

# Chapter : Introduction

"Hey! My bag got swapped with someone else's. I was shocked when I opened it!"

I called my best friend after returning from overseas.

"Everything inside it just lacy underwear, all white! Whose bag is this, an angel or a nun?"

[A woman's bag? By the way, how did end up swapping it?]

"I am not sure."

[And you didn't notice it wasn't yours?]

"It looked *exactly* the same bag, okay! That's why I didn't notice. What a dumb question!"

I growled over the phone at

*Plerng*

, my childhood best friend, who I've been close to since kindergarten. Coincidentally, our dads are best friends too.

I even vaguely remember overhearing that our parents once joked about us getting married if we didn't find anyone we liked by the time we turned 25.

But it seems my friend here already has someone in his heart, and he's planning to introduce her to me soon.

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[So how did you even open their bag? Isn't yours a combination-locked one?]

"That's the weird part. I used

*my*

own combination, and it opened! Or maybe it's just some fake knockoff lock but actually works with a key instead of the code."

[You said your bag cost thousands, but you're talking like it's a cheap one worth a couple of hundred baht.]

"Oh, forget that for now. What do I do? My bag had so many expensive souvenirs inside!"

[And the bag you opened-doesn't it have any valuable items?]

"I haven't checked everything yet, but it seems like it belongs to a well-off woman."

I scanned the contents of the neatly folded clothes inside, a stark contrast to my messy bag where I just crammed everything in.

"Wait a minute. If I could open this bag, doesn't that mean the person who took mine can also open it?"

[Well, if the lock is really fake, then yeah, they probably can.]

"And what if we both accidentally set the same code?"

[Then it can definitely open it too. Why are you so excited about this?]

"Of course, I'm excited! I didn't fold any of my clothes properly. It's so embarrassing!"

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I grabbed my head in frustration. Whoever opened my bag is definitely cursing me out for my terrible packing skills.

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[I think you should focus on the right thing first-contact the bag's owner and arrange to meet up. Problem solved.]

"You're right. But how do I contact them? I don't have their number."

[Try searching in the bag first. Maybe there's something in there that can help you contact them, like a diary or something like that.]

"Do people still write diaries these days?"

I frowned, noticing the silence on the other end.

"Hey, are you busy studying?"

"Don't underestimate people, okay? Some still write diaries. It doesn't mean they're old-fashioned. They might just want to keep track of what's happening in their lives. Not everything can be remembered, you know. How do you think we even have history? It's all because people wrote it down!"

"History is just rewritten by the winners. Anyway, I'll see what I can do. I'll call you later."

"And when are we meeting? I really want to introduce my girlfriend to you!"

"

*'My girlfriend,'*

huh? How confident! Alright, I'll call you back. Let me deal with this bag first-what a mess. Bye!"

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I hung up and stared at the bag in front of me, trying to figure out where to start. Surely, I wasn't going to find anything like a passport or an ID card in here, right? What could I possibly find to identify the owner? At that moment, I wished I were as skilled as Detective Conan.

A diary,huh? Let me take a look. Maybe there's something there.

Reluctantly, I opened the bag. It was so neatly packed that I felt guilty just touching it. Every piece of clothing was folded perfectly, as if ironed. Items were carefully organized, and even the clothes seemed to be sorted by color into layers.

*'Is this a suitcase or a display shelf in a department store? Who on earth owns this bag?'*

I muttered to myself. Judging by the contents-lingerie, shampoo with a soft fragrance, a pink toothbrush, and a shower cap-it was definitely a woman's bag. And not just any woman, but someone meticulous and well-prepared.

As I pondered where to start, my phone rang. Without looking at who is calling, I picked it up with an irritated tone.

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"Hello."

[Hello, I'm calling the number written on the tag attached to the bag. It seems like our luggage got switched.]

"Oh!"

I exclaimed, straightening up in surprise.

"I'm so glad you called! I've been trying to figure out how to contact you. There wasn't anything in the bag to help me reach you. I searched everywhere, but you didn't leave any clues at all!"

[Did you rummage through my bag?]

Her tone sounded displeased, which I noticed and found slightly annoying in return.

"Of course, I had to. What else was I supposed to do?"

[How did you even open my bag?]

The way she changed the word

*"pwa"*

made me smirk slightly. It seemed like we wouldn't be getting along.

"Maybe the lock malfunctioned, or we happened to use the same password."

[Could it really be that much of a coincidence? You definitely checked my bag more than just randomly opening it.]

"Why would I go to such lengths? I didn't even realize my bag had been swapped at first."

[And what password did you use?]

"911." [Oops...]

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The slightly surprised tone that escaped made me pause for a moment. I thought it was cute.

Wait a minute, is it cute like that? Just from a voice? Was I really that sensitive? No way. And why didn't I find it cute when young Kanchai spoke?

No, I couldn't let a simple

*"Oops"* shake me up.

Especially when the person on the other end wasn't even being friendly. I needed to stay firm. If she acted tough, I'd do the same.

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[Wait, you used 911 too? That explains why your bag just opened.]

The other end went silent for about ten seconds before continuing.

[Aren't you even going to fold your clothes?]

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My face instantly heated up in embarrassment. Instead of admitting defeat, I tried to come up with an excuse.

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"Why bother folding them when I'll have to unfold them to wash anyway? Besides, it's my personal luggage-no one else is supposed to open it."

[Well, here we are, opening each other's bags. You know, a bag can reveal a lot about its owner.]

"Oh yeah? If you're so smart, tell me-what kind of person do you think I am?"

Hearing she is show off, I decided to challenge her back. She let out a small "

*Tch*

" before changing the subject.

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[Forget it. I don't see the point in doing that.]

"Oh, backing out now, huh?"

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I mimicked her *"Tch"* in return, refusing to back down.

She fell silent for a moment before launching into full-on Detective Conan mode.

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[You're probably a girl who was raised to be spoiled, not too concerned with small details, because you tend to focus more on the big picture. You seem like someone who essy going person. From what I've seen, all the clothes in the bag are branded, but they don't luxury. You're probably a rich kid who avoid wear the same clothes twice to keep people from noticing.]

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I frowned slightly at her assumptions-judging someone's personality based on their clothes seemed over the top. Still, I wasn't about to lose. I needed to show I could figure something out too.

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"Well, let me guess about you, then. You were probably raised in a strict family, with lots of rules and routines. You pay too much attention to detailoriented that you seem to be obsessive-compulsive. You're someone who sticks to order and structure. Judging by the clothing brands, I'd say you have a moderate income. Your clothes are all in the same tone and style, so you look consistent every day. Even if you repeat outfits, people wouldn't notice because it's your usual style."

[Copycat.]

The grumbling tone, almost like she was talking to herself, made me smile unintentionally. This person seemed kind of cute. I quickly wiped the smile off my face-this was the second time I'd thought that.

"Your family must be government officials-your parents are probably police or military officers. Did I guess right?"

[Smart.]

"You're pretty smart yourself."

We both fell silent, listening to each other's breathing through the line. The atmosphere felt more relaxed now, like two friends getting to know each other.

"So, when should we exchange our bags?"

[Whenever it's convenient for you, but the sooner, the better. There are souvenirs inside. You have some in yours too, though they're crammed into corners and hidden in your clothes.]

"Wow, you're relentless with the jabs about my messy packing. I'm jetlagged right now, so let's meet tomorrow. But what should I do with the clothes I've rummaged through? Do I need to iron them back to perfection?"

[You're not exactly normal yourself, are you? Always dramatic. We can meet tomorrow. By the way, what should I call you?]

"Oh? Asking for my name? If you like me, just say so."

[Does asking your name mean I like you? Don't flatter yourself.]

"Since you're so clever, why don't you try guessing my name?"

[Why should I care about your name? Fine, I'll just call you whatever I feel like.]

"What will you call me, then?"

[

**Hawm Noi**

(

*Fragrant Little One)*

]

"That's funny,"

I chuckled softly and smirked.

"Why would you call me that?"

[Your bag has this faint, pleasant scent, so I thought 'Hawm Noi' would suit you. Plus, beneath that scent, I get the feeling you're fun, lively, and annoying person.]

"Oh, rude! You're not exactly innocent either. Fine, I'll call you something too-how about

**Mae Khun**

(My Lady)?"

[Why that name?]

"You seem so neat and orderly. It gives me this sweet, motherly vibe."

[.....]

"....."

There was silence again, and when the playful energy from earlier seemed to disappear, I started to feel a bit uneasy. I decided to break the silence.

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"You don't like it? I thought it was cute, so-"

[No, it's fine. It just made me a bit embarrassed hearing it.]

"Why....?"

[Well, Mae Khun is something people usually call their wives.]

"....."

[....]

And just like that, the conversation turned awkward again. This time, I was the one left at a loss for words. Just as I was searching for something to say, the lady I just named is the one who speaks first.

[How about this- let's exchange Line IDs using this number? That way, we can set a time to meet.]

"Okay, then I'll see you tomorrow. I promise I'll return your bag without a single scratch, and all your clothes will be pressed so perfectly they'll be sharp enough to cut."

[Always teasing. I'll crumple everything back into a ball so it feels untouched. But I can't guarantee the scent will be the same, though.]

We both fell into a moment of quiet laughter. Just before hanging up, I couldn't help but feel a little bashful as I spoke.

"Well, that's all for now, Mae Khun. Nice meeting a new friend."

[It was nice talking to you too, Hawm Noi. Just saying it makes me feel ticklish.]

"It really does. It's like I just asked you for a kiss on the cheek."

[Crazy..]

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I reluctantly ended the call, feeling like I still wanted to talk but knowing there was nothing more I could do. In the end, as the line disconnected, I could only hold my phone and collapse onto the mattress, staring at the ceiling.

My heart was beating fast and the air around me felt strangely hazy, almost surreal. It was an odd kind of tension, one I couldn't quite put into words.

Wow...

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# Chapter 01: First Encounter

Even though I had firmly decided to return the bag and exchange it, in the end, I couldn't resist secretly rummaging through it tonight. My curiosity got the better of me-I wanted to know what kind of person owned this bag. Besides the usual necessities, I found a beautifully covered novel hidden inside.

**Pluto**

I'm not really a fan of reading. Too many words make me sleepy whenever I open a book. But my curiosity about the bag's owner made me flip through a few pages of the novel to get a glimpse of their interests.

'

*Yawn....'*

Yep, I was already sleepy again-after reading just three lines.

I have to admit, I've never been much of a book lover. The only reading I ever enjoyed was keeping up with trending news-celebrity gossip, scandalous rumors, and dramatic posts from viral pages.

That kind of content helped me develop a habit of reading longer pieces. But when it comes to books, two pages in and I'm already yawning, as if the ink itself is infused with a sleep-inducing drug. I feel bad for the author, pouring their heart into writing, only for me to respond with yawns.

No, I'll give it a try. I'm curious to know what kind of books she reads. But... why is the cover illustration of two women sitting together? Aren't romance novels usually about a man and a woman, embracing or kissing on the cover?

"What are you doing, Fah?"

My mom's sudden entrance, without any warning, made me jump a little. When she saw me sitting there reading a book, her eyes widened in shocklike she had just seen a ghost.

"Fah is reading a book?!"

"Mom, you don't have to be that surprised. It's just a book."

"Since when do you read?"

"Well, look-I'm reading right now. But... I feel so sleepy."

I stretched my arms and let out a small sigh.

"I really respect authors who spend so much effort writing stories, and even more so the readers who can get through all these pages filled with endless text. Why don't I have the talent or interest in reading and writing?"

"That's because you don't know how to read properly."

"So how to read properly? Mom, please tell me."

"If you want to enjoy reading a novel, imagine your favorite actors as the characters. Who do you like right now?"

Mom, who is quite a book lover, sat down beside me, trying to encourage me to read.

"Right now, I like Mew Nittha."

"Then imagine Mew Nittha as the main character. Pick any actor you like as the male lead and place them into the story. Visualize the settings based on the descriptions in the book. That's all it takes."

"Is that the technique you use, Mom?"

"Yes, back when I studied Thai literature, I imagined Sorapong and Duangta Jarujinda in those classic stories."

I glanced at Mom before trying to picture Mario Maurer in an ancient literary tale. But the image of a heroic prince turning into a monkey and pointing at a mermaid just didn't seem cool at all.

"I'll try using your technique, Mom."

"By the way, what are you reading?"

"A novel, I guess. But the cover has two women on it. I suppose I should imagine another woman I like... Let's make it Lisa, then."

I raised an eyebrow playfully.

"Thanks for the tip, gorgeous."

"Where's my souvenir?"

Mom held out her hand, expecting a gift now that our conversation had wrapped up. I gave her an awkward smile before confessing the truth.

"Well... there was a little accident. You'll get your souvenir tomorrow, along with a custom-made perfume I created just for you."

"Why tomorrow? What happened?"

"I accidentally switched bags with someone."

