our hearts beating.

**Thump-thump...**

**Thump-thump...**

I felt something strange in my stomach, as if something was flying inside me. The stillness of the moment made us stop everything we were doing, standing there, together.

Teacher Alin didn't move away, and I didn't want her to. I wanted to stay like this forever, if I could.

"Anna."

"Yes?"

"I feel strange."

"Me too."

"I can't stay away from you."

"That's good, because I don't want to be away from you either."

"Why?"

"Teacher, it smells so good."

Without realizing it, my lips opened and lightly touched the neck of the person in front of me, as if I had lost control. There was a slight stiffness in her body, but that wasn't enough to make me stop.

"What are you doing, Ann?"

"I don't know either."

The beautiful teacher immediately moved away from me, and this made me my consciousness returned, as if I had been hit by something hard.

What had happened before felt as if I had been sleepwalking, not knowing what I was doing.

But I remember doing that.

"Teacher, it's just that I..."

"We're not in school anymore."

"..."

"We are no longer teacher and student."

After speaking, Teacher Alin pulled me in for a kiss. I, who didn't know what to do, just stood rigid, not understanding what was happening. And, because I was so inexperienced and still scared, I ended up pulling away. Teacher Alin looked me in the eyes.

"An... have you done this before?"

"Teacher..."

"I give you the opportunity to choose: shall we stop here or continue?"

"..."

Everything was still silent. The time was long enough for Teacher Alin to nod and come to her own conclusion.

"Then let's end it here."

"No, teacher!"

And I was the one who pulled Teacher Alin closer, forcing her to continue what we had started. The beautiful teacher, seeing that I was not going to give up, looked at me in surprise and gave in, pushing me to lie down on the couch.

"So... now I'm not your teacher anymore."

"It can be whatever... but can I still call you teacher? I like it."

"I can be whatever you want me to be."

And Teacher Alin taught me a new lesson, something I never imagined learning from a woman.

"Do as you wish."

"I want you to be everything to me."

And I... I was lost in the illusion of first love.

It was the first time I knew I would never be able to forget this for the rest of my life...

# 27.Penguin and that rock

It's not right, especially in our country. No, in fact, in no country would anyone consider it right for a student and a teacher to be together.

But I don't understand why this is impossible. After all, it's love, and we're not hurting anyone.

It's just... two people who love each other. Why do our professions and the roles we play in society have such an impact on love?

But since humans are social beings, we have to care about what the people around us think anyway. That's why my relationship with teacher Alin is a secret. At school, we are just teacher and student close.

When I can, I help carry books and take things to her. But at the end of the day, when our social roles end, we go back to being a couple like before. Now, I'm completely attached to Teacher Alin...

I’ve never had a boyfriend before. Hmm… how can I explain it? It’s not like no one has ever liked me. In fact, I’m one of the most popular students in my all-girls school. If I walk down the street, there are always lots of guys trying to impress me.

They all tell me that my face, with its Western features, is beautiful and that when I grow up, I’ll definitely be an actress. But that never made me feel good or proud.

The Western blood that runs through me only reminds me of one thing: I am the daughter of a woman who lived to please men. I don't even know who my father is.

The only advantage of being mixed race is my looks. And that's fine... It's better to be loved than hated. At least Teacher Alin loves me.

"Do you still go to your apartment every now and then, Ann? Do you spend all day glued to teacher Alin. I wonder if that's a good thing."

Pupe asked, as we ate ice cream together during break.

When it comes to love, I feel so embarrassed that MaMiew, who was nearby, rolled her eyes in an exaggerated way.

"Stop acting like a prude, foreigner. It makes me want to vomit."

"When are you going to stop calling me that? My name is so pretty. You know I hate that nickname."

"It's because you hate me calling you that. True friends have to soothe each other's wounds."

I sighed, bored.

Okay. Call it whatever you want: table, chair, bear, dog or pig."

"And what does Teacher Alin call you?"

"Just 'An'."

"...."

"And in bed?"

"You idiot!"

I lifted my leg to kick her. Pupe was always so direct. My face felt hot, as if I were standing next to a boiling pot. Pupe smiled teasingly and pulled my cheek affectionately, something she never normally does.

"When you're in love, you're great. Normally, you're so serious, so indifferent... Love really changes people."

"Hmm... I'm really happy right now."

"And isn't this love that has to be hidden suffocating?"

"It doesn't suffocate. Because when we go home, we're together all the time."

"Do you really call it home? Now, Teacher Alin's house is yours."

"Don't say it loud!"

I signaled for her to speak more quietly.

"If anyone hears, we'll be in trouble."

"You'd better prepare your heart, An."

Suddenly, my friend, who was the one who encouraged me to confess my love to Teacher Aline in the beginning, spoke in a serious tone. When she uses this tone, I always stop to listen.

"After all, Teacher Alin is a woman. Is she really serious about having a relationship with a student like us?"

"Why make such a big deal? If she wasn't serious, she wouldn't have taken me to her house."

"Imagine if Teacher Alin was a man, about 10 years older. Wouldn't it be like a perverted teacher dating a much younger girl like us?"

MaMiew spoke, trying to make me think.

"Do you think she's really serious about this?"

"Why do you have to make me feel worried? I believe that Teacher Alin loves me."

"Aren't you blinded by love?"

Pupe looked straight into my eyes.

"Has she told you she loves you?"

I was surprised.

I remained in silence, not knowing what to answer. Teacher Alin and I have been together for about two months. And now the holidays are coming.

To others, it may seem like a short time. But to me, who has never been in love before, these two months feel like a lifelong connection.

"Love doesn't need words."

"Deep down, don't you want to hear Teacher Aline say she loves you?" MaMiew rested her chin on her hand, looking at me.

"Being in a relationship but not hearing an "I love you" is kind of weird, isn't it?"

"..."

"I'll rephrase that. You don't even need to say you love her. Has she said what the status of your relationship is?"

"..."

"I never said that, did I?"

Pupe asked, pressing the issue, which started to really irritate me.

"I never asked, and I won't ask."

"Are you afraid of the answer?"

"It's not that. I just don't see the point in asking. What we have is already good. We're together, we come home together, we have dinner every night, she gives me private lessons, we sleep hugging each other... Isn't that enough?"

"Teacher Alin isn't being clear with you, Anna."

Pupe said, changing the nickname "foreigner" to my real name, indicating that she was genuinely worried.

"I think you should ask what exactly you are. Something clearer will make you feel more secure."

"What if she doesn't answer?"

"You'll already have your answer."

"What answer?"

"The lack of clarity is already an answer."

. .

I shouldn't... I shouldn't have told my friends about Teacher Alin. Now they're using it to mess with my head, and I keep thinking about it so much that I can't even sleep.

The teacher, so beautiful as always, she noticed my restless behavior and asked with a smile while correcting my homework at the desk in my room.

"Is everything okay, An? It seems like there's something you want to tell me."

I was slightly startled, like a child caught red-handed, before giving a shy, awkward smile to Teacher Alin.

"Did I demonstrate it so clearly?"

"Yeah. You're acting like wants to ask something, but doesn't have the courage. And when I ignore you, you tries to get my attention. Well, you're succeeded."

The teacher, always so kind, took off her glasses and placed them on the table, smiling calmly at me. "Say, what's wrong?"

"It's nothing, teacher..."

"I'm here to listen."

This simple sentence, without any hint of harshness, made me realize that I needed to speak before she got really angry. When I'm with Teacher Alin, I feel like a little child, full of hesitation and respect for her, even when we're making love in bed.

"Teacher Lin, have you ever heard of penguins?"

"What about them?"

I was a little shy about bringing up the subject. I had just watched a documentary that had really impressed me, and I realized that I could use that to express what I wanted to say.

"The nature of penguins is fascinating, Teacher! I saw it in a documentary."

"Really? What do you mean?"

"Penguins are one-love animals. It's very romantic!"

I said, gesturing excitedly so the teacher could see better.

"When a male penguin likes a female, he searches for the most beautiful stone, among thousands, to give her as a symbol of commitment. If the female accepts, they stay together forever."

"I didn't know that. How cute!"

The teacher smiled, charming as always.

"So that's what you wanted to tell me? I was so nervous to talk."

"I just wanted to say that... I love you, teacher. I don't have a stone to give, but I have my heart."

"..."

"If my love were a stone, it would be the most beautiful one I could find. I give it to you, teacher."

"That foreign girl is so cute."

Teacher Alin got up from her desk, walked over to me, and lightly ruffled my hair with her hands. Seeing that smile, I took the opportunity to ask directly, before the beautiful teacher had time to prepare herself:

"I want to know... do you love me?"

"Hmm."

Teacher Alin raised her eyebrows slightly and was silent for a moment before laughing tenderly.

"Little girl, we're together almost every day. Do I really need to say anything?"

"I know it might sound silly. To you, it probably doesn't make any sense. But... I can't help it. We're close, we've spent the night together, but you've never told each other what we are."

"I've told you before, haven't I?"

"What?"

"That we are whatever you want us to be."

I smiled, a little embarrassed, but strangely, I wasn't completely happy with that answer. I wanted a clear answer, but Teacher Alin diverted the conversation and left me to think alone about what our relationship would be like.

However, in order not to seem childish, I let it go. Our relationship remained a secret. But... secrets don't exist in this world.

A student from another class saw us kissing in the staff room during school holidays.

During the holidays, teachers usually go to school to organize the schedule or resolve pending issues. Some students also go to take make-up exams.

Whether through carelessness or lack of attention, this put us in the center of attention when classes resumed.

Good news rarely gets attention, but if it's something bad, spread like wildfire. The matter got out of hand to the point that Alin was called to give explanations to the head of the Accounting Sciences department (she teaches this subject). As for me, I was the target of strange and curious looks from my classmates.

And now... What the hell.

"How does it feel to fuck a teacher, little bitch?"

The seniors, who were the most troublesome in school, used to shout this kind of provocation whenever I passed by during recess or in line.

This kind of comment made Pupe, who heard it, furious with me and almost went to slap the senior, without caring about the consequences. But I was the one who held her back.

"Don't worry about it."

"How do you put up with people calling you names like that? What you do with whoever you want is your business, but she still has the nerve to call you a... son of a bitch...!"

Pupe suddenly fell silent, uncomfortable with saying those words, unable to continue.

"How can people be so cruel?"

"This is my fault, because I was reckless and let everyone see. That's why everything happened like this. But... I trust that Teacher Alin will get away with it. There is no concrete evidence, only rumors, and no one can do anything to us."

I was trying to be strong, but in reality, I was very scared. I didn't know what Teacher Alin would be going through now and how far she would go could handle the situation.

Teacher and student having a secret relationship. Teacher and student loving each other in secret.

No matter the country, it's still wrong. But... this is love. I don't care what people think, because this is something between two people.

Why does society need to interfere in our relationship? And if I was no longer a student at this school, but I had something with Teacher Alin, would it still be wrong?

*I ask again: is it really wrong?!*

In the end, Teacher Alin went back to teaching as if nothing had happened, showing no signs of being disturbed. For her part, behavior, it seemed like everything had been resolved.

However, even so, my classmates whispered about the matter when the Teacher Alin turned her back. Bad news always travels fast, especially in Thai society, and especially when it involves women.

"What a nerve, she's still teaching, right? If it were me, I would have left and gone to take care of pigs or dogs."

Could I handle it? They can gossip or insult me all they want, but talking badly about Teacher Alin, that I couldn't handle. I knew that this

was Pupe's reaction, and I finally understood what she felt.

*Puff!*

The metal case I was holding went straight at the person who spoke those words. Even though I didn't hear the whole sentence clearly, I knew she was talking badly about my beloved. The classmates in the room, who were gossiping so excitedly, they fell silent when they realized what I had done.

Teacher Alin, who had her back to me writing on the board, turned and looked at what was happening, also remaining silent. Then she looked at me with an impassive, emotionless gaze.

"What happened?"

Even though I knew very well that I was the one who threw the metal case at the head of my colleague, who was not far away, asking this question was part of the teacher's role, who needed to control the situation.

"Anna threw the metal case at Phornpan's head."

"Is that true, Anna?"

I looked into Teacher Alin's eyes and bit my lips, but I answered bravely.

"Yes, I did."

"What you did needs to be punished, you know that, right?"

"I know, teacher. But I couldn't help it. Phornpan was cursing you, I heard her!"

I countered, not wanting to give up, and I wanted Teacher Alin to know the reason for all this. However, that didn't make her look at me any less coldly.

"No matter what the reason is, you need to be punished. Go stand in the front of the room for the entire class. Then I will decide whether to send you to the principal or not."

I was ordered to stand at the front of the room, a punishment that did not cause physical pain, but what really hurt me was the face of the Teacher Alin, who showed neither joy nor anger... I felt a tight pain in my chest.

When class ended, I wasn't sent to the principal's office. Phornpan, who I had attacked, just stared at me, looking for an excuse, but she couldn't do anything because Pupe was there to control her.

"You were too impatient, Anna. I don't agree with what you did... Hey, I'm not done talking yet! Where are you going?"

"I'll talk to Teacher Lin to understand what's going on. She's acting like she's mad at me."

"You're going to make things worse."

"To hell with it!"

I ran after Teacher Alin, who was heading to the teachers' lounge, and grabbed her shirt sleeve to show that I was following. The teacher, with her pleasant perfume, turned and looked at me quickly, before smiling slightly, which made me even more confused.

She was mad at me a moment ago and now she was smiling...

"Teacher, I did this because I love you."

"I know."

"But you're mad at me."

"I'm not mad, I'm just doing my job, nothing more."

Teacher Alin kindly let go of my hand and chatted with me like a kind teacher.

"Don't show so much, it will only complicate things for us."

"S...sorry, teacher."

"Is there anything else? That way I can do other things."

"Yes... it's just..."

I stuttered a little, not knowing if I should say that, but I decided to go ahead since the feeling was squeezing me and making me uncomfortable.

"How are you today, teacher? Was it difficult because of the rumors about us?"

"Nothing much happened."

I, who had been worried all day, sighed in relief and began to smile.

"I thought you'd figure it out. I shouldn't worry so much."

"You're too worried, aren't you? Is that all?"

Teacher Alin looked like she was about to leave, so I decided to ask one more thing.

"Just one more thing... I wanted to know, how did you justify yourself so you wouldn't be punished with all this rumor?"

A silence settled between us, and I could only look at Teacher Alin's back, who remained silent for a few seconds. Then, she turned and looked at me with a smile on her face.

I never imagined that my question would receive such a cruel and unforgiving answer, despite her voice not being sharp.

"I said I was pregnant."

"What?"

I was so surprised by the answer that I almost laughed at such an absurd justification.

"And the investigating committee believed you?"

"They did."

"But you're not pregnant. So why..."

***"I'm pregnant."***

"..."

"Anna... I've been pregnant for over a month. Will you be happy for me?"

# 28.The Final Teaching

In my life, I am rarely surprised by anything. Maybe it is because my own existence has made me a very resilient person. I face situations with indifference, without getting shaken or feeling much.

But it wasn't like that with this story... the story that Teacher Alin is pregnant.

I held this pain inside me until the end of class, waiting for the right moment to confront it. Today, I couldn't pay attention to any of the subjects.

My mind was busy, filled with the word **"pregnant"** repeating incessantly. A part of me tried to console myself by saying that this could not be true, that Teacher Alin was making up a story to escape an uncomfortable situation.

But, on the other hand, I believed her completely. The way she said it, the tone of her voice, and the look in her eyes... nothing seemed like a person was lying.

"Teacher Lin, we need to have a serious talk."

I waited until I got home to speak. Teacher Alin, however, remained impassive. She raised an eyebrow, showing an air of surprise.

"About what?"

"About what you said... that you're pregnant. It's not true, is it?"

I wanted her to laugh and say a simple, **"That's a lie,"** but instead she just stayed silent and nodded.

"It's true. Why would I lie?"

"That doesn't make sense! You only stay with me and... I'm a woman! There's no way I can make that happen!"

She laughed softly, but it was a completely out-of-place laugh. When I needed seriousness, she responded with this lighthearted tone, which only increased my fear.

"You're with me 24 hours a day, Ann?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Um... I'm an adult. I need to think about my stability. I can't take this seriously with you."

It was as if someone had hit me with a piece of wood, leaving my entire body in pain. But all I could do was accept it, because now I didn't have the strength to fight whoever was hurting me.

Teacher Alin held this weapon, while I just stood there, allowing her to wound me repeatedly.

"W-why is this happening? I thought... I thought we loved each other..."

"You're really cute, Ann, and I like you, but..."

She seemed indifferent, even seeing my tears streaming down my face.

"You know, right? You're a woman and I'm a woman. There's no way we can be together."

"Why not?"

"Because it is against nature."

"Love has nothing to do with what is or isn't natural! I love you! We did everything a couple does, as man and woman. How can you say that..." "An, can you give me children?"

"..."

"That's right. You can't even answer, can you?"

"Since when did you start thinking about having children? When we got together, you never mentioned anything about it. You were the one who came after me!"

"Back then, I didn't think about it. But now I do."

She placed her hand gently on her belly.

"I think a child is a blessing."

"..."

"Child is a symbol of that man. This child will allow me to be with him." "How could you do this?"

I fell to the ground, crying uncontrollably. While I was drowning in pain, Teacher Alin seemed happy about something that hadn't even been born yet.

"You were with me and you went to have something with a man? How could you do that?"

"I know it sounds selfish, but, An..."

She knelt in front of me, looking into my eyes, and said coldly:

"Am I really so wrong for choosing what's best for me?"

"You're not wrong for wanting the best for yourself, but you can't just leave me behind like that!"

I patted her shoulder, weakly, just to vent.

"How could you do this? How could you hurt someone you love more than anything?"

"I just felt like I wanted to hand the best stone to another penguin, not you... Please understand."

I placed my hand over my chest, feeling my heart shatter. The tears wouldn't stop falling, and I could barely breathe, but all I could do was listen and accept, even though I didn't want to.

"You're being too cruel to me..."

"Think of this as a great lesson, An. That way, in the future, you won't suffer so much again."

She stroked my hair gently, but the gesture felt like a blade tearing through my skin, slowly killing me.

"It's easy for someone who's leaving to say anything, isn't it? To think that I can get over all this so easily..."

"The faster you get over it, the more relieved I'll be. Remember that, Ann..."