I gestured toward the unfamiliar bag and briefly explained the situation, including how I ended up with this novel.

"And that's how it happened."

"I was wondering why you suddenly started reading a novel. Well then, I'll just wait for my souvenir."

"Is Dad home yet?"

"Not yet. He's stuck in a meeting, but I'm sure he'll rush home soon now that his beloved daughter is back."

"I better go to bed quickly. I don't feel like talking to Dad-he always brings up work."

"Well, you graduated, so it's time to start working."

"Ugh, what's the rush? We're rich! Besides, I have no intention of taking over Dad's business. You know my dream is to be a perfumer stylist."

"A job like that... Do you think it'll work in Thailand?"

"I'll be the first one! Anyway, I'm turning off the lights and going to sleep. Tell Dad I'm jet-lagged and already gone to bed."

"Okay."

My mother finally left me alone. I turned off the lights as I told her, pulled the blanket over my head, and used a flashlight to keep reading. Tonight, I would try my best to be a good reader using Mom's technique.

I had never read a novel before. Back then while exams, I had to rely on my friends recording audio clips for me to listen to. But for this novel, I decided to give it my full attention.

Alright, let's do this. Mew Nittha and Lisa-let's see if this technique can help me read all the way through.

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"Are you jet-lagged or on drugs? Why your eyes so dark ?"

Plerng, who had come to pick me up around noon, asked as soon as I got into the car. I was still completely out of it, lost in the world of romance between Metavee, a blind lawyer, and Aioon, a novelist who took her twin sister's place.

Oh, in case you're confused-I'm talking about the characters from Pluto, the novel I was reading last night. Initially, I had only planned to read a little before bed since my eyes were already tired.

But as I kept reading, I realized something odd-there wasn't a single male character in sight. Before I knew it, the two female leads had ended up together.

"Last night I reading a novel till morning."

I only managed to sleep at 6 AM, and then this friend of mine came to pick me up.

"Was it a JamSaai novel?"

"What's JamSaai?"

"It's a publishing house that sells super sweet, candy-colored romance novels. My little sister has stacks of them on her shelf. Girls these days love reading that kind of stuff-especially books by Stampberry. She's really popular."

"Do they publish novels where girls end up together too?"

"What the hell did you just read?"

"Never mind."

I smirked to myself, lost in my imagination. Just picturing Mew Nittha and Lisa taking a bath together made my heart flutter.

*Love you, Mom! Why didn't you tell me about this technique earlier?*

If I had known, I probably would have aced my admission exams and gotten into a top university in Thailand instead of going abroad to study.

"So, where are we going?"

"To meet the woman I'm going to marry."

"You brought me all the way here just for a matchmaking session?"

I straightened my back slightly, feeling a bit annoyed.

"Hey, I have my own things to do too, you know."

"If you didn't want to come, then why did you agree in the first place?"

"Because I thought you were taking me out for lunch."

"I'll treat you to a meal, but I also want you to meet her first."

Plerng grinned mischievously, whistling like he was in an exceptionally good mood.

"I need your help."

"Help with what?"

"Be my matchmaker."

I raised an eyebrow, confused. A matchmaker was supposed to help bring two people together, but he just said he was going to marry this woman. How was I supposed to interpret this? Was I solving The Da Vinci Code now?

"If you're already planning to marry her, why do you need a matchmaker?"

"I want to marry her, but... we've never even talked."

"Wow...!"

So basically, Plerng was just daydreaming about this woman he wanted to marry. I finally got the full story after sitting in the car with him for a while. Apparently, he had fallen for a martial arts instructor at some school.

The first time he saw her, he was so captivated that he followed her all the way to the training center-only to realize she worked there. Determined to spend time with her, he even signed up for private lessons, paying high hourly fee just to be alone with her.

"I've never been able to look her in the eye or start a conversation."

He admitted this honestly as he parked near the training center.

"I take private lessons just to be with her, but all I ever say during class is, 'Is this how you do a headlock?' or 'Oh, so you throw like this?'"

"Still, it sounds like a pretty good story. You get to touch her through martial arts training, right?"

"It is nice."

Plerng finished parking and then twisted his body dramatically like a shy schoolgirl, which was frankly disgusting to watch.

"But I don't want to just touch her-I want to ask her out. I want to take her to dinner, to the movies."

"Dinner and a movie?"

"Anything! I just want to do couple things with her. Please, help me!"

"And how exactly am I supposed to help? I don't even know her."

"I told her I'd be bringing a friend to train with me today so we'd have something to talk about. Just help me out, okay?"

"Which friend would agree to train with you?"

I chuckled before realizing something.

"Wait-you mean me? You expect me to learn martial arts? What for?"

"To protect yourself."

"No way. I hate exercising. It's tiring, sweaty, and a waste of money. I prefer sleeping."

"Come on, do it for your friend! Exercising is still better than working, right?"

"Yeah....that's true."

I straightened up, agreeing with him, but I still hated exercising.

"Is there seriously no other way? I don't want to exert myself. I'm scared of getting all sweaty and smelly."

"Come on, it's a self-defense class. What else can you do? Just come in, check it out, and help me start a conversation with her. Please! Pretty please!"

"But....."

"Please!"

I was finally dragged to my friend's martial arts training center. But when we arrived, the place was empty-except for the air conditioning blasting at full power, making the whole room feel ice-cold.

"Maybe the instructor went to the restroom. You wait here while I go change."

"What? You're just going to leave me sitting here alone?"

"Yep."

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Plerng disappeared into bathroom to change, leaving me all by myself in the chilly room. Since I had nothing else to do, I pulled out my phone, opened my messaging app, and typed a message to someone I had saved under the name Mae Khun. Her profile picture? A photo of Mew Nittha.

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**Mae Khun**

: Don't forget our appointment today, okay?

I nearly dropped my phone when the reply came in almost instantly, as if she had somehow sensed that I was reading our chat. My heart pounded a little, but I took a deep breath and replied as calmly as possible, trying not to sound too excited.

**Hawm Noi**

:

I won't forget! By the way, why is your profile picture Mew Nittha?

**Mae Khun**

:

Oh? Did you clicked on my picture?

**Hawm No**

**i** :

I just wanted to see what the owner of the bag looks like.

**Mae Khun**

:

Well, if you can use Lisa's picture, why can't I use Mew's? So, do you like Lisa?

**Hawm Noi**

:

Yeah... And do you like Mew?

**Mae Khun**

: Yep.

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I chuckled to myself, but just as I did, I heard someone else laughing softly nearby. The sound sent a shiver down my spine-not just from the cold air, but because it felt... familiar.

And then, as if we both realized it at the same time, we lifted our heads from our phones and locked eyes.

*Thump-thump....*

*Thump-thump....*

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I don't know why, but when we locked eyes, my heart started pounding so hard. It felt like the second hand of a clock had frozen in place, and the world around us disappeared-leaving only the two of us.

A small woman dressed in sportswear, with shoulder-length hair tied into a tiny bun at the back. Her skin was fair, almost pale, but I was sure that if she blushed, it would turn a soft pinkish-orange, like a little kid reacting to the heat.

As we stood in silence, the moment was suddenly interrupted by a voice.

"Here it is, teacher."

Immediately, I and the teacher I had been staring at looked away. I cleared my throat awkwardly and pretended to focus on my phone, completely ignoring the person I had just been engaging with.

The one who spoke-Plerng-walked over to me and quickly introduced the martial arts instructor.

"I brought the new student, just like I told you the other day, Teacher Nim."

"Oh, I see."

Teacher Nim's voice had a slight nasal quality-not from a cold, but something natural in her tone. As I was being introduced, I gave her a small, polite smile before quickly cutting in.

"I never agreed to take the class! You just said I could watch first."

"You're already here, so you might as well start. Why hesitate?"

Plerng nudged me and whispered,

"We already talked about this."

"I never agreed!"

"It's okay," Teacher Nim said calmly.

"You can just observe the teaching style first. No pressure. If you're interested, you can sign up later."

"How generous of you, Teacher Nim."

"Well then, let's begin the lesson."

I watched the small woman as she instructed, feeling unexpectedly impressed. Despite her delicate appearance, the way she demonstrated throws and techniques was swift and precise, making it seem like no one could possibly harm her. Her tied-up hair made it hard for me to look away.

Her full lips and sharp nose-so defined...

I licked my lips.

"Just the basics of self-defense, I guess. Like..."

I thought for a moment.

"What should I do if someone grabs me from behind?"

"Alright, I'll demonstrate. Fa, could you..."

Teacher Nim hesitated slightly, pressing her lips together as if unsure how to ask.

"Could you walk behind me and put me in a headlock?"

"Got it. You mean like a hug from behind?"

As I spoke, I felt myself smiling, but I quickly wiped it off my face and followed her instructions, wrapping my arms around her and locking her in place. Even though her skin was damp with sweat, it wasn't unpleasant at all.

And that was odd-because I usually hated anything wet or sticky. Instead, it made her seem even more... sexier.

The moment I locked her in the hold, my chest inevitably pressed against her back. I instinctively closed my eyes for a second, trying to calm my heartbeat. She might notice.

Get a grip! It's just a hold-why am I so nervous?

"Okay, Fa. Do whatever you can to keep me from escaping."

"So, just... hold on tight?"

"Yes, as tight as possible. Don't let go, no matter what. Ready?"

The small woman began demonstrating swiftly, and I braced myself, determined not to get thrown like Plerng had been earlier. But in a split second, I lost balance-she swept my leg, and I hit the mat hard. Before I could react, she pinned me down with her knee.

Wait-why did I do that?

Startled by my own thoughts, I quickly bit my lip, feeling embarrassed. Plerng must have noticed my odd reaction because he turned to me with a questioning look.

"What's up with that face?"

"Nothing... Just focus on your training. Why do you care?"

"I'm exhausted."

My handsome friend panted.

"I need a break. How about this, while I rest, Fa, you go train with Teacher Nim."

"No way, I-"

But when I met the teacher's silent gaze, I suddenly changed my mind. A playful curiosity made me want to get involved.

"Actually, that sounds like a good idea. Then I'll know if this class is worth taking."

I pretended to shake off any hesitation and stepped forward, standing faceto-face with the small instructor. Now that we were close, I realized I was significantly taller.

It made me feel strangely like I had an unfair advantage over my opponentjust because of my height.

"How do I start?"

"Do you have any prior experience?"

"None at all."

"Is there any specific move you'd like to learn?"

"Hahaha, you lost completely!"

Plerng laughed, clearly enjoying my defeat.

I bared my teeth at him.

"I just wasn't ready!"

"Do you want to try again?"

Teacher Nim gave me a small smile before helping me up. She reset her stance, ready to demonstrate once more.

"This time, I won't fail."

"Good. Do whatever it takes-don't let me throw you."

"Yes.."

I moved behind her again, wrapping my arms around her neck and locking her in place.

"Start!"

Teacher Nim attempted to counter me again, but this time, I was determined not to fall for the same trick. When she tried to sweep my leg, I quickly lifted my foot, already anticipating her move.

"You're not throwing me this time!"

She stayed focused, calculating her next move. I could tell she was about to break free, so-without thinking-I panicked and did something completely ridiculous.

**Snap!**

I opened my mouth to nibble on the little one's ear and nibbled lightly, getting a slight taste of sweat. The little one, who was initially full of energy, suddenly became weak and fell to her knees on the cushion, using both arms to support her feet on the floor, with me clinging to her back.

"That's cheating!"

She turned her head, her face flushed deep red, eyes glaring at me.

And what did I do? Instead of explaining myself, I blurted out**"You're so delicious, Teacher."**

*What the hell did I just say?!*

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# Chapter 02: Which is more delicious?

"You're an evil."

Plerng, who had been silent ever since I bit the sweet-faced teacher's ear, suddenly spoke his first words when we were alone in the car. He had known me since we were little, but now, his words came out harsh and full of power.

"Are you insulting me?"

"We're the only ones in the car. Who else am I supposed to scold? You, damn it,"

The handsome friend started the car, gripping the steering wheel tightly. His cheeks puffed out, his face flushed red from just finishing a workout, which made him look cute and irresistible.

"You haven't even started your class, and you're already biting Kru Nim's ear."

"Well...."

I tried to find an explanation, though it was difficult.

"The teacher told me to do whatever I could to resist. I didn't want to lose, so I bit her ear. Don't you know that even Mike Tyson did this?"

"I've trained with her four times, and even talking about other things is hard. But you, on your first time, without even starting the class, already got a taste of her ear, and you said it was delicious."

"Should I have said,

*'It's so salty,'*

or something? Isn't that weird?"

"I'm jealous!"

That's what he's been trying to mock me all this time? He finally blurted it out now. It's so annoying.

"So, you spent so much time with her and why didn't you bite her ear too?"

"If I did it, it wouldn't look cute and playful like when you did. I'm a guy. I wish I could be a girl sometimes. No matter what I do, it just looks like I'm only a friend."

"But it's fine to be a guy, right?"

"You're talking nonsense."

Plerng bared his teeth before nodding in agreement.

"Yeah, true. Being a full-on guy is probably for the best."

"But these days, girls can be naughty too."

"Are you planning to be naughty with Teacher Nim or something?"

"N-No! Idiot!"

Even though I wasn't serious, I answered in a tone that sounded more convincing than I intended. I was even surprised at myself.

Luckily, Plerng didn't seem to care about my awkward tone. Feeling flustered or embarrassed, I just decided to open the car door and get out.

"Where are you going?"

"Annoying, why should I have to put up with your bad mood? I was forced to come here in the first place."

"Hey, seriously?"

Plerng got out of the car and called after me as I walked farther away. "Come on, I was just jealous, that's all. Get in the car, I'll give you a ride."

"No need. I don't want to share a ride or even breathe the same air as you. I'm going to calm myself down. Once I'm not mad anymore, I'll contact you."

"Oh, come on."

I waved him off without even looking back and quickly ran to find a hiding spot, afraid he might drive after me to apologize. And just as expected, Plerng actually drove by, slowing down to look around with his window down before eventually leaving.

Now, I was finally alone.

. .

To be honest, I wasn't really that mad at Plerng. I was just... curious. I wanted to know what that sweet-faced teacher did besides teaching.

As I walked back toward the training school, I almost ran into her, but luckily, I managed to hide just in time and watched her walk out, holding her sports bag, looking like someone ready to go home.

So today, she only came to teach Plerng?

I never thought I'd be this kind of person-someone who sneaks around like Conan, observing and tracking a woman's every move. If I had to explain why I was doing this, I'd say... I just wanted to know.

I wanted to see what kind of woman my friend wanted to marry.

From what I observed today, she was small but energetic. At first glance, she looked delicate and gentle, just like her name. But up close, under those clothes, she was toned with muscles from regular workouts.

When she taught, she had this determined, focused look-fully committed to what she was doing. And most importantly, she had something I really liked.

She doesn't have any body odor.

I have a sensitive nose, almost like a dog. I can tell if there's a smell, even a small one. I can smell if there's cat poop here or dog poop there. I'm really into scents and even considered making it a profession-becoming a

**"Perfumer Stylist."**

It's like a personal stylist but for designing fragrances for people. If I had to describe Kru Nim's scent, I'd say it's like a pomegranate fragrance-sweet, fruity, slightly tangy, soft, and smooth. Maybe with a hint of spice to match her sweet yet spicy personality.

Oh-she just stopped walking. She's looking at a bubble tea menu now.

This is interesting. It seems like this is the moment when she's deep in thought. The small person stood on her toes, swaying back and forth while hooking her thumb through the waistband of her pants and biting her lip, deep in contemplation.

So cute. She looks so sweet, but she's not even fat. How much exercise must she be doing? Just looking at her makes me feel hopeless with life.

Now, she casually walked along, shipping her bubble tea, seemingly in a good mood. Along the way, she glanced around, observing everything like a keen observer. And then, what's she doing? She's looking left and right.

Oh, her underwear is peeking out.

Okay, that's normal. Happens to everyone. When it happens to me, I just pretend I'm doing ballet and pulling the mischievous underwear out. Those naughty panties are annoying my little ass crack.

Alright, now she's walking again, her bubble tea getting low. She's occasionally greeting the dogs along the street, as if she's talking to her mother, kind and compassionate toward animals. It's clear Plerng has sharp eyes.

She's beautiful.

She's sweet.

She's good at everything.

She's an athlete. The way she walks is graceful and elegant. She looks good.

And then, she just fell into a manhole!

"Whoops!"

I couldn't help but laugh and quickly covered my mouth, looking for a place to hide. I wasn't sure how loud I had laughed. Laughing at someone's mistake isn't a good thing, you know?

Wait, where did she go?

I scanned around, confused, looking for the person who had just fallen into the manhole. It happened so fast. Then, I heard a whisper by my ear.

**"Did you have a lot of fun?"**

At that moment, I realized she knew everything. The hairs on my arms stood up, and I bit my lip, trying to think of an escape plan.

"Oh, how did you end up here, Teacher Nim?"

"Just a coincidence, I suppose. The two of us."

"Yes .."

"Really?"

"....."

"If you're lying, you'll go to hell."

"It's better than falling into a manhole, right?"

When I felt the sharp look from her, as if she wanted to rip me apart, I quickly raised my hand in surrender.

"Fine, it wasn't a coincidence."

"Why are you following me?"

"Well..."

I tried to come up with a reason and scratched my head awkwardly.

"I just wanted to get to know my teacher better."

"Is that necessary? You're already in my class, aren't you?"

"Do I need another reason?"

"Well, you should have one."

"I guess I followed you because I like you... When I saw you and thought I'd like to marry you."

I said this sarcastically because I really couldn't come up with a more solid reason. But it seemed to leave her speechless, her face turning a shade of pink-orange as if there was blood rushing to her cheeks.

"Really?"

"....'

But the question of the person in front of me made me freeze and feel my face heat up. Now, we were both silent, until the smaller person bared her teeth.

"You're quite sarcastic, aren't you?"

"Huh? Wait, weren't you not asking seriously earlier?"

"Then, did you answer seriously?"

"....."

"Or are you serious about marrying Teacher Nim?"

The way she referred to herself as "Nim" made me roll my eyes because I wasn't sure how to hide the feelings bubbling inside me. It almost felt like I wanted to scream. The person in front of me looked like a fluffy ball I could just squeeze or something.

"If you agree, I might ask you to marry me. If it's you, I'm fine with that."

"....."

"I'm kidding! We just met, and why talking about marriage? I just wanted to get to know you. It's like when we're at school, there were some issues that made the conversation a bit awkward. I wanted to apologize for what happened today."

I scratched my head again. When I don't know what to do, my hands always feel awkward. Meanwhile, the smaller person stood on her toes, swaying back and forth while biting her lip.

"Why today?"

"Today is Teacher Ear Day."

"Why did you call me 'teacher'?Calling me 'teacher' means you're willing to learn from me, right?"

"Well, I guess so. From what we talked about, it seems like Teacher Nim isn't too angry."

"Who said I'm not angry?"

"Then, can I treat you to a meal as an apology? Are you in a hurry to leave?"

"When we're outside, you don't have to call me 'teacher.' Just call me Nim, that's fine. I haven't eaten dinner yet, and who could refuse a meal from someone? Can I pick the place?"

"Sure, go ahead."

"I'll choose a famous restaurant I found online. It's nearby. It's a bit expensive though."

"Expensive is fine, as long as it's delicious. Take me there, please."

"Alright."

. .

If Plerng knew that I was having dinner with the woman he plans to marry, he'd definitely cry his eyes out.

On the first day we met, I both bit the teacher's ear and also treated the sweet-faced teacher to a meal at a famous restaurant. I had heard the restaurant's name for a long time, passed by word of mouth, but it was the first time I got to eat there. It almost felt like we were strangers meeting for the first time.

"Have you chosen yet? Just Nim?"

When I called her that, the sweet-faced teacher looked up from the menu for a moment, then spoke quietly, but I could hear it clearly.

"Annoying."

"That's mean."

"Did you hear that?"

The little one raised her hand to cover her mouth in surprise, which made me laugh.

"Well, you said it loud enough."

"Are you mad at me?"

"Well, since you're planning to marry me, I'm not mad," I teased, and that made her raise the menu high.

"With an attitude like that, how could I not be annoyed?"

"I heard that even more clearly than before."

"I said it on purpose."

I lowered the menu to meet her gaze, and for a brief moment, there was silence between us, until a waiter came to take our order. After placing our orders, we started chatting casually about various things.

The conversation flowed smoothly without any awkwardness. I was even surprised by how easy it was to talk to her, wondering why Plerng didn't dare to date this woman, especially since she was so good at talking.

"Hey, Nim, are you older than Fa? Oh no, does that mean I have to call you 'Phi Nim'?"

"No way."

The sweet-faced girl waved her hand.

"Just calling me 'Nim' is fine."

"Don't you feel awkward?"

"Stop overthinking."

I propped my chin up and looked at the person across from me, then suddenly asked in all seriousness, eager to know the answer.

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Why are you asking?"

"Can't I ask?"

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

"I asked first, answer me, then I'll tell you."

"If I don't tell you, then what?"

"I won't marry you."

"Well, don't marry me then."

"If you don't marry me, You'll miss out on the best ride in your life. Think about it. Who would care about a short girl who teaches self-defense, who likes bubble tea, and falls into manholes?"

I suddenly remembered something and quickly added,

"Wait, hold on. I'll be right back."

"Where are you going, Fa..Fa!"

I hurried out of the restaurant and looked for a pharmacy. Luckily, there was a convenience store nearby where I could find the medicine I needed.

About ten minutes later, I returned to the table, and it seemed like the food had arrived faster than expected. To my surprise, the person who had been waiting hadn't eaten yet, as if waiting for my return.

"Why are you waiting? Just eat ."

"Nope, We have to eat together."

"Wow, someone's been raised properly."

"And where did you go?"

"I went to buy medicine."

"Why did you buy medicine?"

"Someone fell into the manhole and it must be hurt,"

I moved to sit on my knees beside the table and grabbed the teacher's leg, who flinched slightly and lifted her leg away.

"No, it's okay. I'll take care of it."

The word "I'll" made my heart skip a beat for a moment, then I looked up and smiled at the person. "You're really sweet."

"What are you saying?"

"Let me treat the wound. You fall into a drain earlier. At least put on a plaster first, then go home and treat it properly. If you're hurt, how will you be able to teach the students?"

I hummed cheerfully as I lifted the person's ankle to take a look. There was a small scrape, not too serious, but I still wanted to do something for her.

"You have self-defense skills against people, but no skill to protect yourself from Bangkok's drains, huh?"

"Don't you think you're caring too much?"

Such a straightforward question made me pause for a moment before continuing to put the plaster on.

"I think so too. I've never had to treat anyone's wound before."

"Then why are you doing it?"

"I don't know. Maybe because your eyes are soft and pretty."

I looked up at her and showed the remaining plaster, which was just a bit of scrap to throw away.

"Does that make sense?"

"It doesn't seem like a reason at all."

Then the little person lowered her head, unsure of what to do. I didn't know how to react either, so I moved back to sit in my original spot and began taking my first bite of food.

"Let's eat."

We both began eating our own portions. The descriptions of the food's taste here were not exaggerated at all. It was really delicious. Of course, I would come again for the second and third rounds.

First, because of the taste.

Second, it was a nice experience with a new friend sitting right in front of me.

"How is it? Is it delicious?"

Teacher Nim asked with a proud smile as if she had cooked the meal herself.

"It's really delicious, and it's not as expensive as you said."

**"And between this and Nim, which is more delicious?"**

.

*Thump-thump*

*Thump-thump*

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I froze mid-bite, meeting the eyes of the person who asked, who seemed just as surprised at their own words. Then, she hurriedly stood up, flustered.

"Ex..Excuse me, I'll go to the bathroom first. You can eat without me."

"Where are you going?"

"Hhmm... Whatever, it's none of your business. You can eat first, I'll be right back!"

The little one, in a hurry, tripped over her own feet and fell to the ground. Seeing that, I quickly got up to help her, amidst the curious stares of the people in the restaurant because of the loud noise from both of us.

"Oh...so embarrassing...?"

"I understand,"

I reached out my hand to help the person who had fallen get up.

"Understand what?"

"Understand that you're nervous. I am too."

"Why would I be nervous?"

Teacher Nim looked like she was about to deny it, but I squeezed her hand and smiled, as if to say she wasn't the only one feeling that way.

"I don't know why I'm nervous either. I don't want to find any reason for it. Maybe it's because..."

"Because what?"

**"Nim is more delicious than the food at this restaurant."**

# Chapter 03: We are Dating

I helped Teacher Nim get up. She lowered her eyes in embarrassment before quickly excusing herself to go to the bathroom, just as she had planned earlier.

As I started to notice that everyone was looking at us, I smiled awkwardly and slowly moonwalked back to my seat, trying to appear calm but feeling my face heat up. If I suddenly smiled by myself, people would think I'm crazy? Hehe...

Wait, it feels like I forgot something.

I furrowed my brow slightly, trying to figure out what was still lingering in my mind, but I quickly shook it off, thinking it wasn't important. Right now, my mind was more focused on the person who had gone to the bathroom. Should I sneak up on her?

What's going on? Just a short time away and I'm already missing her? What's happening to me?

Without thinking too much, I decided to do what my mind suggested. I walked toward the bathroom, but stopped in my tracks when I turned the corner and saw someone gently banging her head against the wall, rolling around on the floor. When I clearly saw the clothes, I realized it was Teacher Nim, who was now acting like a cat rolling around.

"What are you doing?"