I looked at her, who was still smiling sweetly, even though her words were so cold.

"..."

"Never love anyone more than yourself. That's the last lesson I can give you."

I closed my fists upon hearing this. The tears continued to flow, but I no longer cried as desperately as before.

"Can I ask one more question?"

"Sure."

"Who is the father of this child?"

. .

My love story went like this. I prefer not to go into too much detail because it seems like the more I tell it, the more I get stuck in that same cycle, reliving the same moments over and over again. Let's just say that the experiences I've had have shaped me into who I am today. I'm afraid to love.

Whenever I feel like I like someone, I try to control myself. My motto is: **I can't get hurt.** If I want to suffer as little as possible, I need to be the one to leave the person first. And then I tell myself that this is not a mistake.

***'Loving yourself is not wrong!'***

This fear turned into a habit. And the habit eventually became a part of me.

When I realized it, I already had several partners, and I treated them all as if they were disposable, like dolls. Hurting other people's feelings became a thing of the past common to me, all because I was afraid of getting hurt. Not even Kewalin escaped this... she suffered because of the fear I created myself. She became spiteful, resentful.

I know I shouldn't use my own pain as an excuse to hurt others, but... I can't help it.

I am scared.

Right now, I'm still staring at my phone. There's a friend request on

Facebook from Teacher Alin, but I'm still not moving. I don't even accept it.

I don't even refuse. I stay like that until I get back to my apartment in Rangsit. While I'm lost in thoughts of the past, something I've never been able to forget, the ringing of my cell phone interrupts my reverie and makes me startle.

An unknown number.

It wasn't saved in my contacts, which made me hesitate for a moment, staring at the screen. Finally, I answered and said:

"Hello?"

"..."

"Hello?"

"..."

The person on the other end of the line didn't say anything. Only breathing could be heard. I hesitated, and then thought: **maybe it's...**

"Teacher Alin, is that you?"

**Tut tut tut.**

The call ended. This only confirmed my suspicions even more: it had to be her. Confusion took over me. I couldn't understand what my ex wanted with this sudden rapprochement.

Did you just want to say hello to a former student?

Did you miss an ex-girlfriend?

I bit my lip, hesitantly considering whether I should call back or not. But before I could decide, another call interrupted my train of thought.

The name "Tham" appeared highlighted on the screen. I admit I was a little irritated to see it was him, but I also felt relieved that I didn't have to call back the person who had called me earlier.

"Hello?"

This time, the "hello" was to someone else.

[Anna, are you busy?]

"What it was?"

[Come find me, I need to talk to you about something.]

"I'm tired today..."

I was ready to refuse, but I changed my mind because I also had something to ask him, probably about Teacher Alin.

"But it's okay, we can meet."

[Where are you now?]

"In my apartment in Rangsit."

[Then let's meet halfway. How about the usual mall where we usually have lunch?] "Okay."

. .

Tham's invitation to meet today piqued my curiosity.

To be honest, I knew he always wanted to see me. He never gave up on me. But the way he was excited—or rather, agitated—this time was unlike anything I’d ever seen.

Something was bothering him, and I could feel it had to do with what had happened yesterday.

"So, Tham? Why did you call me here today? It seems a bit strange."

We were sitting in a restaurant in the mall, the same one where he used to bring me to lunch because I loved the crab and egg curry. Even though we broke up, he still brought me to the same place to eat the same dish. I think it's just something we got used to.

"I have some questions for you."

"It's about yesterday, isn't it?"

I cut the conversation off before he could continue, and that left him clearly uncomfortable. He avoided my gaze, swallowed hard, and at that moment my curiosity only increased.

"Do you know Teacher Alin?"

The name of my first love left me speechless. I tried to hide my nervousness by tucking my hair behind my ear. "Yes. Teacher Alin taught at my school."

I glanced sideways at him.

"But what surprises me is how she knows you."

"Teacher Alin was my math tutor for a while."

"Um... She also taught math at my school."

After that, we were silent. Each of us was lost in our own thoughts. In my case, the silence came from the painful memories I had of her. But Tham... what did his silence mean?

"So you called me here just to ask about Teacher Alin?"

"I... well..."

"..."

"I just wanted to know."

"Is Teacher Alin that important that you made me drive all the way from Rangsit?"

I crossed my fingers on the table and looked Tham in the eyes.

"Better be direct. What's going on?"

"It's just..."

Before he could respond, a familiar scent filled the air, completely drowning out the smell of my curry. Tham and I froze as a sweet voice interrupted our conversation.

"What a coincidence!"

I didn't even need to look to know who it was. But what really shocked me was that, along with the Cherry Blossom perfume, came two people who, theoretically, should never be together. There were Teacher Alin and

Kewalin, side by side, looking at us with equally surprised expressions.

"Teacher..."

Tham muttered, almost in a whisper, while I, surprised, turned to Kewalin and said:

"Kew... What do you mean you and the teacher are together?"

The four of us stared at each other, exchanging confused glances, until Teacher Alin, the first to recover, spoke casually:

"It must just be a coincidence."

"Coincidences don't exist."

I replied sarcastically.

Teacher Alin placed her hand on my shoulder, leaning in close. Her scent hit me, disarming as always.

"And what would you call that, if not a coincidence?"

"..."

"In that case, let's call it fate. It seems fate wanted the four of us to meet today."

# 29.4P

Fate...? It's a word I've never really believed in, as much as the word coincidence. But that's okay, since everyone is sitting together like this, it doesn't matter if it was coincidence or fate.

The four of us were sitting across from each other with a bowl of crab curry right in the center of the table. Teacher Alin chose to sit next to me, leaving Kewalin and Tham sitting together.

"Kewalin and Tham look great together, sitting like that."

Teacher Alin said, breaking the silence that had been hanging over us for a while. Even though it was only two minutes, it felt like an eternity.

"How did you and Kewalin come together?"

I asked. The faint scent of cherry blossom coming from the teacher made me almost lose control over myself. Why am I so weak to smells like that? But I didn't show it, keeping a indifferent expression, as if I didn't care about their presence. I didn't want to show that I was shaken.

"It's exactly the same question I have. How did you and Tham come together, An? After all, Tham is Kewalin's boyfriend."

Silence returned again. But luckily, Kewalin had already been quite honest earlier, saying that she remembered everything and knew that Tham and I had dated before, so she didn't seem too bothered by the situation.

"Tham and I are just friends. And Kew knows it."

I replied, glancing at Kewalin, who remained silent.

"But I can't understand the connection between you and Teacher Alin. How did you end up meeting?"

"It almost seems like a test, doesn't it?"

Teacher Alin leaned back in her chair and began to play with the ends of my hair, absent mindedly.

"Actually, I wanted to add you as a friend on Facebook, An, but you never accepted. So, I ended up looking for other friends on your profile and found Tham's name. But... he didn't accept it either."

I've felt like Facebook was invading my privacy for a long time, from the moment I was thrown into the pool to now sitting here in this restaurant.

"When I went to Tham's profile, I ended up clicking here and there and saw that he was friends with Kewalin, so I added her. And she accepted the request. But, honestly, I was surprised. Why aren't you and Kewalin friends on Facebook, Ann?"

"I don't think we're close enough for me to add her."

Kewalin, who had been silent for a long time, finally spoke. It struck me as a provocation.

If that's not being close, then what is, your troublemaker?

"And you two, huh? Have you gotten that close yet? Just by adding each other on Facebook, you've already gone out together to the mall?"

I retorted.

Teacher Alin laughed in amusement as she continued to play with the tip of my hair. Kewalin’s eyes fixed on the teacher’s hand, and Tham remained silent, as if his mouth was sealed. Why did Tham always seem so tense around Teacher Alin?

"We're just getting to know each other better."

"And what exactly do you gain from this?"

I countered.

"People don't need to win anything to want to make friends, do they?"

Teacher Alin said, letting go of my hair and turning to Tham, who kept his gaze fixed on his plate.

"Hey, Tham, how are you?"

Tham raised his head and smiled tightly at the teacher. It was obvious.

It wasn't my impression.

"I'm fine. What about the teacher? Why did you suddenly return to Thailand?"

I looked at Teacher Alin, who stared at Tham in silence. Her gaze conveyed something that I couldn't identify, but soon she returned to being the same teacher as always, without any apparent emotion.

"I came back because I missed som tam and grilled chicken."

"Have you been out of the country? Where did you go?" I asked, curious.

Teacher Alin raised her eyebrows slightly and nodded.

"Yes, I went to Australia. And I realized there is no better place than Thailand. I have so many memories here. Even though I ran away there, in the end, I just wanted to go back."

"Running away from what?"

Kewalin asked, after remaining a mere spectator for so long.

"Did you do something wrong to need to run away?"

"Those who go abroad do not necessarily need to have done something wrong. Sometimes we just want to forget certain things. But in the end, running away doesn't solve anything."

We all fell silent. Then Teacher Alin added something that reminded me of a past I wanted to forget, something that still made me feel pain, even though I thought I had overcome it.

"I missed my son."

Tham picked up the glass of water and took a sip after the teacher finished her sentence. He seemed calm, but I could feel something in the air. There was I was sure there was something between Tham and Teacher Alin.

The way he avoided looking at her, the fact that he called me to talk, and even knowing that she had gone abroad. There was definitely something.

"Do you have a son?"

Kewalin asked, interested, as if she was relieved.

"That means you have a husband."

"Having a child doesn't mean having a husband. I even thought about having one, but he didn't want me."

"Why?"

"He had no maturity or responsibility. During our relationship, it seemed like we got along well. But when responsibility came, he said it was a mistake."

Teacher Alin signaled to the waiter.

"Two glasses of ice, please. We've been here a while and we haven't had anything yet."

"What kind of man is this? When a woman gets pregnant, he says it was a mistake?"

Kewalin grumbled, clearly irritated.

"And in the end the teacher raised the child alone?"

"No, his parents asked to raise my son. At least they love their grandson, but not his mother."

"Why didn't they like the teacher? The teacher is so pretty, you had a good job... At that time, were you already a teacher?"

"Yes, and that was exactly why. Because I'm a teacher."

"Were they belittling the teaching profession?"

"I think it was because their son was very young and they didn't accept him having a relationship with someone older, and a teacher on top of that."

We all stayed in silence. I looked at Teacher Alin, trying to understand. At the time we were dating, I was still a student. Was her boyfriend also a student?

"I need to go to the bathroom."

Teacher Alin said, cutting the subject short and standing up.

"I'll go with you."

Kewalin said, standing up with a neutral expression.

The two of them left, leaving me alone with Tham. Now I was completely confused. What we discussed was something from the past, but it still affected me as if it were recent.

I don't love her, but I still feel...

"The teacher's presence completely changed the mood, didn't it?"

I commented.

Tham, who had remained silent, finally looked at me, his eyes filled with concern.

"I don't like teacher Alin."

"Why?"

"And you, do you like her?"

This ambiguous question, even if Tham had no intention of it, left me speechless. I don't hate her, but I wouldn't say I like her either.

"I don't know how to explain what I feel. It's like we're in the same place, uncomfortable with her presence."

I replied, smiling at Tham, although I was full of doubts.

"But why don't you like the teacher? Has she ever given you private lessons?"

"I never felt like she was a teacher."

Tham's voice sounded weak, filled with a fear I could hear.

Just as I was about to ask more, he changed the subject, as if he wanted to end the conversation.

"What about you, Ann? It seems like her presence affects you quite a bit, especially on the day of the fetus event. What happened?"

I could only smile, damn it. When I asked him, it seemed easy, but now, answering, it's difficult...

"Teacher Alin has a certain importance in my life."

"In a good or bad way?"

"Both, but it was for a short period."

"You and Teacher Alin don't seem like you're just teacher and student."

"I think those two have been in the bathroom too long. I'm going to take a look, I better go see."

I stood up, as I was not ready to answer such deep questions.

Tham didn't need to know about my life as much as he was trying to divert, without answering either.

I walked over to the nearest bathroom and looked left and right for the duss. There weren't many people in today, so the bathroom was empty. Still, I looked for the closed doors to make sure I was there.

Kewalin and Teacher Alin were still there.

"Kew... Teacher, are you in the bathroom?"

There was no answer, so I was sure that no one was there except for a closed bathroom door. Just as I was about to leave, I heard the sound of a toilet flushing followed by the bathroom door opening.

At first, I wasn't going to look back, but something made me stop and look at the person who was coming out of that door. It was Teacher Alin and Kewalin coming out of the same bathroom.

"Kew!"

I screamed and went to her, pulling her arm angrily. When Teacher Alin saw that I was being aggressive, she grabbed my wrist, raised her hand, and eyebrow and spoke coldly.

"What happened, Ann? Why are you so aggressive?"

"What were you guys doing in the bathroom?"

... A silence fell between the three of us. Teacher Alin didn’t respond and looked at Kewalin, while my friend didn’t seem to care and replied with an indifferent expression.

"It's just that we were in the bathroom."

"And why did you go together?"

"Why are you worried, Ann..."

Kewalin tilted her head and made a naive expression, saying something I used to say, as if it was a "copy and paste".

A phrase that only the two of us understand!

**"It was only five minutes."**

# 30.Wrong Target

"I can't take it anymore. Enough, enough of everything. Come here."

I dragged Kewalin out of the bathroom without caring who was around. To be honest, I couldn't believe what I saw, because I know my sweet girl very well and I know how possessive she is.

Knowing Teacher Alin for just one day and acting so boldly like that, in the bathroom of a shopping mall... it didn't make any sense to her.Kewalin.

I led her to the parking lot. While it wasn't as quiet as I'd hoped, it was still better than fighting in the mall with people walking past us.

"Don't you think you're holding on too tightly? It hurts."

The little girl twisted her wrist and massaged it gently, trying to show that it really hurt. I looked down at my hands, feeling a little guilty, but the anger was stronger and made me ignore it.

"Didn't I tell you not to take revenge in such childish ways?"

"Revenge? You're overreacting."

Kewalin's irritated tone made me bring my hand to my face, exhausted, my heart tight.

"Kew... I don't know what you did in the bathroom with Teacher Alin, but don't try to make me suffer by creating stories that make me think you did something more to her."

"It was just cuteness. Did you forget what we both said? Or do you use the term 'cuteness' with me and 'something else' with your ex?"

"Don't be ironic, Kew. It's not nice. Last night, when we were together, you were sweeter."

When I thought about last night, a silly smile appeared on my face. Kewalin remembered what I had done, every sound, every movement, everything was very different from now. When she saw me smiling, she got even more irritated, because it seemed like she wasn't managing to make me feel jealous.

"Don't smile like that. Last night was just sex. And in the bathroom now, too... So now I understand why you can't forget, the teacher is great, right?"

"Enough trying to fool me, Kew. I don't believe you actually did it."

"The teacher told me to move a little."

"Stop!"

"She told me to spread my legs wider."

"I said, enough."

"She whispered in my ear and asked... 'Have you done this yet? I give you the opportunity to choose: shall we stop here or continue?'"

It was like something had hit my head hard, and I almost fell to the ground. I only managed to stay lucid for a little while. Teacher Alin’s words from when we had something together for the first time came to mind, and it made me look at Kewalin in a different way.

"It can't be..."

"Don't be so confident, Anna. If you did it, I can do it too. See... that's the rule of equality!"

Kewalin crossed her arms, ready to walk away and go back to the mall, but I grabbed her by the shirt. I felt completely powerless, full of disappointment, and I could only accept everything because I know how many things I've done wrong.

With Kewalin...

I said it was only for five minutes.

Now Kewalin was showing me how painful five minutes could be. I understood.

"Kewalin... Don't get involved with Teacher Alin anymore, please."

My voice was shaking. Kewalin looked at me from the corner of her eye, showing no emotion.

"Why can't I get involved? Are you jealous? Who are you jealous of?"

"Kew..."

"Are you jealous of me or Teacher Alin? Tell me now."

I let my arms fall to my sides, feeling weak. Kewalin, seeing that I didn't respond, seemed to get even more irritated.

"Why don't you speak?"

"I have no strength anymore."

I didn't know what to say. Everything was confusing to me. I was completely lost.

After all, who was I jealous of Kewalin or Teacher Alin?

But regardless of who I felt something for, I had to get out of this game.

It was hurting too much. I didn't want to end up throwing myself in the toilet and vomiting from stress like I had in the past.

Love myself... That was the lesson I learned in the past.

**"I give up."**

"..."

"Kew, do whatever you want. I'll get out of all this."

It was I who left, leaving Kewalin standing there. There were no goodbyes, no new fights, it seemed that even Kewalin was surprised to see me so desolate.

No... I don't want to feel pain anymore. I'm scared.

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Long story short, I ran back to my apartment and texted Tham to say I was sick. I didn't wait for a reply and locked myself in my room, alone, like someone with a broken heart.

I cut off contact with the outside world because I believed that the best thing was to not know anything. We humans suffer because of what we know. If I just didn't care, no one could do anything to me.

But even so, I still get calls from unknown numbers, and when I answer, there's no one on the other end, which has started to make me nervous.

Teacher Alin!

Ever since she showed up, my life has been in chaos. Not just my feelings, which were confused, but also the people around me, like Kewalin, who got involved in this just because of resentments about what I did.

After three days, I couldn't stand this feeling anymore.

Today, I was going to talk to her and find out what the teacher really wanted from me!

***Beep...***

The phone rang, as usual, and it was the unknown number again.

I answered immediately and said impatiently:

"What do you want? What do you want from me?"

"..."

"You hurt me before, and now you hurt me again. Do you want me to die?" ***Beep, beep, beep...***

No answer. It was like she was just listening to me, playing a mind game, and then hanging up. I almost threw the phone away, but then I realized that the phone wasn't the caller's fault, so I stopped to think about what I should do.

If I couldn't talk on the phone, I would send a message!

I opened Facebook, a platform where privacy is almost non-existent. I only realized this after Teacher Alin appeared at the Fetus event and after Pupe's live. If you want to see someone, just use Facebook.

I was going to try to use this in a useful way.

I opened the app, went to the message box where Teacher Alin had contacted me before and, after five seconds of looking at my name, ex, I sent the message, nervous.

She still dared to look for me, so I should also be brave enough to respond.

**Anna:**

Teacher...

Within two minutes, she responded.

**Alin**:

I'm surprised. What's wrong, my dear?