I couldn't help but smile when I saw her behavior, knowing she was letting out her embarrassment through the wall. The little person froze for a moment, surprised, before glaring at me.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came to use the bathroom."

I tried my best to hold back my smile.

"And I had to be surprised when I saw someone standing and banging her head against the wall."

"That's so rude!"

After I teased her, Teacher Nim became even more embarrassed than before.

"Let's just go eat!"

"Of course. If I came to a restaurant and didn't eat, what would I be doing?"

The little one stomped her feet angrily and walked away. Once I was sure she had moved far enough out of my range of hearing, I jumped up and down in the bathroom and buried my face in my hands, wanting to scream out of embarrassment.

How adorable!

How cute!

That little one, that short one...

"Exercising before eating?"

This time, it was Teacher Nim's voice that spoke up when I was twisting around by myself in the bathroom.

The shock and embarrassment made me turn around quickly to stare, starting to feel the same embarrassment that she had just felt.

"Didn't you say you were going to eat?"

"I forgot to wash my hands, and then I saw someone dancing around like a fool."

The little person hurried into the bathroom, pretending to wash her hands. Her face showing that she was still embarrassed, smiling awkwardly. I could only grin to myself and pretend to walk into the restroom as if nothing had happened.

. .

In the end, our meal went well. I became Teacher Nim's student, and she made sure to remind me that we'd start one-on-one lessons tomorrow. We even arranged for the payment, without even asking the price.

"See you tomorrow, Teacher, at 2 PM."

"Don't be late! Time is money."

"You're so stingy. I'll be there waiting since 6 AM, just watch."

"Are you in a hurry? I'll see if you'll really be waiting at 6 AM."

"After the lesson, do you want to eat together again?"

I blurted it out without thinking, then remembered I should act more like a student. Teacher Nim was silent for a moment before shrugging.

"How can I say no to free food?"

"Have you said about treating me?"

"You said you're rich."

"This money for paying my lessons. I mean, you're beautiful but stingy. When you fell into a drain, I even bought medicine for you. How cruel can you be?"

I pretended to complain, and the sweet-faced person smiled a little and laughed.

"I'm just kidding. This time, I will treat. You can choose the restaurant."

"But Teacher Nim, you're poor!"

"Bad mouth."

"I'm just teasing! See you tomorrow, I'll be there early."

"At first, everyone is enthusiastic about learning. By the third, fourth, or fifth class, they start slacking off and don't come because they get lazy."

"That's other people, not me."

"Alright, I'll see."

"Just see? Can I do something else?"

I leaned in to make our gazes meet, but Teacher Nim spread her fingers and gently pushed my face away.

"We'll do plenty of other things together."

. .

I called a taxi and headed home, feeling relaxed. As soon as I arrived at my room, my eyes happened to land on my suitcase. The thing that had been lingering in my mind since we were at the restaurant was finally answered.

Immediately...

Oh...shit! I forgot I had an appointment!

As soon as I remembered, I grabbed my phone and dialed. The person on the other end took about three seconds before responding, and that made me close my eyes in fear, thinking I was about to get scolded by her.

"Sorry,"

I said, trying to sound as cute as possible because it was a voice my father could never stand whenever I wanted something, I had to get it, as I was the spoiled child.

"We had an appointment, but-"

[Oh sorry...]

The person on the other side responded with a cheerful tone, which made me raise an eyebrow. I was thinking about how to explain to her that I had forgotten.

[I forget it]

I smiled wide and then sat on the bed, relieved.

"Ah, I was so worried. I thought you were going to be angry. I forgot too. I was busy with something important for a bit."

I fiddled with the bedspread and thought about the sweet-faced teacher who was the reason for my important task today.

"I knew I had forgotten something."

[Yeah same here. I've been busy too, couldn't call to let you know. We're still friends, right?]

Oh, friends.

I smiled awkwardly at how the other person called us "friends." Even though we had only talked over the phone and just met yesterday, it was a good feeling.

"Really? We're not going to stop being friends just because we forgot, right?"

[Yes...]

"Then how about this: let's set a new date. How about tomorrow?"

I shook my head a little.

"No, no. I'm busy tomorrow. Let's do the day after instead."

[I was going to say tomorrow won't work. Okay, see you the day after then.]

"Are you hanging up?"

I said, sounding a bit regretful.

[I won't hang up. If you want to talk about anything, just say it.]

"What can friends talk about?"

[Are you a person who has no friends?]

"I have friends, but I've never talked to them on the phone without seeing their face, so I was wondering what we should talk about."

[Because we've never seen each other's face, we don't have to lie and can just be ourselves. Try telling me something about yourself that others don't know.]

"Most of my close friends already know everything. Hmm....what should I share?"

[Something you've never told anyone. A secret...something dark.]

The voice was slightly excited, and that made me nod in understanding before responding right away.

"Alright, I'll tell you about the dark side of my life. There's a lot of it, not sure if you'll believe it."

[Go ahead, no matter how dark, I can handle it.]

"I sleep with the lights off."

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Lately, I've been hearing the phrase "playing around" a lot. So much so that I think it might be a nickname my parents gave me from birth. Last night, after I said I sleep with the lights off, the other person called me "playing around," and I ended up hanging up, laughing alone.

Oh, you want to know about my secrets that much? Well, wait until we get even closer, and I'll tell you. Hehe.

.

The next day, I was fully prepared for my workout. The outfit I wore today was nothing other than my multicolored sweatpants that I had bought a while ago but had kept stored in the closet because I gave up on exercising.

My dad, who wasn't leaving for work yet, saw me all geared up and reached up to grab the back of my shirt, almost like he was carrying a puppy.

"You little brat, you can't escape me today."

"Ugh."

"You came back and didn't even say hello or talk to me. You've been disappearing here and there. Do you think I can't keep track of you? You've graduated, so you should be working now. How long are you going to keep wasting time like this?"

"I can! I have a rich dad."

"And that's exactly why you act this way."

"Dad,"

I said, knowing that my father was always there to catch me if I fell. I trust him to always be there for me.

"We already talked about this. I want to follow my dreams first. If I can't do it, I'll come back and take over the family business."

"Are you talking about designing your own perfume or something? How far do you think that will go?"

"Dad, you've always supported my dreams. A little more support won't hurt, okay?

*Ngungui~ nyaang~ kukuku~*

."

"What language is that?"

"Isn't it cute?"

I smiled widely, but when I saw his serious face, I couldn't help but burst out laughing.

"Ugh, so annoying. Why did I have to have a daughter?"

"If you had a son, you wouldn't be this smitten, right? Anyway, I'm going now, Dad."

I said as I started heading out the door. When he saw what I was wearing, he looked surprised.

"Where are you going? You look like you're about to work out."

"That's right. I'm going to work out."

"Really? What made you change your mind? You always complain about the smell of sweat, how sticky and gross it is, and then you mumbling with some alien language."

"'Issabara-heh-ah-hai-satae!'. This is a good start. Don't stop me, otherwise, I'll get lazy."

"Alright, alright. Go ahead and do what you want,"

My dad waved his hand as if he was worried I'd give up on working out halfway. I walked straight to my little Japanese car and started the engine, ready to go.

However my girlfriends, whom I almost forgot I was still friends with because I was so excited about my new friend, called to remind me about the souvenirs.

[Hey, you came back but didn't tell your friends. You think you can get away with that? We haven't forgotten about the souvenirs!!!]

"Ugh, you guys are so crazy! I didn't forget, I've just been busy."

[A jobless person like you has so many things to do? Whatever, we're making you meet us today. 6 PM, the souvenirs better be in our hands. Bye.]

"Hey, wait a second!!"

Before I could say anything, they hung up immediately, and I just clenched my teeth. What great friends, so lively, but never listen to reason.

I hadn't even gotten the chance to tell them that my bag got swapped. *Sigh*

, but it's fine, I'll see them soon. There's a lot I want to talk to them about.

But it seemed like someone else hadn't forgotten about needing to apologize. A call came in from Plerng with a cheerful voice. I had already started the car, so I just sat there, feeling a bit stuck, not wanting to drive and talk at the same time.

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[Are you over being mad yet?]

I had completely forgotten that I was even mad.

"I'm over it."

[You said you'd call me when you were over it.]

"I forgot. You know I don't stay mad for more than a day."

[Exactly, that's why I called. I'm coming over to your house. I'm bored.]

"Don't come. I'm not home."

[Where are you going?]

"I'm going to take a martial arts class,"

I told my friend, excited to share that I had finally decided to enroll. The voice on the other end responded with a cheerful "Haha."

[Really? What made you change your mind?]

"I think it's important for people to know how to protect themselves. Now, can we stop chatting? It's almost time for the class. That's it, I've signed up, okay?"

.

I hung up lazily, thinking about the sweet-faced person who was probably on her way too. I didn't want to be late and wanted to make a good impression on the first day of class.

But when I arrived, what I expected to be a quiet, one-on-one class turned out to have my overly enthusiastic friend showing up, even though he wasn't even enrolled. It made me so frustrated that I couldn't help but growl.

"Why are you here?"

"I'm here to take the class."

"How can you be here? This is a one-on-one class! I'm doing the same as you, so hurry up and go back. You're wasting other people's time."

"Why should we learn separately? Teacher Nim will teach us together. I'll manage my own time. If you comes, I'll be here too."

Teacher Nim, the instructor, looked between me and Plerng with a clearly troubled expression. I couldn't tell if she couldn't handle teaching both of us or just didn't want to.

Right now, I didn't want to see my friend's face at all. This wasn't even the point of me coming to class in the first place.

*Ugh!*

"No, private tutoring is expensive. We'll just learn separately."

"Why? Are you hiding something? Why you don't want me here?"

When Plerng said this, I was almost ready to back out. Even Teacher Nim seemed speechless, both of us acting like cows in a tricky situation. The truth was, we were just here to take a class, nothing more.

"Nothing to hide. I just don't understand why we need to learn together."

"What's wrong with that? We...."

Plerng rolled his eyes, trying to find an excuse.

"What we...?"

He looked at me, silently begging for help in thinking of an excuse. But since I had no intention of helping-if anything, I was ready to kick him out if he kept stalling-he was left with no choice but to blurt out a reason on the spot.

And that reason hit me so hard that I almost collapsed on the spot, completely caught off guard.

**"We're dating."**

*Ugh!*

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# Chapter 04: Reconciliation

"Teacher Nim, the truth is-"

"Yes.."

**Thud!**

"It's not true at all!"

**Thud!**

"Oh....!"

. .

For the entire class today, I got thrown around nonstop by my martial arts teacher. She didn't hold back at all. Even though the padded target didn't hurt as much as getting hit directly on my body, it still left red marks and made me feel sore from being slammed onto the mat so many times.

I thought today would be a good day, but it turned into the worst day since I came back from abroad-all because of that stupid friend.

"Teacher Nim was so harsh today."

"Hhm."

"Normally, she isn't this rough."

"Hhm."

"Did you do something to make her mad? Hey! That's my nostril! How did your finger get in there?!"

I angrily poked my fingers into Plerng's nose out of frustration. Ugh, why was he saying things that made me even angrier? This whole mess was his fault!

"I didn't do anything to make her mad. You did!"

"Me? What did I do?"

"You told her we're dating, you idiot!"

*"Aargh..!"*

I couldn't take it anymore! Like a furious heroine in a drama, I grabbed my friend's head and shook it back and forth, secretly hoping his brain would pop out along with his scalp.

"That hurts, damn it! Ouch! Let go!"

Plerng grabbed my wrist and twisted it a little, showing off the skills he had learned after coming to this class four times. Then, he suddenly grinned.

"Wait... B1, do you think the same ss me? That Teacher Nim is mad because she thinks we're actually dating?"

"Of course!"

"Wow."

"Wow, my foot!"

"Teacher Nim is jealous!"

"Jealous?"

"Well, Teacher Nim was acting strange, right? If that's not jealousy, then what is it?"

Plerng's smile made me grin too when I realized what he meant. But then, when I saw him looking shy and flustered, I frowned slightly, wondering what was wrong with him.

"Do you have a parasite in your anus? Why are you squirming like that?"

"You're a girl! Don't say such gross things! I'm just happy to know that Teacher Nim has feelings for me. Damn, she never showed any signs before! If I had known, I wouldn't have wasted money taking these classes for nothing."

"It's okay, I'm rich. But are you sure Teacher Nim is jealous of you?"

"If not me, then who? You? Don't be ridiculous. You only met her for a day. Besides, you're a girl. Of course, she likes me-handsome, rich, and-"

"Stop."

I waved my hand like I was stopping traffic because I could already predict the nonsense he was about to say next.

"You haven't measured up to that with the whole world. And also, it doesn't matter to women."

"I have a rabbit waist!"

"Yeah, a dead rabbit."

Before he could argue back, my phone rang, interrupting our conversation. It was my girl gang calling.

"Hello?"

[Everyone's already at the restaurant waiting for you. Hurry up and bring something fun. I'll send you the location. Bye!]