**Anna**:

I'm tired of playing this game with you. Let's meet in person.

**Alin**:

I don't know if I understood correctly, but I want to see you. I'm out now.

Can we meet at Town Shopping Center, where we saw each other last time? I'll be waiting. Here's my number.

Before I could think of anything else, he sent the number and I immediately got ready and left the apartment.

My heart was racing, but not from excitement at meeting her.

It was a mixture of fear and nervousness. Although we had already met at the event and at the mall, now it would be the first time that we would meet, in a planned way, alone.

Okay... I admit I was nervous, but it wasn't a good feeling. What was I going to say when I met her?

But before I arrived, my phone rang again. It was Tham's number, which surprised me.

Whenever Teacher Alin's name appeared, Tham's name followed right after.

I didn't know what it meant, but there was always this connection. And that's what was happening now.

"Hi, Tham."

I answered the call via the car's Bluetooth, without having to pick up the phone. Than's voice came loudly, as if he knew I was out.

[Let's meet,Anna?]

"I'm busy right now. I can't."

[You're going to Town Shopping Center, right? I'm here too. Park on the second floor near Entrance B.]

"How do you know I'm going...?"

I didn't get an answer, because he hung up immediately. Now I had more questions than before.

Finally, I arrived at the mall, but before meeting Teacher Alin, I decided to go see Tham. After all, I needed to find a place to park.

I parked on the third floor and walked down the stairs to Entrance B, where Tham was waiting.

"Tham, you left me with several doubts. How did you know I was here?"

"That's not important."

Tham's worried expression only made my doubts grow.

"Do you have something to ask? Don't listen to Teacher Alin."

"You knew I was going to see Teacher Alin, didn't you? You know too much, Tham. What's going on?"

"I..."

He bit his lips. I saw tears forming in his eyes, which made me frown, but I didn't say anything.

"I'm worried because you're going to see the teacher. You don't know what she's going to tell you."

"And what is your relationship with the teacher? I'm confused. Tham, stop beating around the bush! This isn't a soap opera, tell me what's going on before something interrupts the conversation."

I've always hated those soap opera moments where everything interrupts just in time to say something important.

"Speak quickly, Tham. I'm afraid of what Teacher Alin will tell me."

"I love you so much, Anna."

"That's not what matters now."

"It was a mistake, Anna... I did what I could."

"What did you do?"

"You and her are closer than I imagined."

And at that moment, Teacher Alin's voice interrupted. I closed my eyes and thought:

Coincidences really do exist, and they will always appear at the best moment.

"Teacher..."

I looked over and saw Teacher Alin with her arms crossed, smiling calmly as she watched us.

"It seems I aimed at the wrong target. Tham's true love isn't Kewalin, right?"

"..."

"But yes, Anna... my dear."

# 31.Sensitive Day

The situation now is extremely suspicious and surprising. As I said before, when I see Tham, I immediately think of Teacher Alin's face, and I can't separate them. Now, is it a coincidence that Tham is here and, by chance, Teacher Alin is here too?

Tham even knew I was coming here and asked to meet me, as if he wanted to intercept me first.

But it seems that the pretty teacher knows me better than anyone. Seeing that I looked back and forth between the two of them, she explained with a soft voice and a cold smile:

"Tham and I agreed to meet here. There's no need to be so surprised, coincidences exist, but not all things are the same coincidence."

Teacher Alin approached us and placed her hand on my waist.

"I've finished my appointment with Tham, now it's your turn, Anna."

"What are you going to talk about?"

Tham asked immediately, looking nervous as he held my hand. The hand that was still holding me tightened, as if he was afraid of letting me slip away.

"No need to talk, you can ask me anything."

Said Tham.

Teacher Alin took Tham's hand away from me with a light touch.

"Let her go, Tham. You're acting like a child. Our time is up, now it's Anna's time."

"No..."

"Let go."

Teacher Alin’s voice became firmer, like that of a teacher reprimanding a student. Tham still resisted, staring at her.

"If you don't let go... Anna, you know that my son..."

"Okay!"

Tham immediately let go of my hand, as if he had received an electric shock, and made an expression as if he was about to go crazy, which made me even more curious.

"If you want anything, go ahead and get it!"

"Including this?"

"Yes, everything."

"Okay."

Teacher Alin stepped away from me and smiled happily at Tham.

"I'll say what I need to say. Now can you leave us to talk, Tham?"

"..."

"Tham, you know Anna is very curious. The more you do this, the more I'll have to explain."

"Yes."

Tham replied briefly and walked away. Of course, I am just as Teacher Alin said, I don't think that because the two of them have agreed, I will let this go. I need to understand what is really going on. They are both full of mystery, there is something they are hiding and they don't want me to know.

I need to know.

Once Tham was gone, it was just the two of us left. Teacher Alin came closer to hug me again, but I moved away and crossed my arms, cautious.

"Are you jealous of me now?"

Her sweet voice and charming smile made me shiver.

"But well, we haven't seen each other in so long. Now that you're grown up, you must feel strange being around me."

"Don't use 'grew up', use 'became more sensible'. And by the way, this is no coincidence, right? Tham is here and the three of us met like this?"

"You're more articulate now, Anna. I only realized today how much prettier you are than before. When you were younger, you were already pretty, but now no one can compete. Tham must be jealous of me."

"..."

"Because once upon a time, you were mine."

"Don't change the subject."

I immediately interrupted her when she tried to recall the past, something that I had already buried deep down and didn't want to relive anymore, because it only brought back rotten memories, nothing pleasant.

"I saw you by chance and followed you. I saw you talking to Tham and, yes, I also arranged to meet him. So, we met."

"What do you want, teacher? I made the appointment with you."

"Don't pretend you don't know. You called me to make me crazy."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because I wanted to drive you crazy, Anna. Just like Tham, who is going crazy."

I remembered Tham immediately.

"What's up with you and Tham? Why this strange attitude? Are you hiding something from me?"

"Oh, you brought it up again. Let's talk somewhere quieter, maybe the mall. The parking lot smells terrible..."

"Don't change the subject."

"Tham already liked me, just like you liked me."

"..."

"He didn't want you to know. That's all. But have you told Tham that we were something in the past?"

"No, never."

I continued speaking politely, even though I was angry and upset.

"I see no reason to tell him."

"He probably feels the same way as you. He didn't want to tell you because he was afraid of hurting you, since he's in love with you. You can see how much he loves you."

She spoke with a slightly sarcastic tone, and I noticed a slight trace of anger, but I still didn't know if it was because of what she was saying.

Are you jealous of me? No, that's not it.

"But is he really that afraid?"

"People's fear is not the same, little one. Just like you're afraid of love. After you fell in love with me and got dumped, turning into a chicken, conquering men and women."

I looked at Teacher Alin with a confused expression. She knew too much about me.

"How do you know that?"

"Lin told me, or rather, Kewalin, her friend."

Teacher Alin paused, emphasizing the 'Lin'. I became irritated and raised my voice, rebutting.

"And about Kew, don't mess with it."

"Are you jealous of your friend? Lin is asking so much about us. Are all your friends like this?"

Teacher Alin looked at me and smiled, as if she was trying to see my reaction. I didn't show anexpression... I thought that now I could control my feelings and all the muscles in my face, but I couldn't help it and raised my hands, hugging my body, as if I was afraid.

Fear of letting my feelings slip out and being used against me again.

"Why did you come back? I still haven't heard back from you."

"And what do you want to hear, exactly? I came back to get you back, something like that?"

"..."

Teacher Alin smiled again and placed her hand gently on my head, as if she was caressing me.

"I'm not a bad person, Anna. Although I can sometimes play with feelings, this time it's not like that. In fact, the reason I came back was to see someone I know. When I saw that Pupe advertised on Facebook, I knew I would end up meeting you. I chose to come, but I didn't think it would bring so many unexpected things."

"Yeah... maybe you shouldn't have come back."

My voice began to tremble. The teacher's compassionate voice touched me deeply. Her tenderness, as before, reminded me of the past and my heart beat faster.

"I didn't come back to hurt you, Anna. I came back because I missed you. You're an important part of my life too."

Teacher Alin raised her hand and gently touched my face. The warmth of her palm caused me to unconsciously turn my face toward her hand. Why am I like this? So weak. No... I need to stop.

I quickly pulled away from her hand and took a step back.

"Let's settle this now. No matter why you came back, don't get involved in my life anymore. And most importantly, don't get involved with the people around me, like Kew."

"So you're a couple, huh?"

"..."

"I already knew, no need to deny it. I was suspicious since the bathroom."

"Yes, about what happened in the bathroom. What happened between you and Keelin? Why did you leave the same room?"

"And what did Lin explain?"

"I'd like to hear from you."

"But I have no intention of explaining."

"..."

"Because it's none of my business."

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Everything is ambiguous. I never received any clear explanation from Teacher Alin.

But I won't prolong this story with her any longer. The further away, the better.

As for Kewalin... I've cut off contact with her too. That little brat is too proud to reach out to me. It's been over a month since we've spoken, it's like we're already over.

Quick, isn't it?

My self-love is still at an advanced level. Even though I'm very curious about how Kewalin is doing, I chose to cut everything off. As for Tham, she still sends me some messages, but I avoid opening them.

And yes... that strange number still keeps calling. When I answer, no one says anything. I start to wonder if it's Teacher Alin.

Or would it be Kewalin?

Why are there so many people named "Lin" in this world?

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"So, foreigner? Have you disappeared for good, huh? If you hadn't shown up, I would have thought you were dead."

Pupe came into my apartment in Rangsit with a bunch of snacks. MaMiew, who arrived later, fell straight onto the bed and lay there without saying anything, looking exhausted. As usual, the owner of the room (me) had to sit on the floor.

"I'm trying to revive myself."

I answered honestly, but Pupe shook her head.

"No, you're worse off than before. But from what I see of your situation, I can understand why. Ex-boyfriend, new girlfriend, ex-girlfriend... it's all spinning in a vicious cycle."

"I cut them all off. Now I'm a survivor."

"You still think you're smart. While you're trying to survive, someone else is facing something much harder."

"Who?"

"Oh, you don't know? Oh, that's right, you don't have Kewalin on Facebook... I forgot to tell you, I added her. Hehe!"

Pupe smiled proudly.

"I love being nosy."

"You're about to tell me something about Kewalin, aren't you?"

My heart started beating fast, a mixture of wanting and not wanting to know.

"How is she?"

"Looks like someone who lost someone very important."

I was a little shocked. I didn't know anything about her at all if it weren't for my friend.

I am worried...

"And even..."

"Want to know more?"

"..."

Pupe brought her phone closer, showing a post from Kewalin, who was at a funeral. I looked at it with interest.

"Whose funeral?"

"I don't know. You know her better than us, you jump around."

"Give me the cell phone."

Pupe smiled, seeing that I was getting interested. Kewalin hadn’t put many details in the post, just that she was at someone’s funeral.

So I started investigating, going to her profile and looking at the friends list to see who else had gone to the funeral. After searching for a while, I discovered that it was the funeral of an army officer.

And after further investigation, I discovered that...

"Kewalin's father died."

"Wow, look how right you made that choice. But wait, her father's funeral and she doesn't include any details?"

"It must be a long story."

"But it is no longer than our curiosity."

Pupe raised her eyebrows, pointing to the name of the temple on Google Maps.

"He's being laid to rest in that temple. Go and support her."

"I don't know what role I would play."

"As a friend, showing empathy. You two don't hate each other. At least go and support each other in this difficult time. Even though you've been through so much already."

I looked at my friend, feeling something like... gratitude. There shouldn't have been a moment like this between me and Pupe, but as I thought about it, I felt something rise in my throat.

No... I'm not going to vomit.

"No need to explain. The look in your eyes just now made me feel nauseous. So, are you going or not? If you want, I'll drive there."

"You're very nosy, Pupe."

"From zero to ten, my intrusion is a ten."

I looked at my friend, who was wearing unexpectedly understated black and white clothes today. It was quite different from her usual style. I had actually noticed it before, but only now did I understand.

By her standards, if they weren’t leopard print clothes, they would be bear prints or something else fussy.

"You came all this way just to tell me about Kewalin, right?"

"Nosy, but helpful."

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And finally, the month of no contact ended when I found myself at the funeral, dressed in a smart, understated black suit, accompanied by my two best friends. It seemed like Kewalin's father was an important person, as the place was filled with wreaths and the guests overflowed the hall, with no places available to sit. The three of us were just wandering around outside, trying to find Kewalin, who no one knew where she was.

If she is the daughter of the deceased, she should be receiving the guests... but there, Kewalin was not there.

"I don't see Kewalin. What now?"

"Let's do it this way, you guys go pay your respects first. I'm not going in yet. I want to find Kew."

"How considerate, huh? You go to a funeral, but you don't pay your respects to the dead, you just look for the girlfriend."

"Look who's talking. This is a funeral, can you stop being sarcastic? Go pay your respects."

"Okay, okay. But hurry up, I hate funerals. I don't like the sound of prayers, the smell of incense. I hate everything to do with temples."

Pupe grumbled with an irritated expression. Despite being extremely curious, she was honest with herself, admitting that she was more "sinful" rather than "virtuous."

As for me, I remained on the outside, as I knew Kewalin probably wouldn't be in the spotlight for everyone to see.

I forgot that Kewalin never had a prominent place in her family.

This meant that today, even though she was the daughter of the deceased, she was there as a "guest" — a guest who had to go to the temple every day to pay homage, without the larger family recognizing her existence.

So I started looking for Kewalin all over the temple. That's when I found her in the kitchen, organizing trays of food and water while was talking to a man.

"Kew!"

My voice made Kewalin turn around immediately. I saw a moment of disappointment on that man's face as she pulled away and came running towards me, hurriedly pulling me to another place.

"Are you okay?"

"Thanks for interrupting, it came at just the right time."

She didn't seem as irritated as usual, which surprised me.

Kewalin quickly left the hall and only stopped walking when she was sure that no one was following us.

"Who are you running away from? That man?"

"Uh-huh."

"Why?"

"He's trying to win me over."

"In the middle of a funeral?!"

I almost laughed, but then I remembered that this wasn't the situation for that.

"I don't even know how to feel. You're charming even when you're dressed in black."

"He's flirting with me without knowing that I'm his older sister."

"What?!"

"We have the same father. Only I know that."

"Ah..."

Okay, this was definitely not the time to laugh. It must have been really hard for Kewalin to deal with something like this at his own father's funeral. And that man... he had no idea. Who flirts with someone at a funeral?

"How did you end up here?"

"So... Pupe saw on your Facebook that you were at a funeral. She showed it to me, and that's how I found out it was your father's funeral. I decided to come pay my respects, because I figured you must be suffering. But from what I see, you seem to be staying strong..."

Before I could finish speaking, Kewalin threw herself into my arms and began to cry, sobbing against my chest.

"That's great... that's great you came. I missed you so much..."

I stood still, surprised, hearing her voice through her sobs. Then I wrapped my arms around her and hugged her, kissing her forehead in a comforting gesture.

"It's okay. I'm here."

It seemed like all the hurt from the past had disappeared. If it continued like this, it would be good...

But apparently, it wouldn't be that simple.

# 32. The Caller

It seems I arrived at the right time, at the moment Kewalin I was vulnerable. I didn't come with the intention of taking this opportunity to reconcile with her. I came out of empathy. And, of course...

It was for love.

Kewalin is fragile and needs to overcome all of this. Although I may not be the best person in her life right now, my presence helps her not feel alone.

It's like I'm a support, someone who keeps her standing in this difficult time.

At the funeral, Kewalin and her mother were present, but they didn't stand out. I heard, discreetly, the relatives of the legitimate wife talking about inheritance and assets, without even caring about the coffin there in front.

Some families are simple to understand. Others, not so much.

I don't know... Maybe it's because I never had a real family.

As for the perfumed girl, who forced herself to appear strong, despite saying before that she didn't like her father, whenever she was alone she ended up crying softly, with restrained sobs. At night she would wake up scared, and I had to pull her close, hugging her. Kewalin was like a child, constantly terrified.

"Are you tired of me?"

That was another night I stayed over at Kewalin's house. It had been more than two weeks since the funeral. In the early hours of the morning, when I pulled her into a hug, I shook my head at her question and lightly patted her back.

"I'm not tired."

"I myself am tired of myself."

"Do you want me to say I'm tired? If I was, why would I stay here with you?"

"Why are you so nice to me?"

"Why are people nice to each other?"

"Are you saying you love me?"

Before, we spoke more directly. Maybe it was the first time that

We talked like this, face to face, without fighting, since the accident, since the fetus party, since Teacher Alin arrived.

"The word 'love', when I say it, has no weight. I myself know it sounds empty. I am someone who deceives people."

I sighed, admitting it.

"But even so, I have devoted myself to you more than to anyone else. Since my first love, I have never done this for anyone. I am afraid."

"Tell me about yourself and Teacher Alin."

"Don't you already know everything?"

"I want to see if the story will add up."

"You're curious, huh?"

I laughed a little.

"If I change one sentence, will you expose me?"

"No, it's just... I can't sleep. I wanted to talk. Hearing your stories might help me think about something other than my father... Or the fact that I never did anything nice for him."

"Okay, I surrender."

Kewalin's low tone left me disarmed. I was afraid she would I cried again. I didn’t know how to deal with it. I’ve seen plenty of tears, from both men and women I’ve hurt in the past, but hers… they really got to me. It was like my first love, who almost destroyed me.

Even after I ran away from her, trying to protect myself from the pain, there I was, again. I went back to the funeral, only to be hurt all over again.

If this isn't love, what else could it be?

"I met Teacher Alin in high school. At the time, I was smoking..."

I began to recount the past, surprised to realize how many years had passed. Still, it seemed like something that had happened yesterday. Kewalin lay there, listening in silence, without interrupting me. She only responded with small sounds:

'Uh-huh.'

'Yeah.'

'And then?'

It was her way of saying she was listening, without having fallen asleep. But remembering that past hurt. My voice shook as the memories came back, as if they were hurting me again. Kewalin hugged me tightly and stroked my back gently, as if she wanted to comfort me.

"You told the same story as Teacher Alin. But I never knew that all of this turned you into the person you are today."

"I'm a terrible person, aren't I?"

"Terrible is an understatement. It's not right to hurt others to protect yourself. She was a teacher, yes, but you didn't have to believe everything she said, like 'Love yourself first.' Loving yourself is important, but not at the expense of hurting others."