"Wait!"

My friends never asked if I was free or not. If they called me to come, I had to come-like a dictatorship. I sighed. Things were already a mess here, and now I had to go deal with their nonsense too?

"Did your crazy girl gang calling you? Fine, I won't bother you anymore. I'm in a good mood today."

"Why are you in a good mood? You want to win her over, but you just told her you already have a girlfriend. That doesn't help your situation at all."

"What do you mean?"

"If you knew she had a husband and a kid, would you still court her?"

"Of course! I'll steal her from her husband for myself!"

"You idiot!"

"Oh my gosh! At that time, I was so shocked that I just said anything without thinking. I completely forgot about this part! What do I do now? She already thinks we're a couple who strip naked on the bed and moan loudly!"

"You told her we're dating, you idiot! It's so creepy! Look, I've got goosebumps!"

I showed off my goosebumps and made an annoyed face.

"I don't care! You caused this mess, so you fix it! Go tell her that we're not whatever nonsense you made up! This is so frustrating! I haven't even had my first kiss, and now I suddenly have a boyfriend who looks like a monkey? Ugh!"

I stood there pretending to have a stomachache until Plerng asked me with concern,

"What's wrong?"

"My uterus is cramping. It says it doesn't want to live anymore. If you claim credit for this, it will be waste of life."

"That's disgusting!"

. .

I parted ways with Plerng, still fuming, and followed the location my friends had shared. It turned out to be the same restaurant where I had eaten yesterday with my beautiful teacher, Nim. As soon as my friends saw me, they waved me over to their table before greeting me in their usual way.

"Hi, friend! Girl from abroad!"

Penguin, the most excited one in the group who always insisted on meeting up, greeted me in English as if I had just returned from overseas.

"Oh, shut up. Did you forget that you failed the English test?"

"I only know one line! If I don't continue with 'Sit down, please,' how else can I continue with 'Thank you, teacher', 'Hurry up' and 'sit down'. Where's my souvenir?"

"Ugh, why are you so obsessed with souvenirs? Is your family bankrupt or something?"

Dan, another friend who had now become the owner of some electronics company, rolled her eyes in annoyance before holding out her hand toward me.

"Where's my souvenir?"

"You guys are too much!-Wait, Preaw, what's up with your hair?"

Preaw, who looked as serene as a saint and showed no signs of escaping the cycle of rebirth, slowly turned to face me like a robot and replied in a calm, monotone voice,

"Lord Shiva style."

"Huh?"

"Can't you see the fake green snake hanging around my neck? I'm cosplaying as Lord Shiva on my mom's orders. Look at the hairstyle, the fake green snake, and this patterned shirt-it all fits the theme. Don't disturb my spiritual concentration."

"Wait, wasn't it supposed to be a python wrapped around your neck?"

I vaguely remembered seeing it in an Indian movie once.

"Or maybe a cobra?"

"Oh! I can't take it anymore! Whether it's a cobra, a green snake, or a python, I don't care! I'm exhausted from being possessed-enough is enough!"

Then, Preaw, who truly lived up to her name, casually tossed the green snake aside and leaned on her arm, looking bored.

"Where's my souvenir?"

"Even Lord Shiva from Mount Kailash wants a souvenir, huh?"

I slumped into a chair, feeling tired and fed up.

"It's not like I want to do this. My mom said that when I tie my hair like this, she thinks of Lord Shiva. Then she won the lottery and told me to keep this look for a while-at least until the next draw."

"The economy must be really bad if even Preaw's mom is playing the lottery now."

"Well, she has to win at some point. She buys numbers from 00 to 99. If she doesn't win, it's too bad,"

Aoy commented, unfazed by the lottery talk.

"I'm just going along with it because my mom promised to increase my credit card limit."

"Conflict of interest,"

I shook my head lightly and laughed at my friend. Preaw just shrugged, accepting it because there was no point in arguing.

"Money is the driving force of society."

"You mean important,"

Someone corrected.

Everyone in our group was a child of business owners making no less than hundreds of millions. We were raised like rich kids, sure, but deep down, we had working-class souls-living simply, eating whatever, swearing without a care, and not bothering if people thought our parents failed to teach us manners.

We were taught-we just didn't care. Come on, if you have money, why do you need to be nice and polite? Being rich is a gift from winning the race as the fastest sperm and being born into the right family. That's all.

"What's up with you? Why is your skin so red? Did you take a nap on a shrimp grill?"

Penguin eyed my flushed skin suspiciously, then glanced at my outfit.

"That looks like workout clothes."

"I just finished working out."

"Unbelievable! You? Working out? In gym class, you always ran off to hide, complaining about the smell of sweat!"

"Life is unpredictable. I want a good body and some self-defense skills in case of danger."

"And what does that have to do with you being red?"

"I got thrown and slapped around a bit too much today."

"Something's up,"

Our group's Lord Shiva said, looking at me with closed eyes.

"What are you doing, Preaw?"

"Using the third eye, wondering what made Fah start exercising. It must be something romantic, something with attraction, something passionate."

"An orgasm!"

Aoy replied like someone observing animal instincts, her eyes bright and sharp.

"It must be this. Fah's in love. If she's not in love with a classmate, then it must be with the teacher. Tell me about his size and shape!"

Aoy grabbed a tissue, leaned back in her chair, and pretending slipped her hand into her jeans while closing her eyes, clearly enjoying herself.

"I'm ready for the climax."

"Why are you all so disgusting? This is a restaurant, you know. Have some respect for high society and your family names."

I tried to change the subject when my friends caught me, but I couldn't escape my friend's suspicions.

"Who would want to date you, Ifah? Do you think someone like Aff

Taksaorn or anyone with royal blood would want hang out with you?"

"Don't look down on Ifah. She has royal friends," Penguin chimed in.

"Who?"

"Me. Lord Shiva, the ruler of Mount Kailash, ready to stand by your side."

Preaw raised her hand and immediately went into a trance. After declaring her possession, she continued,

"Tell me, what does he look like?"

"Use your third eye, it's right there."

"Stop playing hard to get!"

"Fine,"

Knowing I couldn't hide anything anymore, I lazily answered. Preaw leaned forward eagerly, clearly curious. "How tall is he?"

"She's a bit shorter than me."

"Height doesn't matter in horizontal positions. I've proved it,"

Penguin said excitedly.

"It's okay, as long as my friend likes him, I'm all for it. Where did you two do it the first time?"

"Fuck! We just started studying together, and this is only our second meeting... I can't explain why it feels so significant."

I sighed, stressed.

"But things didn't go too well today. She seemed angry and really beat me up."

"Hey, you haven't even started dating yet and he's already using violence.

You are going to die if you actually date him. I don't agree with this. Om Namah Shivaya."

My friend grabbed a snake and threw it at me like casting a spell. I bared my teeth slightly before shouting back.

"Stop it, you a sinner!"

"It's not a sin because I don't have a religion. If we don't have a religion, we won't go to hell because there's nowhere to go,"

My friend proudly said, showing off her wickedness.

"Is he the son of a powerful royal family? Why are you letting him hurt you?"

"She is just jealous."

"Just jealous and hurting you like this? It's not okay,"

Aoy made a face, pretending upset.

"But if the technique was good, I'll forgive him."

"Well, that's bold,"

I thought back to when Teacher Nim threw me like a professional and couldn't help but admire it.

"Okay, I forgive. Tell me everything, especially what happened when you lying down."

"When I lying down? We just looked at each other, nothing special, just a little sore."

Because the small body threw me so hard. I thought my intestines would explode out of all nine orifices.

"After a while, I got up and it happened again. Just kept going around in circles like that."

"Sounds like a low uterus issue."

Aoy rubbing her chin.

"What does the uterus have to do with this?"

"I want to see your guy. Take us to meet him now. Who is it that made you sore and dared to hurt someone who never gives in like you?"

"Hurt? What are you talking about?"

"Take us to meet him."

All my friends insisted, making me hunch my shoulders.

"Meet her? I already told you she is angry. I haven't even gotten close yet because this idiot, Plerng, is pretending to be my boyfriend."

"There's a backstory here," Aoy said, analyzing it.

"It's like you're cheating."

"No way. I can't let this go till tomorrow."

I stood up quickly and checked my watch.

"I'm going now."

"Hey, where are you going? We're not done talking yet!"

I paused for a moment when I heard Praew's voice, then turned back to grab the green snake on the table and waved goodbye to everyone.

"Just borrowing it. Bye."

. .

Since the restaurant we were at was near my class, I chose to walk there instead of driving because I was too lazy to find parking again. When I arrived, Teacher Nim, who was teaching a group class, was throwing the students with enthusiasm, but her expression and mood seemed much happier than when she was with me.

*I am so disappointed.*

I just stood there, not knowing what to do. I wondered if someone who was taking a private class could join a group class. Would they be kicked out if they tried? But because I was too anxious, I decided to walk into the class and face the teacher with a burning desire.

"Teacher Nim."

My voice made the sweet-faced person look at me with a blank expression and respond coldly.

"Our class already finished, this is a group class."

"I feel like I forgot some moves, so I wanted to review them. Can I join the group class?"

In fact, when I spoke, I held my breath because the room was filled with the stench of sweat, mud, and the smell of students I hated. But because of the sweet-faced person, I still had the strength to endure the smell.

"Okay, if you want to review, which move do you not remember?"

"The playful move, the one that always you pull me in...!"

My arm was grabbed immediately and thrown onto the mat again, causing me to accidentally scream out loud,

"Ahh!"

"This isn't the playful move."

"This is the 'Let's kill this love' move."

How angry must she be to keep playing with me without any hesitation?

You can't just kill my love. It's harder for love to happen than for Halley's comet to fall.

I stood up, grounded myself, and then rushed to hug her from behind. The sweet-faced person tried to wiggle away to throw me again, but since I was taught how to dodge by her, I managed to resist a little, whispering what I wanted to say.

"Fah isn't dating Plerng."

"I don't want to hear it."

"That Plerng is a jerk!"

My leg got caught, causing me to fall and be thrown onto the ground again. The group class immediately turned into a private class, as everyone in the class began watching us with interest.

"Do you want to take a break? You seem out of breath. What was that move again? The playful move?"

Teacher Nim brushed herself off, walked over to grab water from the corner, took a sip, and then grabbed her phone to read something. I stared at her proud, aloof attitude in genuine anger, before marching right up to her and calling out in a harsh tone.

**"Num Nim!"**

No more calling her "Teacher" after my anger had subsided. "Num Nim" was the name I made up to sound cute, and it made the sweet-faced person look up from her phone with wide eyes in shock.

The green snake rubber in my hand was thrown toward the teacher so fast, as if an atomic bomb had been launched. It landed right on Teacher Nim's face, making her fall backward instantly-without even a scream.

"Teacher Nim, did you faint? Don't scare me like that!"

I rushed to her collapsed figure in shock and shook her lightly. A crowd of students quickly gathered, forcing me to shoo them away.

"Don't crowd around! Step back!"

Everyone obeyed immediately. Once I had calmed down, I leaned in closer and hesitantly spoke.

"You're not really unconscious, are you?"

"....."

"If you don't wake up, I'll have to give you CPR."

Still no response. My worry deepened. Was she really unconscious? What should I do now? Maybe I should try again.

"If you don't wake up, I'll bite your ear."

"...."

"I'll bite your nose."

"...."

"I'll bite your lips."

"....."

**"You talk to much, just bite me!"**

The small voice that came from the person lying there made me pause for a moment. The smell of compressed milk tablets hit me. It was a scent I loved most, reminding me of my kindergarten days, like the soft, sweet taste of a small child's lips.

And now, it was in Teacher Nim's mouth, a memory that would stay with me forever whenever I smelled it again.

The scent that made me think of her.

**"Alright, I'll bite now."**

.

**Sunyan Note:**

in Thai...they don't use SHE or He in conversation...sometime it's confusing about the gender.

# Chapter 05: Sneeze

I opened my mouth as if I were about to say something but quickly shut it when I felt countless gazes locking onto me from all directions.

Meanwhile, Teacher Nim remained lying down with her eyes closed but frowned. I wasn't sure if she was annoyed that I didn't respond as she had said or if she was nervous about her own challenge.

"Is Teacher Nim dead?"

The smallest elementary school kid in the class asked curiously. I snapped out of my awkward stance and gestured toward the person lying down.

"I don't know. No matter how much I call, she won't wake up."

"Should we do CPR?"

A middle school-aged kid eagerly suggested.

"I just learned how! I'll do chest compressions!"

"I'm awake,"

Teacher Nim suddenly sat up as if nothing had happened.

"I was just meditating."

I smiled, amused by her attempt to cover up her embarrassment. Seeing me looking at her like that, she pointed toward the door, signaling me to wait outside.

"If you don't understand anything, you can ask after class,"

She murmured, biting her lip slightly.

"So I have to wait until class is over?"