"If we don't hurt others, they hurt us."

"Not all the people you wanted to love wanted to hurt you. But you hurt them all."

"And I hurt you."

"Life has its flavors."

Our conversation became lighter, to the point where we almost forgot how much we had teased each other in the past. Kewalin lifted her face and gave me a light kiss on the chin, as if she were joking. I looked at her sideways, in the dark, and said in a provocative tone:

"Hey, what was that?"

"A little kiss."

"Are you seducing me?"

"Did it work? You're so easy to provoke."

"You're a natural seductress. If I wasn't easy, you'd lose confidence in yourself..."

I leaned forward, pretending to kiss her, but I bit her nose lightly, just to tease her. This made her frown, looking a little upset.

"You bit my nose again!"

"What did you expect me to do?"

We were silent for a moment. In fact, our bodies were already speaking for themselves. Her breathing became heavier, a soft moan escaped her throat without wanting to, and the natural scent of the "girl" "Scented" seemed to release pheromones, making me ready to attack her.

But I held myself back. I didn't want Kewalin to think that was all I thought about.

Or maybe that's exactly what she wanted. Who knows...

"It's been a while since we did this, right?"

Kewalin ran her lips along my neck gently, unhurriedly, as if she was teasing a tiger to see how long I could take.

"Before, I was really mad... But the madder I get, the more excited I get."

"You're so direct... Hm..."

I reached out and slid my hand under her elastic shorts, which barely covered her legs, and got lost playing with her bare ass.

"But is that a good idea? Your mother is in the other room."

"As if we never did anything while my mother was home."

"You're talking about that time you lost your memory, right?"

I teased her again, laughing. Kewalin patted me on the shoulder, feigning irritation at being the butt of the joke.

"Don't talk about it... Ah!"

With a slight movement, my hand stopped in front, opening space to continue.

"Let me come in a little, it's difficult like this."

Everything happened calmly, smoothly, very different from other times previous ones, which were intense and full of a battle of wills. Maybe it was because Kewalin was vulnerable and sensitive, and I, in turn, felt happy to be with her.

Everything seemed easier and more perfect, in a way I didn't even know how to describe.

The smell of her body, from every corner, made me dizzy, awakening my desire even more. Our clothes fell off, piece by piece, until there was nothing left.

We knew each other's weak spots and took turns pleasuring each other, never tiring.

It was so good... I didn't want it to end.

Good enough to scare me... Because this world is always fair.

Happiness and suffering are always balanced. It is a rule of the world: no one can be happier than another or suffer more than another. The rich also die—that is their suffering.

Those who find true love are eventually separated by death. — and that is also suffering.

And what about us two? What awaits us? I'm scared.

. .

***'You're graduating this year, right? Let me know when you are, and I'll come back to see you.'***

I stared at the message my mother sent me, a little confused, one morning right after waking up. She hadn't contacted me in a long time, so it was strange to receive something like that out of the blue. And the most curious thing: she knew that her daughter was about to graduate.

"What's wrong, An? You've been staring at that phone for ages. It's going to damage your vision."

Kewalin reached out and turned off my phone screen. I looked up at her, my girlfriend, and answered sincerely:

"I'm surprised. My mom texted me saying she's coming back to celebrate my graduation. It seems like she's been following me from afar after all. And I thought she didn't even care about me."

I said this without thinking much. Kewalin's mother, who was sitting at the table with us, looked at me with a puzzled expression and replied: "There is no mother who does not love her own child."

"It must be love, yes... But I can't feel it very much, you know?"

"You're not a mother yet, Ann. You wouldn't understand. A mother's love is different from the superficial love of a boyfriend, girlfriend or friend. It is a love that expects nothing in return."

"It will be?"

I didn't quite understand, but I nodded and continued eating.

Kewalin, while eating, looked at me with a smile, probably amused to see me still confused by my mother's message.

"There's rice on your cheek."

She said, reaching out to brush the grain off my face.

"Why do you eat so clumsily, like a child?"

And then she took the grain of rice and put it in her mouth, without even thinking about what she was doing. But unfortunately for her, Kewalin's every move was being watched by her mother, who was also there.

Well, that's weird... Friends don't do that kind of thing.

"You, who have always been so concerned about hygiene, seem to be more relaxed lately, huh, Lin?"

"Why, mother?"

Kewalin hadn't yet realized what she had just done. I, on the other hand, was already aware and decided to remain silent, observing what her mother's reaction would be.

"Oh, I don't know... Before eating, you always washed your hands. After eating, you would brush your teeth. You wouldn't eat anything undercooked and you were super careful with everything. But now, you ,took rice from a friend's face and ate it as if it were natural. That's why I was surprised."

That was a roundabout way of saying,

"I've figured it all out."

Kewalin, who seemed to finally understand the situation, stopped in midmovement, with a surprised expression on her face.

"Oh... I forgot, Mom. It's just that I didn't want to waste rice. I feel sorry for the farmers." "It's a good reason."

Her mother replied.

After that, we continued eating in silence, without talking about the subject again.

But after today, I think I'll need to be more careful...

.

.

"Your mother knows about us."

I said as we stepped outside to get some fresh air. Ever since the funeral was over, I had started visiting my loved one more often—about six days a week. The next day, I would go back to my apartment, just to keep up appearances and keep the landlord from getting scared that someone had died.

"Do you really think so? But my mother didn't even show anything."

"She's mature, she doesn't need to say much."

"So that means she accepts it. If she didn't, she would have shown more repulsion than that."

Kewlin smiled widely and linked her arm through mine.

"I'm glad my mother understands. That way it won't turn into a drama like in those other families. Just the fact of loving is hard enough. If I still have problems with my family, I'll die."

She snuggled into my shoulder without worrying if her mother might appear at any moment, now that he had concluded that his acceptance was assured.

I, on the other hand, still feared being frowned upon, but I also didn't have courage to turn her head away from Kewlin, afraid of hurting the sensitive heart of this future dentist.

"Maybe we should make sure your mother is really okay with this before we get too comfortable."

"If I'm not afraid, why should you be?"

"Well..."

"What's wrong? Are you afraid of ex-girlfriends, new interests or even other people's loves who might see us?"

Kewlin’s noisy manner made me sigh. I grabbed her head and brought it closer to my armpit as a joke. After all, wasn’t she so concerned about hygiene?

"An! What are you doing? You messed up my hair."

"Hugging you, to prove that I'm not disgusted."

Although we argued from time to time, most of the time it ended in laughter. At the moment, we were like a newlywed couple, full of energy and enthusiasm for each other.

"Ah!"

Something made me suddenly look at the gate of the house. Kewlin, who was playing with me, was also startled when she noticed my strange reaction.

"What's wrong, An?"

"I don't know... Suddenly, I felt a chill down my spine."

"Did you do something wrong?"

"There you go with your suspicions again. I didn't do anything... But I'm serious."

"You're exaggerating. I don't see anything."

"That's right..."

"Let's go inside. The weather in Thailand isn't ideal for being outside, no."

"But when you go home, there's nothing to do other than use your cell phone."

"Are you sure there's nothing else to do?"

Kewlin gave me a teasing wink, making me bite my lip.

"This again?"

"If you don't want to, you don't have to follow me."

She ran up the stairs. I followed her, half walking, half running, out of respect for her mother. But when I realized that her mother had gone to the back of the house, I quickly climbed the steps, careful not to lose sight of Kewlin.

Whether I arrived on time or not was irrelevant. She always opened the door for me anyway.

***Clack.***

This time, I was the one who locked the door and gave a wink full of ulterior motives.

"You're getting quite cheeky, Dr. Kewlin... You tease me day and night." I approached with a smile on my face.

"It's a good time, right? The sunlight comes in while we're doing things... You can see everything clearly."

"You're not the only one who can see everything, you know?"

Kewlin began to unbutton her white shirt, even after having showered that morning. I, on the other hand, took off my shirt, leaving only my bra, and prepared to advance.

Now Kewlin was partially dressed, with a half-open shirt that revealed her lingerie. This made her even sexier.

We started off in a hurry, like someone quenching a thirst. But in truth, it seemed more like a fun game than anything else.

And because it was so much fun, when the phone rang, it was even more frustrating.

"Are you going to answer?"

Kewlin asked.

I frowned, irritated, especially since it was my phone that was ringing.

"No. This is not the time for that."

But the sound continued incessantly, destroying the mood. The fire that burned inside me was fading like a flame that won't catch. Finally, I gave up and answered the phone.

It was definitely some unknown and annoying number. I was ready to unleash the dogs on the person.

"I can't take it anymore! Who are you? Son of some government minister communication? Because that would explain all the different numbers you use to call me!"

But then, I stopped in my tracks.

The voice that came from the other side wasvery familiar. Very familiar.

"[Didn't you save my number? It's me... the teacher... Alin.]

Teacher Alin's voice made my eyes widen. Even without looking at me, she probably noticed something strange in my reaction.

Kewlin got up from the bed, her body still partially exposed by her open shirt.

"What happened, teacher?"

"[I... feel like I'm about to die.]

# 33.No Chance

Teacher Alin’s voice on the other end of the line wasn’t good at all, but Kewalin’s face at that moment looked even worse. The perfumed girl got up from the bed, came straight to me, and took the cell phone from my hands, ending the call without letting me say goodbye to the teacher.

Immediately, I felt my blood boil as it felt like my privacy was being invaded.

"Why did you do that, Kew? I'm not done talking yet."

"Don't raise your voice at me."

Kewalin, irritated as ever, glared at me with her brown eyes as if they were boiling water.

"What were we doing just now, huh? Why did you answer the phone?"

"Because you were bothering us."

"So I just had to turn it off, right? What did I do wrong?"

"You were wrong because you hung up on purpose! And you know it was Teacher Alin I was talking to!"

"Yeah, and that pisses me off even more than your anger because you're worried about your ex while you're fucking your girlfriend!"

The atmosphere, which had previously been relaxed and lively, became heavy and boiling. I no longer had the energy to continue what we were doing, because deep down I was worried about Teacher Alin.

Her voice over the phone was terrible. And that comment about her "dying"... What was that?

I know I didn't act correctly. I ended up raising my voice to Kewalin. I understand that no one would tolerate that...

"I'm sorry I raised my voice, Kew, but you shouldn't have taken my phone and hung up. We should at least respect each other's space."

"I already respected your space once, and what happened? You went to the bathroom of a bar with another woman and then a man asked you out online marriage. You're the one who made me this way, Aan. Know that."

"But it's over, isn't it? I love you, Kew... And I've already proven it!"

"If you love me, why do you still care so much about your ex? Your girlfriend is here, right in front of you!"

I looked at Kewalin and almost fell to my knees, begging her not to a fight would start. But it seemed like the perfumed girl didn't want to hear anything. Her jealousy and desire for control were taking over everything. At that moment, I knew that anything I said would be useless.

"Kew... Teacher Alin called me saying she's dying."

"And you believe that?"

"But her voice was terrible! How about this: we call her back and go to her together?"

I made a proposal, but Kewalin showed no sign of wanting to give in.

"What I want is for you to cut all ties with your first love, leaving nothing behind, not a shred of feeling. Nothing can come between us. Even if she dies at your feet, you shouldn't care."

"Kew, you're a doctor! If someone died in front of you, would you be able to handle it?"

"If I have to choose between letting my boyfriend's ex die or losing my love, I'd rather she die so you can only love me!"

I put my hands on my head, feeling like I couldn't handle anything at the moment. Kewalin was unyielding, while I felt like a tiger without claws, helpless.

But I couldn't ignore what was happening with Teacher Alin.

"Kew, you love me, right?"

"Yes."

"So I believe that, in the end, you will forgive me. Just as I always forgive you, no matter what you do."

I picked up my shirt that was lying on the floor and put it on. I was determined: first of all, I needed to find out what was happening with the teacher.

Kewalin grabbed my arm, her eyes determined, so intense they gave me chills.

"You're choosing to go to her, aren't you?"

"I can't ignore someone dying in front of me."

"I'm asking: you're choosing her, aren't you?"

"Kew..."

"Okay."

Kewalin let go of my arm and took a step back, as if bracing herself.

"Then go."

But when I saw that she was actually letting me go, something inside me feltfear. The firmness on Kewalin's delicate face made me hesitate, even though my concern lay elsewhere.

"You know I love you, don't you?"

I looked at her seriously, trying to reaffirm my feelings, but Kewalin just smiled and responded with her typical coldness.

"I believe in actions, not words."

"You always do that..."

I turned to leave the room, but Kewalin's words stopped me in my tracks.

"You know I take the rule of equality very seriously, don't you?"

"..."

"If you go after your ex, I'll go after my ex."

"Go see Tham? Tham isn't even your ex!"

"But he is a man."

I sighed and shook my head, trying not to get carried away.

"Don't try to provoke me, Kew. I'll be back soon, and then we can continue fighting."

Because I knew Kewalin was a tease, I left her to her anger. But deep down, I knew that I wasn't entirely right in my actions. After all, I was leaving my girlfriend to chase after my ex-girlfriend in the middle of a moment of happiness.

On the other hand, knowing Teacher Alin, I knew that if she was calling, it was because something serious was really happening.

On the way, I tried to contact her and found out her address. The teacher was living in a simple apartment on the outskirts of town. When I arrived, I found my old flame with an expression as if she were really about to die. "What's going on, teacher?"

"I have a lot of pain in my stomach..."

"The same old illness?"

I sighed in relief. The phrase "I'm about to die" worried me about a lot of things, but I knew that someone like Teacher Alin would never take her own life, since she loves herself more than anyone else. So, it was probably just some health problem.

But I had completely forgotten that she had a recurring problem: menstrual cramps.

I remember that when we were together, every month, when she was in pain, Teacher Alin would almost crawl around the house. She couldn't even sleep in bed, she would get restless and couldn't teach normally. When she did go, she would end up lying in the infirmary. To this day, it's still the same.

"I always thought that when you had children, this problem would go away."

"I thought so too. The doctor said the same thing, but it didn't go away."

Teacher Alin walked slowly to the bed, lay down and hugged a hot water bottle.

"Better to kill myself now than to continue suffering like this."

"It must be karma, maybe. Because you've hurt others' hearts so many times, now you're suffering physically."

"What an interesting idea."

Teacher Alin didn't laugh, as she was too busy writhing in pain.

"Sorry for calling you. I couldn't get in touch with anyone and all I could think about was you. Were you busy with something?"

*'Yes, I was almost having sex...'*

Obviously I didn't say that.

"No problem. I'm here now. But tell me, what can I do to help?"

"I wish someone would buy me some pain medicine."

"You could have asked the janitor or some maid here. They would have done it for you."

"I am embarrassed."

"But when you left me, you were the most shameless person in the world."

I couldn't resist teasing her. Teacher Alin looked at me sideways and frowned.

"How rude."

Whenever she scolds me, I feel intimidated, as if it were something inevitable.

I almost replied "sorry" automatically, but when I realized there was no need to do so, I lifted my chin and crossed my arms.

"It's just the medicine, right? I'll buy it for you, but I'm not going to stay here and keep you company."

"I didn't even expect that much."

"Don't you know anyone in Bangkok? If you have pain again, will you call me again?"

"I know people in Bangkok, but I can't call any of them. The only good memories I have here are related to you."

I bit my lip, filled with internal conflict. Just by her saying that I was something good, I felt a certain sense of comfort, while at the same time I was irritated with myself for being so emotionally weak.

I hated how sensitive I was. This isn't a Japanese anime! First love is just first love, not last love. Why all the drama?

"I'll buy the medicine and go home."

As soon as I finished speaking, I left the room and went looking for a pharmacy.

I described the symptoms to the pharmacist with the confidence of someone who knew what he was doing. Everything was the same as before. What I did before, I continue to do now.

After picking up the medicine, I went back to Teacher Alin's apartment and stopped when I saw her sleeping. I didn't have the courage to wake her up.

She was sleeping, but if I woke her up, she would be in pain again.

I looked at her with a serene feeling. It wasn't love, nor hate, but it wasn't indifference either. I admit that I don't feel completely neutral.

Although we were together for a short time, it was something significant. Despite everything, even though we hurt each other deeply, I never came to hate her.

Our lives have gone their separate ways. We have let go of each other's hands, but we care about each other as life partners. There is nothing wrong with that.

With that thought, I placed the bag of medicine on the pillow next to her, who was lying on her side, and left quietly, without making any noise. My next destination was the person I was with in the present. It was time to deal with that stubborn girl.

Time had passed, it was already past eight o'clock at night. As expected in Bangkok, the traffic on a weekday had been congested since six o'clock in the evening. It was a tiring journey, but I finally arrived at Kewalin's house.

During the trip, I tried to send messages and call, but she didn't answer, didn't read, didn't respond, absolutely nothing.

It was clear: she was completely ignoring me.

**Anna:**

Kew, I'm in front of your house and I'm going to come in. Don't lock the bedroom door. I don't want your mother to know we fought.

After sending the message, I went in. Her mother, who was watching TV, she looked at me in surprise.

"Why did you come back alone? Weren't you with Lin?"

"Isn't Lin home?"

"She left almost at the same time as you. I thought you went together."

"Ah... Yes..."

I started looking for an explanation.

"We went together, but came back separately. I thought she had already arrived. It's okay, I'll try to get in touch with her."

Great, Kewalin. You got what you wanted. Not answering calls, not replying to messages, and just disappearing completely had me really worried. To avoid raising suspicions, I left the house and called her again.

The result was the same: she didn't answer, but she didn't hang up the phone either.

It was as if to say, "I know you're calling, but I'm not going to answer."

My next attempt was to call Tham, as she had mentioned today. The result was the same. Normally, if I called Tham, he would answer in two seconds or return quickly. But this time, nothing.

They were conspiring against me, weren't they?

**Anna:**

"Kew, it's late. Your mother will suspect we fought."

**Anna:**

"Today was my fault. You can punish me, yell at me, or hit me however you want. Please come home."

**Anna**:

"I can explain. Teacher Alin was having menstrual pain, couldn't walk and had no one to help. So I went buy medicine and came straight back. I was late because of the traffic."

**Anna:**

"I love you, Kew."

This time, she replied. Even though it wasn't a message, at least I saw that she read it. The "read" notification appeared, and I waited anxiously awaiting the answer.

1. minute...
2. minutes...

.

**Kewalin:**

Let's not meet again, Anna.

I licked my lips, feeling like slapping myself. It seemed like she was really mad this time. Before I could respond, another message arrived. This time, it was full of feelings I couldn't explain. understood, but they carried a weight in each word.

**Kewalin:**

Sorry

.

# 34.Stalker

After that, Kawalin started avoiding contact, she didn't answer my calls, she didn't reply to messages, she didn't do anything. It's been three days now.

Honestly, I'm very anxious and distressed. I feel like the protagonist of a drama who desperately tries to win back the girl, waiting outside the gate like a curious dog. All that's missing is the rain falling, leaving me shivering with cold while a melancholic song plays as the soundtrack and tears fill the house.

Even though I know she's home, I can only stay out here. This time, Kewalin seems to be really angry, with no intention of talking to me.

Should I pretend to be in pain by writing something like "no

I can't live without you" or "I want to die" just to get attention? ... No, it's no use.

Many people have treated me like this before, and all I did was ignore it and think, "Then die."

If I did something like that, not only would it be pathetic, but Kewalin would also be disappointed in me.

Most importantly, I love myself too much to do something like that.

Oh, what do I do now? It's been three days since we talked. Does she really want to cut me out of her life for good? What a horrible feeling...

I turned to look around, but I didn't see anything. Lately, I've been feeling like something is following me all the time. I seem to be imagining things, but I'm already starting to think I'm going crazy.

However, this is happening all too often.

***Thump-thump...***

My heart started beating faster. Before, I was focused on who I was inside the house, but now I feel something strange coming from behind me. There are movements nearby, and it prevents me from looking back.

A person... these are someone's steps.

"Anna."

An unfamiliar voice called out to me. Instinctively, I quickly turned around to see who it was and frowned, not knowing who the man standing in front of me was.

"What? We know each other?"

There was something like anger or disappointment on his face. I looked more closely, and then a vague memory came to me. I had seen him in a restaurant with Kewalin. At that time, something had happened that had made him very angry.

Ah... now I remember.

"Sap."

His disappointed face turned into a wide, almost childish smile, like that of a child finding his mother after getting lost. However, that smile was too big, and something about his aura seemed strange, not at all trustworthy.

"That's great, Anna. You remember me."

The stranger took a step toward me, and I instinctively backed away until my back was touching the gate of Kewalin's house. There was no one around to help me.

It's not safe... I feel it.

"What are you doing here, Sap?"

"I came to see you."

"See me? How did you know I was here?"

Suddenly, something occurred to me.

"These days, were you the one following me?"

"No."

"Oh, no?"

"Not just these days. It's been months."

**A stalker...**

This was dangerous. I realized this quickly and began looking for a way to escape. I looked around, trying to find a way out, but Sap placed his hands on either side of my body, pinning me against the gate. Now it felt more like a forced hug than something consensual.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"I'm uncomfortable. Can we talk in a more open place? It's too close."

"Talking like this, up close, is better. You can hear better... and you smell so good."

Sap brought his nose closer as if he was sniffing something, like a dog.

"It's not the same scent as Lin, but it's nice."

"Why are you following me, Sap?"

"I wanted to know what you do on a daily basis. Who you talk to, what you spend your time on. Now, I know everything about you."

A stalker...

I was being stalked. Now I understood what Kewalin had gone through to have exploded like that. I should never have gotten involved.

"I think about you every day, but I didn't want to suddenly approach you. I wanted to get used to your presence sooner... But I couldn't help myself, so I had to call."

"Call? So those strange numbers were yours?"

"Yes, it was me... But you always thought it was someone else, especially one named Alin. Good thing it was a woman. If it was a man, I would kill him."

"..."

"You are mine. Only mine."

I bit my lip and started thinking seriously about how to get out of this situation, but there was no way out. No room to even move. He was so close that it felt like he was going to merge with me.

"Step back a little. I can't breathe."

"I can give you mouth-to-mouth resuscitation."

As soon as Sap leaned over, I slammed my head into him as hard as I could. But since he was taller, I only managed to hit his mouth and chin. He backed away, but didn't fall, giving me a small space to try to escape.

But then...

"Where do you think you're going?"

Sap grabbed my arm and threw me against the wall of the house. I tried to scream, but he covered my mouth with his hand, squeezing it tightly, while threatening me.

"Don't force me to do something worse."

"..."

"Why is it like this...? Every time I love someone, they end up hating me. Even you, Anna. I thought it was different, but even you hurt me"

***Thunk!***

Suddenly, Sap's body fell to the ground like a dry leaf. I was confused until I noticed Tham holding a piece of brick in a ripple shape.

I finally understood what had happened.

"Tham!"

I rushed to hug him like someone filled with fear. Tham wrapped his arms around me as he looked at Sap's unconscious body on the ground, as shocked as I was.

"Now everything is fine. I was already finding this all strange."

Not wanting anyone else to go through something like this, Tham decided to take Sap to the nearest police station, while I, as the victim, filed the complaint. It didn't take long for Sap to regain consciousness and hear all charges before being taken into custody.

I noticed that Sap's family went to the police station, talking to the police officers with expressions of disbelief.

After all, as parents, they would never believe that their son would be someone so scary...

"Maybe she gave my son an opening."

Upon hearing this accusation, Tham promptly showed the video he secretly recorded as evidence to corroborate my testimony. Only then did Sap's parents fall silent, although no apology was made. That had been a very long night. And to think that at the most terrifying moment of my life, it was Tham who appeared to save me...

"Thanks."

I said when Tham dropped me off at my apartment in Rangsit. Today, I allowed him to come up for a drink as a way of saying thank you and courtesy.

Meanwhile, I grabbed a can of beer from the fridge and started drinking. in large gulps, as if the yeast could dissolve the remaining panic.

"It was nothing. Even if it wasn't you, I would have helped. It all happened right in front of me."

"But what were you doing near Kew House? Did you go to see her?"

"Yes."

Tham nodded briefly, as if he didn't want to dwell on the subject.

"How lucky you were there when you were. This guy had been following me for days... No, months actually. But he showed up the day you went to see Kew. Should I thank fate or coincidence?"

"But didn't you say you don't believe in coincidences?"

"And I still don't."

I continued drinking and sat on the bed.

"By the way, why did you go to see Kew?"

"It was just to talk, but I happened to see you earlier."

"Maybe Kew was also being chased by this guy, but coincidentally, he changed the target to me earlier. Otherwise, she might have gone through this... And maybe she wouldn't have been as lucky to be saved."

Tham laughed, as if he disagreed. I looked at him, puzzled, and frowned.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Nothing."

"There is something, yes."

"Well... how can I explain?"

Tham hesitated, but when he realized that I wouldn't give up, he finally gave in.

"It's part of a revenge plan, you know? Kewalin had already told me about

it."

"Like this?"

"She wanted to teach you a lesson. She thought you were too friendly and close to everyone, so I wanted you to understand that other people's good deeds don't always mean true friendship. This guy had been stalking Lin for a while now, and she thought that if he started chasing you, it would be more balanced."

I blinked, confused, unable to believe what I was hearing.

"But it was too much of a coincidence. If I hadn't gone after Sap that day, Kew's plan wouldn't have worked."

"Exactly. That's why she did everything she could that day to exaggerate and make the guy look pitiful, hoping he'd give up. She watched to see how you'd react, and as always, you were you: you reached out to comfort him and ended up getting involved. She managed to get rid of him, but he got in your way."

My beer can almost fell to the floor when I remembered that day. I was just trying to help Sap, thinking that Kew might be affected in some way in the future. I never imagined that she had planned all this to teach me a lesson.

Is this possible...?

My eyes began to fill with tears. I didn't know if it was because shock, sadness or disappointment. I never thought someone I loved would do something like this.

Seeing me so quiet, Tham left the table where he was sitting, took a handkerchief and came to me to comfort me.

"Wipe away your tears. I think Kewalin has already forgotten about this. If she knew what happened today, she would be as surprised as you."

"Kew is very spiteful. I never imagined she would be this much. I've tried everything to show her how I feel about her, but she still..."

My heart ached. I took another sip of beer and, when I finished the can, I threw it towards the door, irritated.

"The more you love, the more it hurts."

"You too... You collaborated with her."

"Back then, I was angry with you too. Don't you remember how you left me? Who wouldn't be hurt? Now do you understand how painful it is to be hurt by someone you love?"

Tham’s voice shook at the end, but he tried to force a smile. I looked at him and sighed, smelling the faint scent of beer emanating from myself.

"You still haven't stopped loving me?"

"And is it so easy to stop loving someone like that?"

"But I hurt you so much..."

"And what Kew did to you made you stop loving her?"

No... Despite the pain and suffering, I couldn't deny that I still loved her.

Tears began to stream down my face, and Tham gently wiped them away with his thumb.

"I envy Kew. Why do you love someone like her so much, while I always wanted that love but never received it?"

"Tham..."

"Okay. I understand..."

This time, he was the one who cried, perhaps out of self-pity.

"If the person doesn't love you, there's no point in doing anything. I just wanted to have a chance, at least once, to show my worth. Who knows, maybe, you noticed or felt something..."

"A chance, is that it?"

It seems like everyone wants a chance, just like I want one. Kewalin, who now refuses to see or speak to me. I smiled wearily and looked at Tham with empathy.

"You deserve a chance, Tham."

I lightly touched his face with compassion.

"But I don't know if, even with that chance, I could love you."

"An..."

"Then let's try..."

Tham leaned toward me, and I didn't shy away. But he needed to know that if I gave him this chance, but my heart didn't follow him...

He would need to learn to give up.

# 35. Accept

Opportunities are not for everyone. I am one of the people who has not been given any opportunities... especially from Kewalin.

It's been over a week since she, firm and determined, hasn't answered my calls, hasn't returned them, hasn't read my messages on Line, hasn't responded to texts, hasn't even logged into Facebook (I even asked Pupe to check).

It feels like I've been completely thrown out of Kewalin's orbit and will never have the chance to return.

Now, the person who got the next opportunity is Tham. He believes he is the luckiest man in the world. Since that day, I decided to give it a try. I gave him a chance, after all, I know how much it hurts to not be given a chance to start over. So I tried to be kind and open my heart a little.

But unfortunately... dating Tham made me realize something: I am, without a shadow of a doubt, a lesbian.

For the past two weeks, I've tried hard. I really wanted to try to love a man who's so devoted to me. But I couldn't. When you don't loves, just doesn't love. And it seems like today is the day I'll have to be cruel to him. Yes... I'm going to break up.

"You're so quiet today, An. Did something happen?"

We are sitting in a seafood restaurant on the outskirts of town because I had mentioned two days ago that I wanted to eat river shrimp.

Today, he brought me here.

"Hm... just thinking about some things."

"Thinking about what?"

"..."

Before I could say anything, Tham interrupted me with a huge smile.

"An, you've already finished college, right?"

"Yes. Just like you. You're graduating this year too, aren't you?"

"Yes."

Tham rubbed his hands nervously and began to sweat.

"I'm so anxious."

"Anxious about what?"

He hesitated before answering, afraid:

"It's something I've talked to you about before. I'm wondering if I should take a chance and say it again."

I tried to remember what Tham had said, but lately he had been talking so much that I had barely paid attention. My mind was still busy thinking about Kewalin.

I miss her so much... Does she miss me? I picked up my phone while Tham was trying to say something important. I swiped the screen without paying much attention to him.

"I'm thinking about our future."

"Uh-huh..."

By chance, I went into the friend request list and saw that the name of the perfumed person (Kewalin) was still there. Along with the name of Teacher Alin.

"I know we started dating recently, not even a month ago. But if we count the time before, it's already been three years. I wouldn't mind if we became a family..."

As I listened to Tham, it was as if his words went in one ear and out the other. My attention was on Teacher Alin's name. Should I accept the request? Strangely, I no longer felt the same way emotion from before.

Curious.

***To accept.***

As soon as I accepted, I immediately saw Teacher Alin's feed. At the same time, Tham said something important:

"An... I want to ask you..."

On her feed, Alin posted something showing how happy she was today:

*'Hanging out with my son. Does he look like me?'*

Accompanied by a photo of a handsome, fair-skinned boy, very familiar.

I frowned as I looked at him. I had seen this boy before.

This boy...

"In marriage."

I threw my phone at Tham's face immediately upon realizing it. Then I stood up and banged the table in anger. Tham, who was proposing to me, was completely confused.

"My God, how stupid was I! Why didn't I think that Teacher Alin and you could be related in some way?" "Wait, Ann. What happened?"

"Look at the cell phone I played! Look!"

I have always considered myself an intelligent person, able to connect the dots and understand the world around me. But in this case, I completely failed. I did not expect... I had no idea... that Teacher Alin and Tham would have a child together.

After I spoke, Tham took out his cell phone and turned pale as he tried to explain himself:

"Um... listen to me. I can explain. I was going to tell you about this, but I never found the right opportunity."

"We've been together every day, Tham! We've had so much time, and you never said anything?"

"B-but that's in the past."

"And you didn't think it was important to tell me that you have a son?"

I covered my face with my hands and grabbed my bag.

"I don't accept this. Let's end it here."

"Wait, Ann!"

Tham ran after me to the parking lot and fell to his knees, crying. He did everything he could to stop me from leaving, which only made me more angry. I actually intended to break up with him today. But finding out about this now was something I simply couldn't accept!

"That's in the past, An. There's nothing left between me and Teacher Alin, other than Tim. Are you mad because I have a son?"

"It's not that."

"So what is it?"

I sighed and looked at him seriously. For the first and last time, I would be honest with him. And he needed to understand.

"Listen, Tham. I'm breaking up with you for three big reasons. Pay attention. First: I don't love you."

"Ann..."

"Second: You deceived me. You were not sincere from the beginning. That is already wrong."

Tham was rubbing his hands, crying like a child, which made me feel sorry for him.

"I promise I'll tell you everything. About my son, about Teacher Alin, anything. I won't hide anything from you anymore. I love you so much, An. I'd even give my life for you. Please don't break up with me."

"Third: I'm a lesbian. I don't like men!"

"That can't be true."

"It's because of you that I discovered that I never liked men!"

I spoke honestly, even though I felt angry and guilty. Because, in the end, I wasn't completely honest with him either.

"I wanted to give you a chance because I know how much it hurts to not have an opportunity, just like Kewalin didn't give me one. That's why I dated you."

"But we're together now. The past is behind us. If you don't accept my son... I can take him out of my life."

I closed my eyes. At first I wanted to list just three reasons, but now I had to add one more. I hope this gives him pause.

"Actually, I didn't want to add anything else. But I have to. This is the last reason, Tham: I need to tell you something too."

"..."

"Teacher Alin and I used to live together as a couple. She left me because she got pregnant with you. This is something I cannot accept!"

Tham almost fainted, but he remained kneeling, his arms hanging loosely at his sides, without strength.

"What? You and Teacher Alin..."

"Yes, Teacher Alin and I were girlfriends back in school. I can't accept that my ex was my new boyfriend's girlfriend and the mother of his child. Do you understand how confusing that is? It's repulsive. I can't accept this vicious cycle."

"..."

"I have enough reasons already. Let's end it here."

Tham let me go without trying to stop me. I also didn't imagine that today would be the day things would end so disastrously. I learned about the relationship between Teacher Alin and Tham, while he also found out that Alin and I once had something.

It was fair enough.

In the end, now, I have no one left. Neither men nor women. This is the end for someone greedy like me.

.

. .

"Your story would make a great plot for a novel, huh? Will it always revolve around these four? And then, how come Teacher Alin's ex is Tham?

The world really is small!"

MaMiew, who was playing in my apartment, put her hand on her head after hearing everything.

"It's a good thing Kewalin wasn't involved in this, she's not the wife of either of those two, but you said that Kewalin already left the bathroom with the teacher, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I don't think anything happened."

"Anything could happen!"

Pupe crossed her arms and began to bite her cheek, thoughtful.

"What now? Are you just going to leave Kewalin like that?"

"I can't talk to her, I haven't even been to her house. Her mother is there, I don't want to fight in front of her."

"Are you well?"

Pupe lifted her leg and pushed me as if it were a joke, but I could tell she was worried. I looked at my friends and made a dejected expression.

"I'm fine, I guess. Now I have you guys here, so it's not so bad. Before, Tham was still supporting me, so I wasn't so sad. But if you weren't here... I would end up breaking down and crying again."

"What a shame, huh? When you start trying to fall in love with someone, things get so complicated."

"It was your fault. Who's going to look for their ex-girlfriend when they're already with someone else? If it were me, I would have broken up too. It doesn't make sense."

MaMiew said irritably, and I just stood there with my head down and feeling guilty.

"At that moment, I was just worried about the teacher. I really wanted to help."

I explained, but my friends still shook their heads in disapproval.

"You went to Teacher Alin, and... did something happen?"

"You're crazy! Teacher Alin and I didn't do anything. That day, she had menstrual pain, so I went to buy medicine for her and came home straight away."

"Even if I wanted to, it would be with my fingers full of blood, right?"

I raised my leg to push MaMiew, but she ran to hide behind Pupe and stuck her tongue out at me.

"Serves you right! She was dumped by her girlfriend because she went after someone with period pain!"

I made a face at my friend, intending to give her a reply, but her cell phone rang, saving her life.

"You got away with it because the pretty song on my phone played, MaMiew."

When I looked at the screen and saw the name of the person calling, I made a face like I was tired of everything.

"I can't believe you're calling again..."

"It's Teacher Alin, right?"

Pupe asked, with that know-it-all tone. I nodded tiredly and just stared at my phone until it hung up.

"Why aren't you answering?"

"Last time, I answered and broke up with Kewalin. And now, if I answer, what will change?"

"You don't have anyone else to finish, so just answer it!"

"You're insisting too much."

Before I could respond, the phone rang again. This time, I hesitated and ended up answering it.

"Yes, teacher."

Although I was a little afraid that Teacher Alin was causing more problems, I still wanted to know what she had to say. I knew she wouldn't care about something unimportant.

"An... Can you come out and see me?"

"What happened? Are you having period pain again?"

"No, I need to talk to you today."

"I can't, I'm not available."

I looked at my friends and tried to look firm, like I was refusing.

"It's not because you want to see me that I'm going."

'Don't worry, I'm fine...'