"If you can wait, I'll teach you."

"But that'll take a long time. It's already getting dark."

I glanced outside, pretending to be inconvenienced. The sweet-faced teacher furrowed her brows slightly and asked in a small voice,

"Do you have an errand to hurry?"

"No, but waiting too long makes me miss you."

"Get out and wait outside!"

Her small arms pushed me toward the door before emphasizing firmly,

"Sit right here. Don't come in. And-"

"And?"

"Don't go anywhere."

"After being ordered like this, where could I even go?"

. .

I waited until class ended, just as she had instructed. But even if she hadn't said anything, I had already decided to stay and talk to her. However, everything turned out to be much easier than I had expected.

I have no idea why, but when I tried walked in, something threw me around without holding back. But when I stopped to drink water, the green snake became clear and suddenly everything change like magic.

*Could it be that green snake, the false relic Shiva of my friend?*

*.*

"You didn't have to wait too long, right?"

The petite figure who had just finished taking a shower walked in wearing a casual outfit, and wet hair. The sporty scent of her soap made her look unexpectedly cool, but to me, she was still just as cute.

"I could wait my whole life for you."

"Okay, then see you tomorrow."

Teacher Nim turned to leave, but I quickly grabbed her wrist and pouted.

"How cruel."

"Just kidding."

This time, she laughed brightly, clearly pleased that her joke had made me sulk.

"Have you eaten yet?"

"How could I eat? I was too stressed from being scolded. Look, I've lost so much weight in just one day. So pitiful."

"You're so dramatic. Alright, I'll treat you."

"We've met twice, and both times we've had a meal together."

I smiled as I walked beside her. She pretended not to notice.

"If we're not eating, what should we do then?"

"Good question. What should we do?"

I raised my voice slightly, actually considering it.

"I've never been on a real date before, so I have no idea what people usually do."

"A... date?"

The sweet-faced teacher turned to look at me before quickly averting her gaze.

"Wait, are we on a date right now?"

It seemed like my words had slipped out faster than my thoughts. Honestly, I had never considered it until I read

*Pluto*

, a novel that opened up a whole new perspective for me. It made me think that maybe this was just normal for everyone now.

Or was I the only one who saw it that way?

Did Teacher Nim not think this was a date?

"Um... I don't know what to call whatever this is. If you're uncomfortable, Teacher Nim.."

"Uncomfo...

*cough.* "

"....."

"Sorry, i just got my saliva in my throat...

*cough*

!"

She suddenly choked on her own saliva mid-sentence, coughing a little. I burst out laughing at the perfect timing.

"Okay, okay! I believe you-so uncomfooorrrtaaa-"

"Stop making fun of me!"

"I won't tease you anymore."

"Are you mad?"

"Why would I be mad? I just don't know what to say."

"I thought you were upset again. I was worried. You seemed in a bad mood all day, and I was wondering why you suddenly stopped being mad. Did something happen during the water break?"

"....."

"There must have been something."

"Well... I saw you tossing the snake earlier, and it was kind of cute. So I wasn't mad anymore."

"....."

"Plerng sent me a message saying he's not actually dating you like he said. He admitted that he only said it because he wanted to study with you. He told me to ask you for the real reason."

Once she confessed that, I understood. That troublesome friend of mine at least had some sense of timing, which made everything a lot easier.

"I see."

By then, we had reached the parking lot. I pressed my car key to unlock the door and casually nudged her toward it.

"Hop in. Let's go eat, and then I'll take you home."

"Aren't you going to tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"The reason Plerng wants to study with you."

"Hm... Should I tell you?"

"....."

"Let's have dinner first, then you can tell me."

.

That kind of persuasion made my heart swell. This time, we changed things up and ate at a simple roadside porridge stall. Partly because I didn't want my beautiful teacher to have to treat me to something expensive, and partly because if we went back to the same restaurant, I might run into my obnoxious friend group and make things awkward.

"Plerng wants to study with me because he wants me to set things up for him."

"Set up what?"

"He wants me to be the matchmaker!"

I let out a loud "Hmph!" and shook my head in frustration.

"It's weird, right? He's always so smooth with strong and flirting with many women. But now? He doesn't even dare to make a move. Back when he was studying in France, he told me he'd introduce me to the woman he was going to marry. So I assumed he had already won her over. Turns out, he couldn't even hold a proper conversation with her."

"I see... So why don't you help set him up?"

**"If I did, I'd miss out."**

I spoke absentmindedly before pausing, suddenly realizing what I had said. I quickly cleared my throat. Teacher Nim, who had heard me loud and clear, decided to play along innocently.

"Miss out on what?"

"Um... nothing..."

"If you don't tell me, I won't know."

"

*Cough...cough.*

He likes... But, uh ...Teacher Nim..."

"What?"

"

*Cough...cough*

! You see, I'm coughing, aren't I?"

I pretended to sip my drink and coughed again.

"You sure are coughing a lot."

"I love-

*cough*

!"

The sweet-faced teacher ducked her head, pretending to clear her throat just as I forced a bite of Chinese sausage into my mouth, avoiding eye contact.

My heart pounded anxiously, but I acted as if nothing had happened. It would've been nice if she had said something to ease my embarrassment. "I think... we don't know each other very well."

I turned to meet her shy gaze and nodded.

"That's true."

"But have you ever heard this saying?"

"Which one?"

Her face turned as red as a shrimp. Even though it was already dark, the soft glow from the porridge stall made her expression perfectly visible to me.

**"The right person doesn't have to make an effort."**

"Wait a sec-"

I immediately ducked under the table, covering my face with my hands, completely flustered. I kept my mouth shut, trying not to scream, for a whole minute. Only when Teacher Nim peeked under the table did I force myself to act normal.

"What are you doing? You've been hiding under there forever. Did I say something wrong?"

"No, you didn't say anything wrong. I'm just... excited."

"I'm excited too. So should we do something to calm down?"

"Like what?" "Let's go to a hotel."

Silence.

"Fah!!!"

Nim burst out laughing.

"I'm joking!"

I dramatically pretended to faint, making her laugh even harder. Her laughter drowned out the sounds of engines and car horns on the street.

My heartbeat was so loud in my ears that I wondered if she could hear it too.

"You shouldn't joke about things like that."

"Are... are you mad? I was just-"

"I'm serious. Let's go to a hotel, Teacher Nim."

"You idiot!"

. .

We never explicitly said we were dating, but the atmosphere made it clear enough. Eventually, she let me drive her home.

When we arrived, I glanced past the front gate at the two-story wooden house. It wasn't too big or too small, with just enough space for a lush garden. It gave me an idea of her family's modest but comfortable lifestylenot extravagant like mine or my group of friends.

"Your house is so cozy. I love how green it is."

"It's basically a breeding ground for green snakes. I've been catching them to play with since I was little."

I stared at her, surprised at how casually she said that.

"You're not scared at all? They're snakes. But when I threw that green snake at you, you fainted instantly."

"I was just pretending. I didn't know how to react. I was shocked over the misunderstanding between you and Plerng." "So you just passed out to escape the problem?"

I smirked.

"If your students weren't around, I would've shut you up already. You smell like milk candy-it's really tempting."

"Idiot."

"Can't I?"

"Can't what?"

I didn't say anything else, leaving her to figure it out on her own.

"Pretending not to know? In class, you let me bite...

*Ouch*

!"

Teacher Nim playfully opened her mouth and bit my shoulder lightly before quickly pulling away.

"What's this?"

"Well, you didn't bite me, so I did it myself. See you later!"

"See you when?"

"We can arrange a time by phone."

"Do we even have each other's numbers?"

At that moment, we both froze, as if we had seen a ghost. We had been playful with each other, eaten together, and even playfully bitten each other's shoulders-but we didn't have each other's phone numbers!

So how had we been contacting each other all this time? Telepathy?

"That's true... Why don't we have each other's numbers? Hold on."

Teacher Nim took out some kind of notebook, hesitated for a moment, then wrote down a number and handed it to me.

"Call this number, okay?"

"Ah, okay."

The sweet-faced person looked at me briefly before stepping out of the car, waving goodbye. I waved back and watched her enter the house. Then, as if there was a hidden camera in my car audience watching, I spoke to myself. *"I already miss you."*

. .

I went home feeling so happy. This was one of the best times of my life. I had never been in love before. I had admired people from afar but never deeply cared.

I had never had a crush on a senior. I didn't know what real feelings wereuntil I met Teacher Nim. Everything had moved so fast, in just two days. **When you find the right person, you don't have to make an effort**

**.**

I flopped onto my bed and grabbed my phone to save the number-then froze. If I saved the number, my profile with Lisa picture and my contact name

*"Hawm Noi"*

would show up in Teacher Nim's contacts too!

Oh no! So embarrassing! I should get another phone just for talking to Nim.

As I scrolled through my contacts, I saw Mew's picture and suddenly felt a little guilty. If this was my first time feeling something special, that wouldn't be entirely true.

Because there was someone else-someone I had never seen in person-but who still made my heart race.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

Hello, Mae Khun! What are you doing?"

.

About three seconds later, the person on the other end read my message and typed back.

.

**Mae Khun**

:

I'm lying on my bed, rolling around, thinking about random things. I was just thinking about you.

**Hawm Noi:**

We're thinking the same thing! I miss you too.

.

But I was lying. I wasn't only thinking about her. Teacher Nim had taken up almost every inch of space in my heart right now.

.

**Mae Khun**

:

How was your day? Tell me about it.

**Hawm Noi**

:

It was a really good day. How about you?

**Mae Khun**

:

It was a great day. A really, really great day. I can't even explain it.

**Hawm Noi**

:

Looks like we both had good things happen today! Want to share?

**Mae Khun**

:

I want to share... but I don't know where to start.

**Hawm Noi**

:

Just say whatever comes to mind first. Just blurt it out! You'll figure out the rest as you go.

.

I hesitated for a moment, and decided to typed a message as if to test the waters.

**Hawm Noi**

:

Have you ever been in love?

.

The other person read my message but didn't reply for over two minutes. For most people, that wouldn't be a long wait. But for me, sitting here anxiously, it felt like forever.

.

**Mae Khun**

: I think... maybe I have.

**Hawm Noi**

:

Does that mean you're in love right now?

.

Suddenly, I felt a mix of disappointment and relief.

I loved talking to Mae Khun. It gave me a special feeling I couldn't explain. But at the same time, I had been giddy over Nim, and that made me feel guilty toward Mae Khun in a way I couldn't quite understand.

But when she said she was already in love, that guilt eased-just a little.

.

**Mae Khun**

:

It's too early to make that conclusion. But why did you suddenly bring this up? Hawm Noi, are you in love?

**Hawm Noi:**

I don't know.

**Mae Khun:**

You can talk to me. At least, I am... your friend.

**Hawm No**

i:

A friend...

.

I wrote it that way to make the other person feel like I was speaking slowly, almost like I was sighing absentmindedly.

.

**Hawm Noi**

:

Before we become friends, let's trade secrets. If you tell me one of your secrets, I'll tell you what's in my heart.

**Mae Khun:**

So we have to trade, huh? Alright, I'll tell you a secret.

.

I quickly sat up and licked my lips in amusement.

.

**Hawm No**

i:

Go ahead. **Mae Khun**

:

The secret is... Secret.

**Hawm No**

i:

That's right! A secret is a "secret." Now tell me, what's the secret?

**Mae Khun:**

Secret Garden.

. .

After talking with Mae Khun, I ran to find Aunt Porn, the housekeeper, who was probably already asleep at this late hour-eleven o'clock. At first, she seemed annoyed, but when she saw it was me, she quickly changed her attitude and acted very polite.

"What is it, Miss Fah? Do you need something? Why are you up so late? Are you hungry for instant noodles?"

"No, I just need a little favor. Can I borrow your phone to call a friend?"

"Oh? What happened to your phone?"

"It's broken."

I lied again. But oh well, Aunt Porn was just asking casually. In the end, she let me borrow her phone.

I dialed Teacher Nim's number, which I had already written down. The call barely rang once before the other person picked up, sounding completely awake.

.

[Hello..]

"Are you still awake? Were you waiting for my call?"

[Did you get home?]

"Quite a while ago."

[If you've been home for a while, why didn't you call earlier? You made me wait.]

"So you really were waiting!"

I laughed. Aunt Porn, who had been secretly watching me, narrowed her eyes. I quickly turned away and whispered,

"I borrowed someone else's phone to call. My phone is broken. I'll buy a new one tomorrow."

[How could it be broken? I saw you using it just fine at the shop earlier.]

.

*So observant.*

*.*

"Well, yeah, but when I got home, it broke. So I had to run around looking for a phone to call you."

.

I lied again.

.

"Anyway, don't save this number. I'll call you tomorrow from my new phone and add you on LINE."

[No need to add me on LINE.]

"Why not?"

[I prefer talking rather than texting.]

.

I smiled and nodded as if she could see me.