I thought to myself, but soon Teacher Alin's voice came again.

"Please, An... If you don't come, I may never see my son again. Tham asked me to call you, please come."

I knew this was just another attempt by Tham to manipulate me using Teacher Alin, but I was also sure that she didn't want me would call without a serious reason.

"Sorry, I really can't help you. Bye."

Just as I was about to hang up, she said something that made me stop.

"What did you say?"

***"If you come, you'll be able to see Kewalin. You have to come."***

# 36.Tim

"I came because of Kewalin. That's the only reason..."

In fact, I really didn't want to believe that what Teacher Alin said was true. There was no logical reason for the perfumed person to come find her. But still, if it was an opportunity, I should grab it. Whether I came or not, this would be the last time I would find the teacher.

Next time, even if Teacher Alin really was dying, jumped off a building, or got hit by a car, I wouldn't show up. She's already destroyed my life more than enough.

The meeting place was a park in the city center. This place it used to get busy around school hours because it was close to a high school and a medium-sized shopping mall. In the morning, people would come to exercise or take a shortcut to work. In the late afternoon, they would do aerobics or play Pokémon GO.

I really didn't understand why it needed to be there. Thailand's weather wasn't exactly conducive to outdoor gatherings.

When I arrived, there was Kewalin, the woman I had wanted to see all along, but who kept avoiding me. Besides her, Teacher Alin was also present.

I wanted to know why the perfumed person had agreed to come and what the reason was.

"Kew..."

Kewalin crossed her arms, hugging herself, and gave Teacher Alin an unfriendly look.

"You said Anna was dying, but she doesn't look like someone on the verge of death at all."

"If I had told you the truth, you wouldn't have come."

"Yes, yes, I wouldn't have come at all."

"So why did you come?"

This time, I was the one who asked, but Kewalin still didn't look at me, as if she was disgusted by me.

"The teacher said that if I came, I would help her see her son."

"Just because she asked, you came?"

"Anyone in this world can ask me for anything, except you, Anna."

Kewalin's words cut my heart. I looked straight at her, but she looked away. Teacher Alin, noticing the tension between the two of us, sighed.

"You two aren't doing well, are you? Did you have a fight? Whatever it is, resolve it now. Since you're here, take the opportunity to clear things up."

"That's not your problem."

"That's right, it's none of my business. But you've come all this way. Do you really want to leave this unresolved? If you have something to say, say it now."

"The problem is precisely you, teacher."

I said directly, blowing air out of my mouth to try to contain my anger.

"The day you said you were going to die, I was with Kew. After I came to you, we didn't talk anymore."

"Wow, what a grudge."

Teacher Alin looked at Kewalin, who was glaring at me for mentioning this in front of the others. But I wanted to clear everything up once and for all.

"Tell her, teacher, that we both didn't do anything that day. You had menstrual cramps."

"I can confirm. That day, I had horrible cramps. There was nothing I could do."

Teacher Alin shrugged, as if it was no big deal.

"Stop fighting. I didn't come back to destroy your relationship."

"But you did. Do you know how hard it was for me to start over?"

"It's not because you went out with the teacher or anything like that. What hurt me was that you valued someone else more than me."

The word "someone else" made Teacher Alin point to herself, laughing a little.

"Look, I'm not really someone else to Anna. I mean... I was her ex, her first love, her first time..."

"No need to give details. I already know about you."

Kewalin crossed her arms impatiently.

Sometimes, I felt that Teacher Alin was quite provocative. Kewalin, on the other hand, was visibly irritated.

"Like I said, I broke up with Anna because she valued someone else more than me. I'm tired of a relationship that keeps going in circles. I want out of this orbit. Please exclude me from all this mess."

She looked like she was on the verge of tears. I felt terrible too. When I tried to approach her, Kewalin took a step back.

I understood. First love always hurts. And I was the one who opened a huge wound in her heart.

The only way to cure her was to treat the wound.

"I love you, Kew."

I confessed my love for Kewalin in front of Teacher Alin. For a brief moment, I saw a stiff expression on the teacher's face, as if she didn't like it, but she soon shook her head, dismissing the thought.

"No matter what you say, Anna. I don't believe you anymore. Today, I came here to end everything between us. I don't want to be involved in this cycle anymore. Enough for me."

"So that's why you came?"

I asked before she turned to leave. That made her stop.

"I came to make it clear that it's over between us. There's nothing left."

"That's a lie. If you wanted to make it clear that it was over, you wouldn't have come. You came because you still have feelings for me. You came because you were worried about me, thinking I might die, right?"

"..."

"It's the same reason I went that day, thinking Teacher Alin was dying. Why don't you understand that?"

I approached her and pulled her by the arm to make her look me in the eyes. This time, I was the one who started crying, even though I had remained strong until now.

"The teacher already confirmed that nothing happened between us. Why do you insist on breaking up with me?You don't love me anymore?"

"We arrives."

Tham's voice, which arrived at that moment, interrupted our discussion.

We all turned to see him, holding the hand of a fair-skinned little boy. The height difference made it seem as if the charming man had been shrunk to a miniature size.

"Tim!"

Teacher Alin almost ran to her son, but Tham held him tightly in his arms, pushing him away from her.

"Don't touch my son."

"What's all this fuss about? Why bring a child into this?"

I raised my hands and pressed my temples, feeling like today was the day of the apocalypse. It was hard enough dealing with Kewalin alone, and now this? Everyone here, fighting in front of a child? How embarrassing.

"Wait a minute. How is Teacher Alin's son with you, Tham? I don't understand."

Kewalin looked confused, needing a long explanation. And I knew that, just like me, the perfumed one would be shocked to hear the whole story.

"Teacher Alin had a child with Tham."

"I'd better go."

Kewalin made to leave quickly, like someone who wanted to avoid trouble, but Tham called her before she could escape.

"You have to stay, Lin. This involves all of us."

Tham bent down and lifted the boy to his feet before pointing towards the playground.

"Go play. I'll call you later."

"Okay, brother."

Tim referred to Tham as "brother," which led me to conclude that the family must have decided that the grandparents would be the parents, and he would remain single. Nobody knew about Tham's past, just as I had never suspected anything.

A handsome, educated man with money and good background. Who could have imagined that he would be capable of something so low? Getting his own teacher pregnant?

But I won't judge him so much. After all, I'm not an example either. His ex is my ex too.

I should have run away from there like Kewalin tried to do, but I couldn't. We had come this far, there was nowhere else to run.

"If you have something to say, say it now and get it over with, because this will be the last time we talk."

I spoke firmly, without beating around the bush. Tham's face showed pain when he heard this.

"Today I will clarify everything."

He turned to Teacher Alin and asked:

"Do you want your son back?"

The teacher's expression was one of pure excitement, as if she had won the lottery. Without hesitation, she seized the opportunity.

"Yes, I'll take care of Tim."

"But promise me that Tim will never contact me again. He will never know that I am more than a brother to him."

"No problem."

Tham then looked at me, full of hope.

"Now I'm free, An. We can love each other."

Tham's selfishness was breathtaking. What the hell! He called everyone here to get rid of his responsibilities, all to try to convince me of this?

"Don't you understand, Tham? Do you want me to announce on the radio or TV that I'm a lesbian?"

My statement was loud enough for everyone around to hear.

A few people passing by glanced and quickly looked away when our eyes met. What a ridiculous situation, discussing this in public. But then again, we couldn't talk in someone's house or in a shopping mall. An open space seemed like the only place where we could shout without disturbing anyone.

"You're just teasing me."

Tham insisted, childish like a spoiled child who wouldn't accept a "no". I was exhausted. Physically and emotionally.

"Let me explain, Tham. I grew up in a family where my mother was a prostitute. I never saw any man as something good. They come, satisfy their desires and leave."

"..."

"I like a woman's body. I desire breasts and pussies, not muscles. I don't like dicks, understand that. Men disgust me."

I was as direct as possible. I've never had to be so frank in my entire life.

But if the truth was what would cut any ties once and for all, then so be it.

"My first love was Teacher Alin. My second love, and I hope my last, is Kewalin. The woman with the scent of cherry blossom, who always turns me on."

I approached Tham.

"I hate the masculine perfumes you wear, like Polo Sport, Armani or CK. They're too masculine. I don't feel anything for that. Stop stalking me."

"Lie! That's a lie!"

Tham screamed, tears streaming down his face. The birds in the surrounding trees flew away in fright, but that was the least of it. The person most shaken was someone else.

Teacher Alin.

"Where's Tim?"

The teacher's desperate tone interrupted our conflict. Everyone looked at the playground at the same time. Kewalin pointed to the main gate, where there was a group of colorful balloons.

"Tim is over there!"

Since Tim was still very young, his absence caused general panic. The teacher ran ahead, while Kewalin hesitated before following her. Only Tham and I were left. It was time to end this once and for all.

"It's over, Tham. Enough. You make me uncomfortable."

I tried to leave, but he held my arm.

"No, An. I love you very much."

"Your son is up ahead. You should be worried about him, not chasing after women. I can't love someone like that."

"..."

"You are no different from the man who left his 'seed' in my mother and disappeared. I hate this!"

I pushed Tham away and ran to the park gate. I don't know if they had caught up with Tim yet, but all I wanted to do was get away from Tham and find Kewalin.

But something terrible happened.

"Kew..."

Kewalin stood there, covering her mouth with her hands, tears in her eyes. I followed her gaze to a group of people gathered around something on the ground.

It was Tim's body.

He was lying in the middle of the street, covered in blood, with Teacher Alin holding him in her arms, trying to give him first aid.

"It wasn't my fault! He ran in front of me..."

The driver's voice was drowned out by the general shock. Tham screamed in despair and ran to his son. But teacher Alin violently pushed him away.

"Don't touch my son!"

I was still in a daze, trying to process everything, but I knew I had to act.

I picked up my cell phone with shaking hands and dialed 911.

"Does anyone know the number for the fire department or emergency services?!"

There was complete silence.

"Damn it! I said call an ambulance! Someone please help!"

# 37.Chance and Consequence

Now Tham and Teacher Alin have already gone to the hospital. Only me and Kewalin are left, who have nothing to do with this, and we are so tired that we can't go anywhere. We found a coffee shop to talk.

In fact, the atmosphere is so tense that we can't move. We've both just been through a traumatic experience, and the image of Tim lying motionless is still etched in my mind, making it hard to calm down.

It's been more than three hours since Tham disappeared. I'm very worried about Tim, even though I've only met him once, I ended up becoming attached to that boy. I can't ignore it. I feel like I had some responsibility for this happening. I was the one who insisted that Tham bring his son here, and now he's facing this.

"Tham... What did the doctor say?"

It took a long time for the person on the other end of the line to accept and respond. Tham was silent for a moment and then replied in a voice choked with tears:

"Tim is gone."

My phone fell from my hand, as if I had no strength left. Kewalin looked at my state and immediately realized what it was meant. Even she, such a sweet person, couldn't hold back her tears as she felt sorry for that little one.

"How could this happen? Huhu..."

She also couldn't hold back her tears as she felt sorry for that little boy.

"How could this happen? Huhu..."

"We shouldn't have met."

There was a silence between us, which I didn't break, because deep down I also thought the same way as her. This cruel cycle made a life that had nothing to do with it go away.

But I could not fully express my agreement, because I believed that meeting Kewalin was the best thing that ever happened to me.

She, with her sweet smell and her beauty, didn't deserve to be involved with someone like me. I couldn't bear it if I had to lose her.

"That's not true. The fact that I met you is a good thing."

"Where's the good in that?"

Kewalin wiped away hertears and looked at me.

"Since we met, there has only been sadness. If I analyze it, you will realize that we have much more suffering than happiness."

"It's because we're both too stubborn. If I give up and you stop holding a grudge, is there a chance we can be together...for always?"

The word "forever" made both of us fall silent again. I was very afraid that Kewalin would not agree, because silence is sometimes an answer in itself: both for agree as to disagree.

"Can the two of us really move forward together?"

I stared at her as she questioned me, her eyes brimming with tears. She wanted to make sure that what I was saying wasn't just something I was throwing out there.

"We can, if we try."

"But haven't we tried before?"

"You tried, but I wasn't the one who tried hard enough... What I need now is a chance, and..."

"Enough."

Kewalin raised her hand and interrupted, as if she he didn't want to hear any more, and it started to distress me, because I was being cut off so easily, and it hurt me deeply.

"No, that's not enough. I don't want to lose you, Kewalin."

"You and I have already seen what happened."

"It has nothing to do with us."

"How can you say it has nothing to do with it?"

Kewalin raised her voice, causing everyone in the cafe to look at us before returning to their occupations.

"Everything that happened has to do with us. Don't pretend it doesn't, that the boy's accident has nothing to do with us. The accident with Tim happened because his father brought him here to show that he chose more than his son."

"Kewalin..."

"If the four of us hadn't met, none of this would have happened. I'm not just blaming you, I blame myself too."

Kewalin raised her hands and covered her face, crying.

"I have my part of this too. If I weren't so stubborn and spiteful, if I had broken up with you in a civilized manner when the car rolled over, none of this would have happened."

"Kewalin..."

My voice trembled as I heard her blaming herself like that.

"You didn't do anything wrong."

"I did."

"What did you do?"

"I slept with Tham."

"That's not possible. You would never do that."

"I did it because I wanted to hurt you."

Kewalin gasped, taking a deep breath as she touched on this topic.

"Since you went after your ex-girlfriend, I might as well do the same even. Whether it was because of the effects of alcohol or the pain that Tham and I felt for you, we ended up making a mistake."

I slumped back into my chair, feeling helpless. Part of me believed that

Kewalin was telling the truth, because the fact that Tham had gone to Kewalin's house Kewalin and seeing me with Sap already made me feel strange. How did Tham know where she lived if he had never seen us together there before?

Damn... How did this all happen?

"Even if it's true..."

I swallowed hard before continuing.

"I don't care. I love you, Kewalin."

"You don't care, but I do. I hate this kind of thing, but I ended up doing it. This paradox makes me sick."

Kewalin bit her lip, almost drawing blood.

"I need to get out of this circle. Even though I've cut off contact with Tham,

I don't want to be around anyone involved, especially you."

"..."

"I feel bad for doing this to you. I don't accept myself anymore. Now, I no longer have the right to criticize you for being a womanizer and sleeping with other people."

"Kewalin, you're not like me. And I'll never criticize you for that. Don't try to push me away, please."

I sobbed, trying to beg, as if it were the last time.

"I won't say anything."

"I want to get out of this cycle. I can't watch my child die like Tim did."

"What?"

These words were the turning point that made me shudder. If this were a soap opera, this would be the moment that would turn everything upside down, changing completely the direction of the story.

"I've been pregnant for four weeks. Now, I don't have the mind to worry about anyone but myself. Love is no longer essential. I hope you understand that."

Kewalin got up to leave, but I didn't give up. I pulled her arm so she would turn around and we could talk one more time.

"I understand everything, Kewalin. And I truly accept it. I won't give up on you. No way, I won't give up."

I began to understand what Tham felt when I insisted on refusing his love. Even if I had to kneel, I would do it, if that meant that the person in front of me would change her mind. But Kewalin shook her head, refusing any pleas or requests on my part.

"I don't think the two of us can't be together."

"What do I need to do, Kew? Huh... What do I need to do?"

I was running out of strength, almost falling to the ground, when Kewalin reached out, took mine and patted my hand lightly.

"Do your best to accept this."

Is this a return of karma? In the past, I have broken up with other people without any remorse, even when they desperately begged me. I would just smile and say curtly,

***'Accept.'***

Now, Kewalin has become the reflection of these people. She is doing to me what I did to others, and I cannot accept this! If today ends, the two of us will truly be separated forever.

No, I can't accept it!

"There must be a way. The fact that we met feels like something that was fated, Kew... at least give me a chance. Up until now, you've been teasing me, and because of that, everything has gotten out of hand. You have to given me a chance."

Kawalin was silent for a moment and sighed.

"You always said you didn't believe in coincidences or destiny."

Because I didn't want to give up, I tried to justify it with something I most disbelieved.

"I don't believe it, but... if it's with you... I believe anything."

"That's just how you are. "

Kawalin pulled her hand away from me and placed it behind her back.

"To get what you want, you say anything. Until now, you still love yourself and you're not even sure if what you say can be fulfilled."

"I can do this. I can do this!"

I started crying like a little child, not caring about the looks of the people around us. How can I make the person so sweet?believe that I am already completely defeated?

"All I ask is that you don't go. I'll do anything."

Kawalin also started crying, as if we were competing. One of us was trying to beg the other to believe, while the other wanted to believe but couldn't anymore.

"Anyway, we need to finish, An."

Kawalin tried to control her tears and forced out the words.

"If fate or coincidence really exists, then if we happen to meet three times, I will give you another chance."

"Kew..."

"I will believe that someone destined us to meet and love each other. But if we don't meet, we will each go our own way. Maybe our separation will teach you to love someone else, and not just love yourself."

Kawalin walked away from the cafeteria, leaving me alone to cry... No, I can't let her go like this.

Because I never believed in coincidences, so chance... we need to create it!

I ran out of the coffee shop and saw Kawalin turn left. I had to "run into" her three times and do it as quickly as possible.

Using a trick.

I ran to the right and took long strides. Luckily, the coffee shop was in the middle of the street, so I could go around the block and wait for Kewalin out front. But by the time I got there, I could barely walk anymore.

I saw her figure approaching in the distance, and she was wiping away her tears. As she got closer, I stepped in front of her.

"Kew!"

"An..."

Kawalin looked back in surprise.

"How are you here?"

"Coincidence!"

I had barely finished speaking when Kewalin stopped, as if she knew what I was trying to do, and shook her head.

"It's not like that... Um, it's not like that."

"We've met once before."

Kewalin walked past me, looking irritated, but I still didn't want to give up and kept trying to make it a second time. I ran to the car, and drove it quickly to the front of her house, because of course, she had nowhere else to go.

This was my second chance.

I sped up to Kewalin's two-story house and waited, knowing she would be there soon. It wasn't long before she arrived, and I positioned myself in front, repeating the scene.

"Kww, what a coincidence!"

"Enough, Anna! Don't you understand?"

This time, Kawalin screamed, exasperated.

"Why are you wasting this chance? This is not a coincidence, it is selfishness. You can't let me go."

"Kew..."