.

"Same. I like that too."

[Like what?]

"You. Oops... What did I just say?"

.

Even though I couldn't see her face, I could guess-she was probably either banging her head against the wall or rolling around like a shy little millipede.

.

[I'm not talking to you anymore. Call me tomorrow with your new number so I can save it.]

"Why do I have to be the only one talking?"

[I've been talking to you this whole time.]

"I mean, why do I have to be the only one expression my feelings? So sad. Am I just imagining things by myself?"

.

The person on the other end went silent for a moment before...

.

[I like....

*sneeze*

]

"Like what?"

[I just sneezed. My nose itches, haha.. I really like it!]

.

When I heard the sneeze, I immediately rolled around with my back against the nearest wall. It was the prettiest sneeze I've ever heard in my lifesomething I'd never heard before.

.

"You must have a cold. Don't forget to take medicine and rest..."

.

*Bleep!*

Then the call cut off suddenly, leaving me unable to finish my sentence. When I called back, a sweet, familiar voice came on-something everyone across the country has probably heard for refill services.

*"Your balance is insufficient for this transaction."*

*.*

I bit my lip, frustrated, then turned to Aunt Porn, who was staring at me like I was possessed by a ghost. I completely forgot that I wasn't the only living thing on this earth as I rolled around on the wall.

"Aunt, I'll top up tomorrow. My phone's out of credit."

"Are you really okay? You look like you're in pain."

"In pain? What do you mean?"

"You look like you're possessed or something. Like you've been sprinkled with holy water-so restless, rolling around."

"I'm just embarrassed!"

I handed the phone back to her with a polite gesture.

"Anyway, thank you for letting me borrow it. And please don't tell anyone about tonight. Let's keep it a secret between us."

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. This will be a secret."

I raised an eyebrow and, pretending to be curious, asked what she would say.

"What kind of secret?"

**"Secret Garden."**

So....

.

# Chapter 06: Bodyguard

Whenever we repeatedly insist,

*"Don't tell anyone*

," you can be sure that by the next day, the entire country will know exactly what happened. Just like my life today. As I was about to step out of the house to buy a new phone, my mom called me back in a voice that could rival a megaphone.

Her tone was full of curiosity and suspicion, turned up to full volume at level 1234.

"Since you got back to Thailand, you haven't stayed home for a single day, sweetheart."

I skidded to a stop and turned to flash my mom a syrupy sweet smile. Whenever she used the word "sweetheart," it meant a serious interrogation was coming. I was trying to guess what it was about when I caught sight of Aunt Porn standing not far away.

It must be about last night's phone call.

"Yes, Mom?"

"You haven't had a proper conversation with me since you got back. It's been five or six days already."

"But we already talked when you asked about your souvenirs."

"And where are they? Haven't you gotten your bag back yet."

"I'm getting it today. I already arranged to swap bags with the person."

"What time?"

"We didn't set an exact time."

"And where are you going now?"

"Oh, Mom, you're questioning me like a detective interrogating a thief! I'm just going out to explore, like any normal person who just got back from abroad. I miss papaya salad and spicy mangoes salad."

"You have a boyfriend, don't you?"

Here we go. I glanced at Aunt Porn, who was slowly moonwalking behind my mom as if trying to avoid getting caught in the crossfire.

"What boyfriend? I've only been back for three days. That's way too fast for sparks to fly."

"But Aunt Porn said she saw you talking on the phone last night, acting all suspicious-rolling around between the wall and the cement-coated, TOApainted surface."

"Why stop there, Mom? You might as well name the contractor who built the wall and the architect who designed the house! I was just rolling around like normal. I didn't want to stand still and get eaten alive by mosquitoes. Aunt Porn's front yard is super dark. At first, I was going to do the ' *Ah Li Ga Ga'* dance, but I was afraid Auntie Porn would be shocked."

"Is that just an excuse?"

"If you don't believe me, call the number I dialed last night and see if a man or a woman answers."

We locked eyes for a moment before Mom waved her hand dismissively.

"Fine, I believe you."

"Because you trust me? Hehe."

"Because I already called."

My heart nearly stopped. That meant Mom had talked to \*Kru (\* *teacher*

) Nim! How much did they talk? What did she ask? Did she say anything she shouldn't have?

"And what did she say?"

"She said-"

"Said what?"

"Said-"

"What did she say!?"

"She said 'Hello,' and then I hung up."

Mom shrugged casually. Meanwhile, I, who had been anxiously waiting with my spine practically curled from the suspense, let out a quiet sigh of relief, trying not to make it too obvious.

"So it was a woman's voice?"

"Yep."

"Geez, Mom! You really had to ask all that?"

"I just wanted to see what you'd do. Maybe the person was borrowing a friend's phone, just like how you borrowed Aunt Porn's. I thought you had a boyfriend for sure."

"And if I *did*

have a boyfriend, would you be mad?"

Another wave of silence filled the room. Mom shrugged again.

"No, but I just think you should introduce him properly instead of sneaking around. By the way, aren't you dating Plerng?"

"Plerng is just a friend, Mom!" "Men and women can't be

*just*

friends. Look at your dad-every woman he met, he turned into his wife. Including me."

Mom rolled her eyes, clearly still exasperated by Dad's past flirty nature.

"But once you were born, he stopped. Guess he was afraid karma would come for his daughter. More importantly, I *have*

to screen any man before your father hears about him. You know how overprotective he is-he guards you like treasure."

And that was another reason why I never had many guy friends. The only exception was Plerng, who was the son of Dad's close friend. Even so, Dad still didn't like him much. It was like I was some kind of priceless treasure no one could take from him. And that, ultimately, was why I was still single today.

Or maybe I've received so much love from my dad that it overflows, making me feel like I don't need love from any other man.

Wait... does that mean Mom doesn't love me? Then why do I like women? This is confusing.

"Anyway, if there's nothing going on. I'll get going now, Mom."

. .

After surviving the interrogation, I drove straight to the mall to buy a new phone-one specifically for talking to Kru Nim.

I also got a new number that ended in the lucky digits

*69*

because the salesperson said it was great for couples, ensuring a longlasting relationship... and will get

*69*

too.

*Oh...*

I only laughed. Why are you looking at me like that? I wasn't thinking anything weird.

*Really!*

Once I finished my errands, I eagerly dialed the number written on a torn piece of notepad paper-the number of the sweet-faced person I missed with every breath.

Before calling, I even gave the paper a little kiss, feeling like my heart was swelling with happiness. Then, I waited as the dial tone rang and listened for the voice I longed to hear.

**[Hello?]**

*"Do you miss me when you don't see me?"*

There was a brief silence on the other end before a calm voice replied.

**[I do.]**

.

And just like that, I, who had been casually walking, suddenly curled up like a millipede in the middle of the mall, overwhelmed with shyness. Passersby looked at me in confusion.

If I spoke now, the person on the other end would definitely notice my weird behavior. So, I stayed quiet for a long moment, forcing every tense muscle in my body to relax before finally responding.

.

*"You're being so straightforward today."*

**[Otherwise, someone might complain about talking to herself again.]**

*"Are you working right now? I'll come see you."*

**[I have a private lesson, but you can come. We can eat afterward.]**

*"Are we going to eat? Oh my, it's only been three days!"*

**[What do you mean-]**

.

The person on the other end seemed confused before suddenly realizing and shrieking in a high-pitched voice.

.

**[You pervert!]**

.

.

I waited outside the classroom while the petite woman taught her student, a foreigner who seemed to be Chinese. They looked comfortable talking to each other, and from lip-reading, it seemed they were speaking English.

The first day I came...I watched the sweet-faced woman teach Plerng, though I wasn't paying much attention at first. But today, I focused carefully and realized just how strong and agile she was. Before I knew it, the lesson was over.

"Thank you," the student said.

.

I had bought a drink earlier and handed it to Numnim

*(name i gave her),*

who had just taken a shower. Steam from the warm water still lingered on her skin, and the sporty scent of her soap made my heart pound. She looked unbelievably cool.

"What made you choose this job?"

"Hmm? Is this an interview?"

Numnim laughed and sat down, as if taking a break, even though we could've just left. But I wanted to steal a little more time to chat.

"Sort of. Honestly, I don't know that much about you yet. But that's a good thing-it makes getting to know each other exciting."

"How about this? To make sure we have something to talk about every day, let's ask one question per day to get to know each other."

"Sounds good. Let's start today-why did you choose this career?"

"Do you think I don't fit the job?"

She smiled mischievously, raising one eyebrow.

"Do I look unsuitable with this job?"

"It's not that you don't fit, I'm just surprised. Most women might dream of opening a café or working at a corporate job where they get to wear nice clothes. But you chose something physical, something that requires strength."

"What should I say....I like action movies."

"That's it?"

She grinned.

"And I read a novel once where the heroine was a badass cop. She fought criminals with her bare hands and caught a murderer using self-defense skills. It made me realize how valuable those skills are."

"So, that means you wanted to be a police officer?"

"Not really. I don't like government jobs-they're too strict. But I did grow up as the child of government official,"

She shrugged, taking another sip of water.

"My parents don't really like my job, but they can't stop me. It's something I like. The pay is good, I get to work out, and even if it's not my ultimate dream, it's still a good thing."

"What's your real dream job?"

"No way, you'll laugh."

"I promise I won't."

"You sure?"

"Yeah..."

"I want to be..."

Numnim leaned forward from the other side.

"I want to be a bodyguard."

"I don't see what's so funny about that. I thought you wanted to be a dog or a cat,

*Oh dear*

..."

I waved my hands and pouted a little. I had expected something more exciting. The sweet-faced person looked relieved when she saw that I wasn't making fun of her dream.

"That's great. Every time I tell my friends or family, they all laugh. My friends say,

*'Who would hire a tiny bodyguard the size of a puppy?'*

It's so frustrating. Just because I have a small, sweet face, people assume I'm weak. Even you, Fah, must be wondering why I chose this job just by looking at me, right?"

"Well, you can't really blame them. Who told you to be so pretty?"

"

*Ouch*

! That's harsh."

I rubbed my leg after getting kicked under the table.

"Now it's your turn... Fah, what do you do for work?"

"Me? Work?"

"Well, I see you visiting every day, so I was just curious about your job. Or do you have your own business?"

I hesitated because I didn't know how to answer. If I said,

*"My dad is rich,"* that would sound too arrogant.

"Or do you not have a job?"

"It's not like that!"

I quickly waved my hands in denial, making the self-defense instructor chuckle.

"Just joking. Of course, you have a job. You have a car, so you must have money for gas. At your age, you wouldn't still be asking your parents for money, right?"

*I almost laughed out loud...hahaha.*

"But you still haven't answered. So, what do you do?"

"I work in..."

I tried to think of a position in my dad's company since I didn't know any job titles except CEO. Then I remembered my dad talking on the phone about the purchasing department.

"I work in purchasing."

"I see."

"That's the end of the questions for today because we can only ask one question per day. Now, let's go eat!"

I quickly changed the subject, afraid that Numnim would dig deeper into my job details-something I would never be able to explain. From this moment on, I needed to build a new version of myself, as a human being.

. .

**"Dad, please turn around and listen to me for a moment. I lost my way, did wrong, and refused to work..."**

I stopped back home before heading to my appointment with Mae Khun because I was impatient and wanted to talk to my father and get it over with.

As soon as I arrived, I walked straight to my father's office and danced to the rhythm of classic *Suraphol Sombatcharoen* song with exaggerated emotion.

My father, who had been deep in thought, looked up when he heard me singing. His serious expression melted into a big smile, and the tension disappeared.

"Beautiful dancing. What's up, you brat? Suddenly feeling guilty about not working? You should have felt guilty since you graduated... two years ago."

I slid over to my father and knelt down, resting my chin pitifully on the edge of his desk.

"Dad, I finally realized that I've been wasting my days, living a useless life."

"Ahah...."

"Other than asking Dad for money, I am not good at anything."

"Let's get to the point."

"I want a job."

"Are you possessed?"

Dad reached out and touched my forehead.

"No fever. Someone as lazy as you, who wakes up late and avoids all responsibilities, suddenly asking for a job? Something must have happened."

"Why are you suspicious just because I want to work? I just want to be a good daughter for once. If something happens to you, who else will take care of our great company if not me?"

"I've lectured you until my big mouth could tear all the way to my... well, never mind. And you've never listened or shown any sign of awareness."

"Wow, Dad, is your mouth... really...that big?"

"Enough! What's going on? Just tell me."

"Nothing, really."

I stood up and stomped my foot loudly.

"I'm mad now! Why is it so hard to ask for a job, but when I ask for money, you give it so easily?"

"Because it's suspicious. There are only a few things that make people change like this. Did you do something wrong?"

"No!"

"Are you in love?"

"N...No!"

"Is that voice of someone in love?"

"Pumpkin patch (

*Thai folklore*

)!" "That's ' *folklore*

'! So you are in love! Who is it?!"