"Don't do this, Anna. Don't make me more disappointed than I already am. There is only one more chance for you. If you do this again, we will never be able to meet again."

"..."

"The chance is gone."

Kewalin’s firmness made me fall to the ground, helpless. Her voice and posture showed that she was serious, and it made me start to think about giving up.

"Are you really going to cut me out of your life, Kew?"

"Yes. Now, there is nothing I worry about more than myself and the unborn baby."

"..."

"Anna, maybe if we separate, we can realize if we really love each other.

Don't rush things, don't destroy everything out of selfishness. Otherwise..."

"..."

"I'm going to turn the tables, and we won't be able to reconnect."

Kewalin walked away from me calmly, without looking back, just saying:

"Goodbye."

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It's repeating itself again... I was left behind.

But now, it's different from the past, because at that time, Teacher Alin left me as a selfish person, while now I was left because I behaved in an unworthy manner. Kewalin walked away like someone who was hurt.

This is something I caused myself...

I drove home with tears streaming down my face. The whole way, I couldn’t stop wiping away the tears. At times, between sobs, I would press the accelerator too hard, but that wasn’t because I was drunk, it was just I was not concentrating on driving.

I could only blame myself, saying that this was the return of what I did with others and that I was now being haunted by this karma. I saw the faces and tears of the people I had abandoned and not valued overlapping in my memory. Now, it was my turn to get back what I did. I hope the people I

hurt in the past will forgive me. It's so painful...

***Brrr...***

The phone rang as I drove home. It was a call from "Pupe." I quickly picked up the phone and answered it, but when I took my eyes off the road for just two seconds to look, I noticed a dog running towards me.

"Hey!"

Startled, I turned the steering wheel, causing the car to off the road. Everything it happened so fast, like it was in a movie. The vibration, the impact... My whole body was shaken, and I felt like my organs were colliding inside me.

Before I knew it, I was lying in the car, strapped in by my seatbelt.

It was all over, and the dog had already run away, disappearing.

"Hello, Anna... Anna!"

I looked at the phone that was lying next to me and smiled weakly.

"Wow... I thought I was going to die."

And then, everything went black.

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. .

I opened my eyes and woke up somewhere. My skin felt the cold air and the smell of disinfectant and medicine. It wasn't hard to guess... it was a hospital.

Ah... now I remember how I got here. I thought I was going to wake up in the clouds.

"Hey, An's awake!"

Pupe's voice, loud and shrill, made me smile. Of course, this important character in my life, without her, my life would be without grace.

"Pupe."

"Ugh, you made us worry so much, you ghost!"

Pupe started to cry, and Miew, seeing her friend crying, also started to cry without thinking.

"Do you remember us? Have you lost your memory? Any brain damage? I'm going to ask you some questions, and you answer... The equation has holes, it has snakes, crows, it goes all the way to the hole... Who invented this shit?"

"You, after I woke up, are already making jokes? And what question is that?"

I laughed.

"I thought I wasn't going to survive."

"He barely survived, but this situation caused several people to get hurt."

"What do you mean by that?"

"The taxi that was behind you..."

"Stop talking about others. An survived, and that's what matters... What amulet are you wearing? They both survived, then."

Miew wiped her tears and spoke without thinking much, but the word "both" made me stop and look at my friend.

"Both of what?"

Pupe and Miew exchanged a look, as if they were hesitating, but the one who finally revealed the whole story was someone else I hadn't even realized: my mother, whom I hadn't seen in many years. Usually only we had been talking via text message, but now she was there, with tears in her eyes.

"Ann."

"Mom...."

My mom leaned over me and kissed me on the forehead, something she had never done before. I was so overcome with emotion that I couldn't speak.

"How are you? You escaped death."

"Mom, how did you know?"

"When I heard the news, I came running. I'm glad you're okay... Everything's fine with both of you."

She repeated "both" again, which made me frown in surprise.

"Both of what, Mom?"

"You're pregnant."

# 38.Why the World is Round

**Years passed...**

When I look back and think about the days gone by, it seems like it was yesterday, or maybe just a day or two ago. But suddenly I realize that four years have already passed.

The child that was in my belly at that time has now grown up and is about to start at the primary school that Pupe chose for her.

"It's the best school. A friend of my father owns it. Not just anyone can get in. It's all about contacts, and I have powerful contacts."

"If it's the best, it means it's expensive. I won't be able to afford it... Let's put her in a school close to home."

I immediately declined my friend's offer. The economy is not doing well, and although I already work and earn money, the school fees are leaving me with almost nothing. Especially for young children.

"Since when was money an issue? She's my daughter too."

"Don't pretend you're her mother. Don't you remember what you said when you found out I was pregnant?"

Miew, who was eating pickled mango, looked at her friend who was wearing a snake print outfit with a sarcastic smile. Of course I remembered it too. I couldn't help but smile.

**'*I'm not going to judge you, An. Are you going to keep the baby or are you going to have an abortion?'***

*'You're crazy, Pupe. This is a sin!'*

Miew replied, but Pupe, rich as ever, waved her hand, as if she were a traffic police officer.

*'I don't know if sin exists, but if the child is born and the mother doesn't. If you are prepared, this is not right. The sin is mine, not that of the people around me who are talking about it without knowing.'*

I understood what Pupe meant, and smiled. I had already decided from the first moment, as soon as my friend told me about the baby.

**'I'll keep the baby.'**

And today, my daughter has grown up and become a beautiful little girl. Pupe, who was the one who suggested the abortion back then, is now the person most involved with my daughter's school, clothes and food. She is completely obsessed.

"Why are you talking about this, Miew? If my daughter hears it? I want her to have good memories of me, to go to school every day, to receive flowers."

"She has me."

I pointed to myself and made a face.

"I am her mother."

"I take care of her. Don't forget who helped raise your daughter."

I was getting a little annoyed with Pupe, but she was right. So I went to help teach '**In'** how to sing. I also had to buy a camera so I could record videos and watch them later when she grows up.

"Pupe, you stole my daughter, you know?"

"I hope In grows up with the same personality as me."

Pupe struck a pose with her hands clasped together, as if she were making a wish.

I frowned, a little uncomfortable.

"Are you trying to corrupt my daughter?"

"Corrupt? What's wrong with having a daughter like me?"

In started at the school chosen by Pupe, who offered to pay the monthly fee and all the school materials. 4 years passed, and a lot things changed. I became a more work-focused person and less worried about my love life.

Maybe it was because I didn't have time to care about others. My life was my daughter, and my mind was never empty, I always thought about her.

I learned that being a mother is a huge task. The love between a man and a woman or between women cannot be compared. What came out of me showed me that I now have a new person to love in this world: little In, my daughter, with her fair skin and adorable little face.

Oh... an update on my life: I'm now a relatively well-known photographer.

Pupe invested in opening a studio for me and used her connections to help. We are partners, with Pupe as investor and I working hard.

I have several clients now, which has made me more known, mainly through word of mouth. In the beginning, I photographed for magazines, which didn't give me much money (few people know that this type of photography doesn't pay well).

But after building my portfolio, I started getting more lucrative work, including advertising. Recently, one of my photos was placed on a large billboard. Anyone driving down the main road you will certainly see the image.

That made me very proud.

As for my mother, when she found out I was pregnant, she didn't make any negative comments. On the contrary, she helped me take care of my daughter and gave me advice on how to raise the baby. I never imagined that my Mom would do this, considering it was just the two of us growing up, but now, seeing everything she does for me.

No matter what my mother was like, or what work she did, now that I see how much she helped take care of my daughter, I know for sure that she loves me and has dedicated herself to me. I felt touched, but I didn't show it.

I started to realize how much my mother loved me after I became a mother.

"Today is the first day of school, you have to make friends."

I crouched down and looked at In, who was dressed in her school uniform, with a strange feeling of loneliness. She looked at me with teary eyes.

"Can't I stay with you, Mom?"

When I saw my daughter's eyes filled with tears, I went to her and hugged her.

Before, I would see celebrities posting about their children going to school and crying, thinking it was an exaggeration. But now, after going through it, I understand how difficult it is. The fear that your child will love someone else more than you, forgetting that they are only three years old and will be four.

"If you don't go to school, you won't learn. Do you want to be like me or Pupe?"

I smiled at my daughter, who looked at me with a confused expression. Pupe also looked lost.

"Why does it sound so painful?"

I didn't explain anything, I just took my daughter to the teacher. It didn't take long, and In looked at me with tears in her eyes.

"Will you pick me up later, Mom? Don't leave me here."

When I saw my daughter crying, I could barely hold back the tears. But before I could say anything, Pupe stole the show. She had a handkerchief over her face, also crying. I looked at her with a look of disgust. I am the mother, and she wants my daughter to give her a crown of flowers on Mother's Day, really?

"In the afternoon, your mother will pick you up."

"Wow, I'm her mother!"

"I'm a mother too."

Pupe raised her handkerchief and wiped away her tears.

"Isn't it nice to have several people who love your daughter?"

"It's annoying. Besides friends, you're still trying to steal my daughter's love."

"Are you jealous of your own daughter?"

"Because she's my daughter!"

"She's mine too!"

Now, she and I are competing for the love of the same child. Perhaps our friendship of more than ten years is coming to an end because of jealousy.

We are afraid that In will love the other one more.

But life goes on. No mother stops sending her child to school. I still work as a photographer, while Pupe, who doesn't have a job, now has the job of taking In to and from school.

The three of us mothers (or "moms" in Pupe and Miew's case) anxiously await In's return. As soon as Pupe brings her back, I put work aside to talk to my daughter, just to see what she's learned that day.

"In made a lot of friends! One of them is called Alan."

"Boy?"

Pupe looked at my daughter with a suspicious look.

"Is he handsome?"

"Hey... she is only preschool class, and our niece isn't a 'chicken' like you. Give it a rest."

MaMiew looked at her friend with a look of someone who knew what was going on, but little In, who had only known the world for a few years, didn't understand what 'chicken' meant, other than knowing that it was an animal with a beak.

"Why does it have to be a chicken?"

She asked.

"Because it's a cute animal."

I replied, changing the subject, and scowled at my friend who was swearing in front of the child.

"So, Alan is my daughter's only friend?"

"Yes. Alan saw me crying and came to comfort me. But he cried too. We hugged and cried together."

"Did he hug our daughter?"

Pupe made an irritated face, and I looked at my friend.

"Why? Can't boys and girls hug?"

"But Alan is very kind."

"That's cool! Let's see his mom someday, I want to meet In's first friend in life."

And so the story went. Little In entered school and began to adjust to her new environment. She was happy to go to school and came back every day to tell her what her teacher had taught her. But children in kindergarten, for the most part, did nothing but draw and paint. Until one word slipped out.

"Mom, mom's hand has to be washed first. It's not hygienic."

"What, daughter?"

Pupe made a surprised expression and placed her hand on her chest.

"That word is so beautiful, it feels precious coming out of your mouth. What did you say, In?"

"Hygienic, mom."

"How do you spell that word?"

MaMiew whispered to her friend, who also had a confused expression.

"Ah, whatever. We're not going to write that word anyway."

We are equally silly, my friend...

And in addition to the new words, academic terms also emerged that a child in kindergarten should not say.

"Mom, what is kinetic energy?"

I, who had studied science, was surprised and began to look at the daughter with an expression of shock. Pupe, faced with a question that made no sense in her life, passed the answer to her friend next to her.

"I think MaMiew knows."

MaMiew blinked rapidly, as if trying to find a way out. I pretended to look away, pretending I didn't hear her, because I knew her friend would drop that bomb on me. Let's see how they would respond to the child.

"Kinetic energy is... energy that occurs when income and expenditure are not balanced."

I almost spat out water when I heard this while I was rummaging through the fridge, but I just kept my cool and continued listening to my friend's explanation.

"If you earn 5 baht but have to pay 6 baht for noodles, you will be broke and poor."

You idiot! A child in kindergarten doesn't know how to do that kind of calculation!

Pupe, seeing that things were getting bigger, put on a serious face and started to give a more "correct" explanation...

Or not.

"If you're going to teach it like this, don't even teach it. The explanation is a mess... Kinetic energy is the energy that your parents don't have to give you, so you have to make an effort to study."

"Enough both of you."

I put down the glass of water and walked over to my daughter, who had not yet received a proper response. I bent down and spoke to the little one.

"In, you're still too young to understand this. Why, did school already teach you?"

"You don't know how to explain it either."

"I know, but you don't need to know that yet. Don't forget that I'm the best student in the group."

I spoke confidently, and my friends began to murmur, unable to argue.

"Where did you learn that?"

"Alan. He's very smart, he knows everything. He said his mom loves reading books to him. Today he talked about kinetic energy, so I pretended I knew, but I really didn't."

"That's very clever, daughter. If we don't know, we have to pretend we know first. Like a good daughter of Mother Pupe."

I bared my teeth at my friend and began to feel that, perhaps, my daughter was growing up the wrong way. So I started to correct it.

"In, if we don't know, we need to admit that we don't know, so that those who know can explain to us what it means."

"But I don't want to look stupid in front of Alan. I'm afraid he won't want to be my friend."

"Are you that afraid? Why?"

"He's handsome. All the girls in the class want to be friends with him, but he's just my friend."

"My daughter, of course. But she was born into the wrong family."

Pupe still believed that. I laughed softly. I understood that any child in kindergarten, or of any age, would be impressed by a handsome friend. That's normal.

"I think I need to meet this friend of In's. I want to see how handsome he is."

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"Jewelry photography work? I'm not very good at it."

Today, Ten, who I met in college, called me to talk because he wanted to hire me to photograph jewelry. This work It was very new to me. If I accepted and the photos didn't turn out well, not only would I waste the store owner's time, but I would also lose my trust.

"Try it, it doesn't cost anything. I don't know anyone. My brother's friend just opened a store, I thought I'd help. If you go, you can ask for whatever you want, because you're an old friend."

Then Ten handed me a box of jewelry to choose from. I'm not good with those mystical accessories that are said to bring good luck. I've heard of each one, saying it brings luck of one kind or another, but I don't know.

I believed in it very much.

"I don't know what to do with this."

"You can use it, or even give it as an engagement gift."

"An engagement gift? I already have a child." "What? Seriously? You already have a husband?"

I was taken by surprise...

I laughed and didn't answer, but Ten kept pushing me to choose something, and when I couldn't decide, the other friend in the store started explaining the qualities of each piece, telling me what they did.

"This amulet here brings wealth. If you wear it, money will start flowing to you."

So basically, if I stayed home watching porn, the money would be in my account without me having to do anything... Of course, I didn't say anything, I just smiled.

"I always thought charms like this were made of wood and shaped like... something."

"Nowadays, they make everything seem like an accessory. What could be more profitable than selling beliefs? Besides luck, there's also love, but you don't need that, right? You're already beautiful. So take this one. It will make you help attract people. Everyone will be charmed by you."

Ten handed me a pink charm, which looked more like a piece of crochet thread wrapped around a small glass jar. I took it and smiled halfheartedly. When someone pushes something like that on me, even unintentionally, you ends up accepting.

"Thanks."

"When it works, let me know, okay?"

And so, I was practically forced to take the job. While we were discussing the details, my phone rang and Pupe's hurried voice made me stop everything I was doing and pay attention immediately.

"Friend, I won't be able to pick up In today."

"Wow, it's almost six o'clock! Why are you only telling me now?!"

I quickly grabbed my coat and put it on, already thinking that little In must be alone at school, probably afraid of ghosts.

"Sorry guys, I have to go pick up my daughter from school now. I'll get on with the work details later."

"Okay."

The others understood, and after smiling politely at everyone, I ran out to the car while talking to Pupe, irritated.

[I was in the middle of a car accident. At first I thought I could make it in time, but the other driver was insisting on file a police report. Oh, what a headache! Do you want me to send a photo to confirm?]

"No need. I don't trust you to catch In anymore."

[Help, no! In is my daughter...]

I hung up the call because I was tired. In less than ten minutes, I arrived at school. When I saw the silent environment, it only increased my anxiety. Little In should be crying right now.

"Teacher, where is In?"

The teacher, who is responsible for ensuring that all children are released to their parents, looked at me with mild disapproval, which made me feel even more guilty.

"In is playing with the toys inside. Her mother arrived late today."

"I had a little accident. Was In alone?"

The teacher shook her head.

"She was with Alan. Alan's mother was afraid that In would be alone, so she didn't leave." "Ah, I see."

"Look, there she is."

I looked toward the toys and saw In sitting, eating a snack, accompanied by a little white boy who stood out from afar. The other mother, with her back turned, was probably Alan's mother. I should thank her.

"In!"

As soon as I called her, my daughter ran to hug me with a happy smile.

"Mommy!"

I crouched down and hugged her, then looked at the other mother.

"Thanks for staying with In. There was an emergency and I was late..."

When the woman turned around, I froze, unable to move. The small woman

I had never forgotten turned to me, her eyes wide open teary eyes and a smile on her face, which made my eyes fill with tears too.

"Kew..."

"I knew it was you... An, I remember In's last name. Long time no see...?"

# 39.Love, the world is a cycle

Kewalin and I left school and stopped to eat at a fast food place nearby. The person who smelled good said that there were toys for the children there, so they would have something to do while we talked.

Kewalin was as always. Her face, her beauty, her eyes that shone, only her hair was longer and she looked more grown up. I couldn't stop looking at the face of the fragrant person, missing her, but I couldn't show it much.

"It's been so long since we've seen each other, how many years have passed?"

"Four years... I think that's it. I was surprised to see ourselves and our children already grown up. It seems like a funny story about mothers."

I said and laughed, before looking at the two children playing.

"In talks all the time about a friend called Alan. I can't believe our children will be school friends."

"Yeah, it's really surprising."

"Kew, are you okay?"

"An, are you okay?"

We both spoke at the same time and then fell silent, laughing. The mood between us became more relaxed as we remembered times gone by. The last time we spoke was full of tension.

We grew up like this, right...

"I'm fine. After I had a child, my life became fuller with things to do. I'm happier now. And you, An... how are you? You're a mother now."

"It's the same thing. After I had In, there's a lot to do. I'm not as obsessed with having girlfriends as I used to be. All the love I have now is dedicated to her."

"And how are you? Have you managed to truly love someone?"

Kewalin asked, grabbing a soda to drink. I nodded and smiled.

"It's been really good. My daughters are the only thing I can give my love to without fear. Now, I love someone else more than I love myself."

I said, looking into Kewalin's eyes. I still remember how she taught me before, and I wanted the smelly person to know that I also have a heart. I can love someone else now.

*And I still love you, Kewalin.*

But I don't know if it would make any difference to say that. Time has passed and I don't know if the love Kewalin gave me still exists. So, I end up telling myself that it's better to stay silent.

"Oh, you've grown up."

"And you too, Kew."

"And the father of your child... your husband..."

Kewalin was silent, as if this question was something invasive, which made me respond quickly.

"I don't have."

"...."

"There is no father. In has three mothers."

I held up my fingers, bending them one by one as I spoke the names.

"Me, Mom Pupe, and Mom Miew."

"Did you separate from your husband?"

"If you want to say it that way, fine. But he wasn't even my husband. It was just a mistake."

"He's Tham's son, right... Well, our children are very similar in age."

Kewalin looked surprised, and I knew that talking about the child's father would shock the person in front of me. Because Alan, Kewalin's son, has the same father.

What will this world be like, huh...

"So, Kew, have you remarried yet?"

"I only have love to give to my son. I'm not thinking about finding a husband."

Single...

I almost smiled, but held it in before changing the subject and asking how things were.

"And your mother, how is she?"

"It's okay. She's had a lot of fun taking care of Alan. She's a smiling grandmother now."

Kewalin sighed.

"When I told my mom I was pregnant, I was almost scared to death that she would be disappointed."

"But she didn't say anything, did she? Your mother is very good. Even when she found out about us, she pretended she didn't know."

"Yeah... even if I were to do something, what would I do? Abort a grandchild?"

Remembering that time, I smiled. What a generous mother she was! Not everyone can handle it so well. Kewalin was lucky.

It wasn't long before the kids came running over to us at the table.

Especially Alan, who hadn't stopped looking at me since school and kept hiding behind Kewalin. Now, he was still like that, which made Kewalin laugh.

"When he sees a beautiful person, this is how he gets. He hides behind me."

"Are you saying I'm pretty?"

"Mom Kew is pretty too."

In, wanting to join in the conversation, praised. Kewalin looked at In fondly.

"How cute."

"Does it look like me?"

"Yes, very much. She's the mini version of you, Anna."

"So, mom is also as beautiful as In, right?"

I joked a little. Kewalin laughed and dipped her finger in the cup, then splashed water on me with a mischievous laugh.

"You're still a player, aren't you?"

Kewalin chuckled, knowing me well.

"Are you in contact with Tham and Teacher Alin?"

"No."

I shook my head.

"I cut ties with both of them. I don't want to know anything anymore. Otherwise, I would go back to the same cycle, right?" "Even you ended up getting dragged into this cycle too."

I looked at Kewalin's son, who was still playing with In.

"It's even funny, the four of us are always hanging around here, right?"

"It's not quite like that. In fact, Teacher Alin and I have nothing. We are not completely within that cycle."

I looked at Kewalin, surprised, and remembered the day I saw her coming out of the bathroom with Teacher Alin.

"But that day, you came out of the bathroom with Teacher Alin."

"I just went in, but we didn't do anything. When I think about it, I see how foolish it was."

Kewalin laughed at herself at that time.

"I was angry because Teacher Alin recognized the sound of your steps and dragged me into the bathroom to make you misunderstand."

"What do you mean by that?"

"At that time, I was jealous... I thought that Teacher Alin and you were closer. Just by the sound of your footsteps and the drag of your shoes, she knew it was you. And that was a public bathroom, anyone could come or go. And, in fact, it was you who walked in at that moment. I almost went crazy with jealousy."

"So, you mean you and Teacher Alin didn't do anything?"

"No, we didn't do anything."

We were silent for a moment, not knowing what to say. Soon, Kewalin's cell phone rang and I already imagined it was her mother, worried that she hadn't yet brought her grandson back.

"I have to go now."

"Hmm."

Then we both stood up and held our children's hands. An awkward silence settled between us, as if we hadn't yet we wanted to part ways. It was such a short moment, but I didn't have the heart to stop the nice-smelling person from leaving. I didn't want to do anything that would seem selfish, like before.

"Then, until we meet again."

"Hmm, until we meet again."

We all left the restaurant and said goodbye with a somewhat melancholic gesture. I was holding my daughter's hand and walking in the opposite direction to the person who smelled good, but I tried to walk slowly, as if I was waiting for an opportunity.

My other hand, which was free, I put it in my pocket, not knowing where to put it, until I touched something strange, something I didn't quite recognize. It was a protective amulet that Brother Dan had given me.

Metta Mahaniyom[1]. They say that when you speak, people become enchanted and fascinated. Should I try it?

An opportunity like this wouldn't come easily again. If I let it pass me by, I might regret it for the rest of my life.

Yes... this is the third chance, and it really is a coincidence, not something I

created. Will Kewalin forget about this?

What if I charge?

I don't have the courage.

"Are you okay, Mother An?"

The small voice, with a slightly serious tone, made me look down, and I was shocked to realize that the child with me was not In.

"Alan, how did you get here, my dear?"

"I don't know."

The boy became a little shy.

"Mom Kewalin was also taking In."

Surprised, I immediately turned back in the direction we had come from. And yes, I met Kewalin again in front of the fast food restaurant we had just left. We both stopped and stared at each other. The familiar atmosphere returned, like on the island, and in my heart, I counted mentally.

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"8 seconds."

Kewalin spoke, and that was exactly what I was thinking. We both, with tears in our eyes, let go of the children's hands, who ran to the right side. "Have you heard about penguins?"

I started talking about something we used to share. Kewalin smiled. I pressed my lips together and bravely walked over and offered her something, but she remained still, as if she was thinking.

"I've heard it, but I don't remember the details."

"They say that the male penguin searches for the best stone among millions to give to his partner. And if she accepts, they stay together as a couple until death."

"Ah..."

"Do you accept this stone, Kew?"

I looked into her eyes, as if I was asking for something. In fact, I wanted to cry out loud, because I had never asked for love from someone so direct a way, and Kewalin was the first for everything, even for this feeling of defeat.

"I've fallen in love with you again, Kew."

Kewalin looked at my hand holding the amulet, seemed to ponder, and then reached out to accept it, looking into my eyes.

"Me too... I fell in love with you again, like always."

I smiled at her and handed her the amulet. Kewalin looked at the small glass object in her hands and tilted her head, smiling as if she already knew it, before laughing.

"Is that a rock?"

"Yes, it seems to really work. Metta Mahaniyom. Whatever you say will make people fall in love."

"You're also into amulets, right? Actually, you didn't even need them."

"..."

"With one look from you, I'm already lost."

"I missed you so much!"

We hugged as if we missed each other so much, and we started crying. It's been 4 years, and this is a coincidence that happened. I can't help but believe that it was fate that made us meet like this.

"It was a real coincidence. I didn't plan anything."

"I know."

"Do I still have a chance?"

Kewalin pulled away a little and with both hands held my face, wiping away my tears.

"After seeing you today, I told myself that I can't let this go... Let's start over."

"Really? Can I go back?"

"But this is the last chance. If you falter again, I won't allow it anymore."

"I won't waver! I'll only have you, Kew."

We were still hugging each other, while our children held each other's hands, looking at us in confusion. In's small voice called out our attention, as if bringing us back to reality, and it made me smile at her.

"Why are you crying, Mommy? Are you hurt somewhere?"

"I'm not hurt, honey. I'm just happy."

"Why are you happy?"

Kewalin sat next to me and explained to the children.

"Because we're going to become a family."

For such young children, it must be difficult to understand what this means. It will take a while to explain everything to them.

The love between us two was not easy. The round world made us face many difficulties, but now, for the first time, I feel happy. Because this brought us back to each other and made us remember the old times.

Now that our maturity is ready, our hearts are prepared to take responsibility for two lives that have grown, and for the love that I believe will be the last.

If I had to thank for something, besides the amulet, it would be fate and the small world that made us meet again.

**------ THE END -----**

# Special Chapter: Kewalin

The love life when we were students and when we became a family living together is completely different. When I was in college, the biggest concern I had was whether or not I would study to be able to read well enough for exams.

But as I grew older, my concerns shifted to more practical matters, such as earning money for everyday life and supporting my family. When we have children, concerns double.

And if we have two children, the headache multiplies...

"Mother An, Mother Kew, I want to sleep with you!"

An and I were about to make love when, after just five minutes, we jumped out of bed, quickly got dressed and opened the door to the two children who were there, with that cute expression.

"What happened, son?"

I asked Alan, my son. As a young man trying to act like an adult, Alan always talked more than his sister, In, who was shy and didn't like to talk much.

"In had a nightmare. She wants to sleep in my bed."

The child with partially Western features hid behind her brother in embarrassment. An looked at her daughter with a mischievous smile and said in a suspicious tone:

"Nightmare, is it? Are you sure about that, daughter?"

"Yes."

"Those who lie go to hell."

"An... why are you talking to our daughter like that?"

An put her hand over her mouth, trying to hold back her smile, and waved for her daughter to come over to her.

"Okay then. She can sleep with Mommy tonight. I'll go cuddle with In."

"Can Alan sleep here too?"

"Ask Alan... What do you think, Alan? Can you sleep here?"

When An asked, Alan, who was trying to act like an adult, suddenly became shy.

"Yes, Mom. Can I sleep next to Mom An?"

Seductive...

I looked at my son with a look of understanding. Alan was usually very shy, and every time I hugged him or kissed him, he would play hard to get. But with An, it was different. In less than a month, they were already very close, and Alan started finding subtle ways to get closer to her. In also became attached to Alan, and the two started doing everything together.

"Yes."

Now my son hardly paid any attention to me anymore, which was a little sad, but I understood it, since An had always had an irresistible charm, even to four or five year olds. But the the problem that really worried me was not the fact that the children were coming to sleep in my room, but rather the envy that was starting to arise.

Until one day, In ran into the kitchen and pulled on the hem of my shirt while I was cutting vegetables.

"Mother Kew, I have something girlish to tell you."

"Oh?"

"Can we talk just the two of us?"

"Sure, what's up?"

"I don't like mother An."

And here was the problem. I stopped everything I was doing and crouched down to talk to my daughter, who now didn't care who was who, because I loved them both equally. Truly, these two children were brothers, with the same father.

"What happened, tell me, daughter."

"Mother An..."

It seems she was jealous. Now that she had a new brother, she I thought I wouldn't get any more love and that An was giving me more attention for Alan than for her. Now she was here, feeling left out, and I knew I needed to talk to An about it.

"Why, daughter?"

"Mother An is stealing Alan's love."

"What do you mean?"

"I think Alan likes Mom An. Like a man likes a woman. I don't like that, Mom. Mom An already has you as her girlfriend, so why do you need to be around Alan?"

It was a turning point... I slowly stood up and looked into the living room, where I saw An and Alan happily wrestling. Then I looked at my daughter, who was standing there, feeling jealous of An, who was getting attention from the boy.

I needed to change my mindset to be able to talk to An properly. An's beauty really was dangerous for all ages.

"Anna"

When we were alone in the room, Anna, tired of playing with her son, jumped into my arms and started kissing me from one side to the other, as if she were a naughty child. We only do this when we are alone, because we are afraid that it might not be appropriate or might seem inconvenient, so we try to keep children from seeing it.

"What's wrong? Why did you call me that, with my full name? It must be something serious."

"We have a problem."

"What's the problem?"

"Your beauty."

"What have I done, Kew? No, I'm not being a chicken, these days I just work and dedicate myself to you and our children."

"Calm down, listen to everything first."

I laughed and slapped Anna on the shoulder, who was being overly scared.

Anna's past experiences made her suspicious. When we moved back in together.

"Your beauty and charm are creating problems with our little daughter."

"What does In have?"

"Today, In came to me and said that..."

"What?"

"She doesn't like her mother Anna."

It seems that when I said this, the beautiful woman, who had been excited until that moment, had her mouth open and her eyes began to widen filled with emotion. As everyone knows, a mother's biggest concern is that her child doesn't love her, and these words coming from the mouth of my daughter was now making Anna look like a heartbroken person.

"What did I do to make In not like me?"

Anna let herself fall onto the bed, without strength, and said:

"I don't know."

"You're too pretty."

"I've always been pretty."

I thought about slapping Anna's ear, but was she really sad?

"But you looked prettier in front of Alan. In is jealous of Alan because he's paying more attention to you."

"And what do you want me to do? Do you want me to hit Alan and not play with him?"

"I understand. Children that age are very sensitive. I don't know how to deal with it either. At first, I thought In was jealous because you only played with Alan and forgot about her. But actually, it's the same thing contrary."

"I even wanted to diminish my beauty, but it's so hard!"

"Oh, you're really stressed about this!"

I raised my hand and playfully pinched Anna's cheek.

When she saw that I was irritated, she put her finger on my waist.

And that's when we started play fighting on the mattress, completely forgetting that we were talking about the children.

It was at that exact moment that Alan opened the door and saw us, exactly when we were kissing and exchanging passionate looks.

"What's going on here?"

Anna and I, afraid that the children would see something inappropriate,we jumped out of bed and went to opposite corners. Alan, our dear son, looked at me silently and, without saying a word, left and closed the door behind him.

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"Kewalin"

Now it was Anna's turn to come over and talk to me. Rarely she calls me by my full name, and I felt a shiver and realized that something serious was waiting for me.

"What's up? Have you talked to Alan?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Alan said he... doesn't like me."

It was as if the scene was repeating itself. I immediately understood what Anna felt, what it was like to fall to her knees. I heard my son, whom I had given birth to and cared for since he was a baby, say that he didn't love me. That kind of heartache is unbearable.

"Why?"

"Because I kissed you and Alan got jealous."

"Ah... What's going on with our house?"

"Yeah, I don't know..."

Anna sat down next to me and sighed deeply.

"How are we going to make our children understand? Now, my daughter doesn't like me, and your son doesn't like you. What kind of family are we?"

"A confused family..."

I said, trying to keep calm.

"I think we need to talk to them, face to face. If we don't resolve this now, the children will be confused about our relationship, and it could affect them when they grow up. They need to understand this now."

"When are we going to explain?"

"Right now. Let's call the children."

So we went after the children. Five minutes later, we were all together.

Now it was time for the children to understand their relationship with their mothers.

"Alan... I heard you don't like me..."

My voice was shaking, but I tried to control my emotions. The little boy was sitting on the couch, swinging his small legs since they couldn't reach the floor.

"Oh?"

"Why?"

"Because I like Mommy An, but Mommy Anna likes Mommy Kew."

"And because you like Mommy An, In doesn't like Mommy An?"

This circle relationship was making us look at each other and sigh heavily. Now, Anna began to speak in a firmer voice.

"Let's get this straight, all of us, In and Alan..."

Anna's determined voice made her daughter shrink a little, although she had initially made a face of disdain. I smiled, as I hadn't seen Anna being so firm for a long time; usually, she did this with the men she walked away from.

"I've said it before, haven't I? Mommy An and Mommy Kew are girlfriends."

When she said that, I felt a little embarrassed and thought that as the kids got older, we could explain better what it meant to be a girlfriend, but for now, we tried to show that we were a family, just like any other.

"I remember."

"Being girlfriends means that Mommy Anna and Mommy Kew love each other. We are like mothers to you both. Do you remember that?"

"But why doesn't our family have a father like other families?"

In asked curiously, and this was one of the questions we would need to explain one day. But I decided to answer right away.

"Because a family doesn't have to have a father and a mother. If we feel it's complete, then it's a family. Would you like Mummy Kew to be the father? Can I be, or do you want Mummy Kew to be just the mother?"

In made a confused face, but didn't seem to have any problems with the explanation.

"Yeah... And if Mommy Anna and Mommy Kew are girlfriends, then Alan can't like Mommy Anna anymore. And can I like Alan then?"

Said In.

When Alan heard this, he made a disgusted face and crossed his arms, showing that he didn't want to. "Of course Alan can like Mommy Ann."

Anna said with a smile.

"Mommy Anna can fill both the mother and father roles for Alan."

"But I wanted to be Mommy Anna's boyfriend."

Alan said.

"If you were Mommy Anna's boyfriend, you would be abandoned."

Anna replied.

"Eh?"

"But if you're a Mama Anna's boy, she'll give you a kiss on the cheek every day, he'll take you to school, he'll play fight with you and even buy you new video games..."

I immediately squeezed Anna's leg when she started trying to make a bargain with Alan.

"I was joking, just speaking in a man's voice. That's abadvantage of being Anna's son, you'll want to be her son, won't you?"

"But shouldn't we..."

"I'm going to hug Alan every day, is that right?"

I glanced at my son, who was getting embarrassed.

"If you're my son, I'll kiss you every day and play fight with you too. So, okay, you can be my son."

"So, can Alan be my boyfriend?"

"No!"

Anna immediately stopped, but I was the one who spoke up, touching Anna's leg to explain, since our daughter still didn't like her.

"No."

I said in a softer voice and a smile.

"Because Alan is your brother. If they were dating, their love wouldn't last."

"But Mommy Anna and Mommy Kew are still girlfriends. Does that mean you two will break up one day?"

I was responsible for the confusion by speaking like that.

"Nothing in life is guaranteed, In. One day, Mama Kew and I might even part ways."

I said that, and it made Anna shocked.

"But listen, I'll explain. In this world, nothing is certain, but one thing is certain: the love of our family. If you love Alan as a brother, he will never abandon you, even if Mom and I are separated."

In looked at me and Anna, not really understanding, but she approached Alan. The two hugged each other, afraid of being separated.

"So I can love Alan like a brother, because I don't want him to abandon me."

"I will not abandon you, because I will love Mama Anna as if I were both father and mother at the same time. And Mama Anna will love Mama Kew, and Mama Kew will love In."

Alan said.

"And I'm going to love Alan too. A relationship in a circle, always turning." The two children began to play at imitating the gesture of a circle and laughed at this idea. Anna and I looked at each other, sighed and thought about how, although we were tired of explaining our relationships, this was the biggest challenge: answering the endless questions from our children and help them understand what was right. And that, in fact, is the reason behind the title of the story.

***In -> Anna -> Kewalin -> Alan -> Anna -> In and so it goes...***

**Love in a cycle.**

**.**

**-----END OF SC----**

**Sunyan Note:**

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