"You are the only one who shouldn't be sad." (\*song lyric)

"Alright!"

"Dad, you can't keep up with every song,"

I quickly tried to changed the subject and sighed.

"I just want a job. All my friends are working, but I have nothing to do. I want to make perfume, but I don't know where to start, so I want to learn first. Once I can use it to build my dream, won't you support me, Dad?"

"Are you sure this is really about that?"

"I'm too tired to argue. I'll just apply for a job somewhere else."

"Come here first,"

Dad waved at me when he saw I was really sulking. When I didn't move, he got up, walked over, put his arm around my shoulders, and lightly tapped my forehead.

"Don't be like that. Still mad?"

"Ah, fine. If you want to work, you can. But since you've never worked before, suddenly getting a good position would seem strange. So, start as an intern first."

I grinned widely at my dad. Being an intern, a kitten, a puppy-whatever. As long as I had a job title, that was enough.

"Great! Oh... can I train in the purchasing department?"

"Why that department?"

Because I had already told NumNim. If I knew about another department, I would have chosen that one too.

"I heard you talking on the phone the other day. It sounded like a cool name, so I want to train there."

"Hmm... actually, that might be a good idea,"

Dad stroked his chin as if thinking of something.

"Fine, you can train there. But don't tell anyone you're my daughter. Otherwise, they'll treat you too nicely and not give you real work. Also, I want you to keep an eye on things for me."

"Keep an eye on what?"

"I suspect someone might be cheating."

My eyes widened like a spotted spider.

"Okay! I'll be your eyes and ears!"

I rubbed my hands together.

"This is going to be exciting!"

"It's not that exciting. You're going there to work, not to play. Got it?"

"Got it. Thank you, dear Dad. That's all for now."

I spun around, ready to leave, but suddenly stopped as I remembered something. Turning back, I asked,

"Before I came in, you looked really serious. Did something happen?"

"Did I really look like that?"

"Yes! You never hide anything from me. Come on, tell me, my dear friend. Who caused you to feel stressed?"

"So, you've gone from being dad to friend, huh, you brat?"

Dad laughed and shook his head.

"It's nothing. There's just been some strange stuff happening lately."

"What kind of strange stuff?"

"The other day, my car window broke at the company."

"....."

"Today, my car had a flat tire. When I checked, I found someone had scattered nails on the road."

"No... don't tell me, Dad..."

"Yes...."

"Dad's being haunted?"

"You idiot! Someone's trying to harm me!"

Dad laughed loudly after I cracked a joke in the middle of a tense situation. I couldn't help but worry when I heard that.

"Why would someone want to harm you, Dad? You run a dog food company, not a diamond business."

"Are you crazy? I run a construction company! This is the person who's going to work in the purchasing department? Is this the person who's going to take over? You don't even know what work I'm doing."

"Fuckkk....!"

I stuck my tongue out and rolled my eyes.

"But why would they want to hurt you? If you die, I'll still get all the inheritance. The only one who would harm you is me, because I can't stand the inheritance with such a small allowance."

"I'm tired of my daughter. There are issues of benefits, auctions from both public sector and the government. I'm a tiger in this industry. Everyone else has bankrupt, but I'm still standing strong because I'm good at it."

"A tiger? Does that mean you're not stressed? It's better to be safe than sorry, Dad."

I smiled at Dad before a lightbulb went off in my head.

*'I want to be a bodyguard'.*

"Dad, you should have a bodyguard."

"What? Bodyguard?"

"Yes! A bodyguard. You should have one, and I know someone I can trust who can introduce to Dad."

I winked and gave a sly look.

"If Dad hire that person, I promise I'll be a good daughter. Whatever you ask, I'll do."

.

# Chapter 07: Dear Friend, My Worst Enemy

"Don't be so dramatic. Why do you need a bodyguard?"

Mom's voice suddenly rose in irritation when she found out that Dad was hiring a bodyguard. Even though we'd already explained the reason, she still seemed upset, leaving Dad and me exchanging confused looks.

"I have to protect myself."

"That's unnecessary. If you just come home on time, stop wandering around, and behave properly, you wouldn't need one."

"Even good people can be targeted, you know. Have you seen the news about righteous monks being murdered and buried in cement?"

"I believe that if you live a good life, no one will want to harm you. Just come home on time instead of sneaking around acting suspicious."

Dad glanced at Mom for a moment, nodded slowly, then turned to me with a challenging tone.

"At first, I wasn't serious about this, but after this conversation, Fah, tell your friend to meet me as soon as possible. If the interview satisfactory, I'll hire them on the spot."

My eyes lit up with excitement like a spider spotting prey on the ceiling, while Mom stomped her foot angrily before storming upstairs. I couldn't understand why she was so upset.

"What's wrong with Mom? She seems in a bad mood."

"What kind of people fear the police?"

"Uh... criminals?"

"Exactly. The person who smashed my car window and scattered nails on the road must be someone very close to me."

Dad smirked like Conan, his sharp eyes full of intelligence, intense like Kindaichi, and layered with depth like Uncle Seree in parliament.

"Are you saying it's Mom?"

"Yes, didn't you notice how anxious she got?"

"But why would Mom do something like that?"

"It's jealousy. Even at her age, she still can't let go of the past. These days, I only go back to that building for work. Your mom loves judging the present based on the past."

"So... are you still a womanizer, Dad?"

I look at him with curiously. Because my father was a kind-hearted, mature man whose looks could easily attract women, no matter their age.

"Dad has some charm, but I don't flirting around. I come home every day.

*Hmph*

! Your mom is so cruel."

Dad sounded so exhausted that I spread my arms wide and hugged him.

"Oh...oh... please don't cry, my dear Dad. You still have me!"

I comforted him playfully.

"It's good if no one is really trying to harm you, but you're still getting a bodyguard, right?"

"Of course. Just to annoy your mom. Go call your friend."

"Okay!"

. .

After getting Dad's business card, I planned to give it to NumNim tomorrow. Honestly, I wanted to go find her right away, but I had an appointment this evening to swap bags with Mae Khun. With about an hour left before our meeting time, I sent her a message to let her know I was on my way.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**The wheels are about to roll! See you soon, Mae Khun!**

.

But the message went unread.

I frowned a little. Normally, she would reply within thirty seconds, but today, she was unusually slow.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**Hellooo? Anybody thereee?**

.

Still no response. I started feeling a bit worried. Was something wrong? I even considered calling her-half to confirm we wouldn't miss our meeting, half to check if she was okay.

Just as I was about to make the call, my phone rang.

But it wasn't her.

It was Plerng.

"Damn, you monkey! Did you really have to call me now? It's like you knew-"

[Knew what? Never mind that! Guess what? I finally got to talk to Teacher Nim!]

.

At that, I frowned deeply, completely forgetting about Mae Khun.

.

"How?"

.

My voice turned sharp and intense, even I noticed it. But Plerng didn't seem to notice on my tone.

.

"Don't you have a class with Teacher Nim today?"

[I'm so embarrassed. But listen-I have to share this excitement with someone. I secretly followed Teacher Nim out of her home]

"From home? How do you even know where NumNim lives?"

[Who's NumNim?]

"I meant Teacher Nim! I like giving nicknames to objects and people I know."

[Oh? What nickname did you give me?]

"Hell."

[Evil, but I won't be mad-because if I get mad, I won't have anyone to talk to.]

"...."

[I've been watching Teacher Nim's house for a while now, trying to figure out how to talk to her. Today, I finally decided to follow as a suggestion from a friend.]

"What friend?"

[A friend from Twitter. I saw people sharing their craziest life experiences, so I decided to imitate one of them.]

"What did you do?"

[I crashed my car into the back of Teacher Nim's car]

.

Plerng's triumphant tone made me grit my teeth, almost screaming. But I forced myself to stay calm and asked in a flat voice.

.

"Where exactly did you hit her?" [Near your house. Around Ratchada.]

.

The moment Plerng gave me the details, I grabbed my car keys and started the engine. It was close to my house and also near the place I was supposed to meet up for the bag exchange. Perfect timing.

[The insurance guys are here taking pictures. After this, I plan to invite

Teacher Nim to dinner to 'comfort' her. Genius plan, right?]

"Sure. See you there."

[See me? Why? Don't come!]

"Don't you want someone to help you? That's exactly what I'm going to do."

.

I hung up on Plerng and immediately called NumNim with my other phone. She picked up, sounding exhausted-or maybe just sulking for sympathy.

[Fah, you called like you knew I was stressed out.]

"Of course I knew. Plerng just told me his car 'kissed' yours. Are you okay? You're not hurt, right?"

[No, it was just a light bump. But my dad is super protective of this car. I'm definitely getting scolded when I get home.]

Hearing the worry in her voice, I sighed with a soft smile while driving.

"I don't think your dad will be that mad. At least you're safe. But from the way you sound, it seems like you're really scared of him."

[He's a strict man. Before I left, he reminded me over and over to be careful and not get into any accidents. And guess what? I messed up. Ugh! I should've just taken a taxi like usual.]

"Where were you going, anyway? Why did you drive today?"

[I had an appointment.]

"With who?"

[Oh! My dad's calling-I have to go. Talk later, okay?]

The sweet-faced girl hung up so quickly leaving me, who still wondering who she had an appointment with.

About five minutes later, I arrived at the scene. The insurance agents were finishing up, getting ready to leave, while Plerng was standing with the sweet-faced teacher, pretending to be deeply apologetic-such a fraud.

"I'm here."

I parked behind them, stepped out confidently, and immediately went over to stand beside NumNim, blending in seamlessly.

"How bad is the damage?"

"Wow, you got here fast. Did you fly?"

I couldn't tell if Plerng was being sarcastic, but I didn't care. Of course, I had to rush over when my friend was was doing something so outrageous and messing with my lovely person.

*My lovely person...*

Heh.. Just thinking about it made me feel all giddy. So embarrassing.

"I live nearby. But wow...what a coincidence that your car just had to crash into Teacher Nim's, out of the hundreds and thousands on the road."

I turned my attention to NumNim, who looked like she was on the verge of tears. Without hesitation, I pulled her into a hug, gently rubbing her back in comfort.

"Oh my dear..."

For a split second, she shyly rested her chin on my shoulder before hesitating, probably because Plerng was watching. She ended up awkwardly pulling away.

"My dad scolded me a little, but it wasn't too bad."

"See? I told you."

"When did you say that?"

Plerng, who had been listening to our conversation, was visibly confused.

"By the way, you sure got close to Teacher Nim fast. Only met a couple of times, and now you're hugging?"

"We're both girls. We click easily. So, what now? Are we leaving separately?"

"No!"

Plerng interrupted quickly.

"I mean... I feel so guilty for causing all this trouble. Let me make it up to you, Teacher Nim-please have dinner with us."

"But I..."

NumNim hesitated, clearly unenthusiastic about the idea. Plerng shot me a look, silently begging for backup.

"Come on, Teacher. Just have a little meal. The accident already happenedwe can't undo it now."

I reached out and gently took her hand, intertwining our fingers and massaging her palm reassuringly. For a brief moment, I felt a spark-an electric current buzzing between us. She must have felt it too, because her face turned bright red.

"O-okay... I'll go."

"Great! Let's drive there together."

"But... I don't think I can drive right now."

Her voice was small, tinged with lingering fear. I understood completely, so I offered without hesitation.

"That's okay. I'll drive for you."

"What about your car, Fa?"

"I'll just leave it here. I'll call someone from home to come pick it up-my house is nearby anyway."

. .

With that settled, I called my dad's driver to come get my car while I took the old sedan that had just been rear-ended and followed Plerng to the restaurant.

During the drive, NumNim reached out and held my hand, as if seeking comfort. That simple gesture told me she must be quite a fragile young girl.

"Is your dad really that strict?"

I asked, curious to learn more about the small, soft-spoken girl beside me.

"Yeah..He's very orderly person. Even the smallest mistake gets me scolded. I grew up with a lot of rules and structure. The one thing that really disappointed him was my refusal to take the civil service exam and choosing to be a martial arts instructor instead. If the pay wasn't good, he probably wouldn't give up either."

"No wonder you look so worried. But if you're too scared to drive now, how are you going to get home later?"

"That's right."

NumNim looked at me again with concern.

"What should I do?"

"What should you do?I'll just take you home."

"Wait... what?"

"Right now."

Without hesitation, I made a U-turn. NumNim glanced nervously between me and Plerng's car, which was getting farther away.

"Fah, are we just abandon Plerng? That's kind of mean."

"Why feel bad for him? He deliberately crashed into your car just to start a conversation. You should be mad at him."

"That's crazy. What good person would do something like that."

"Exactly. He's not a good person."

"Is this really true?"

"Completely."

NumNim sat quietly for a moment, then suddenly huffed.

"Good. Serves him right. Let him eat alone-he deserves it for being sneaky."

She turned back once more to glare at Plerng's disappearing car before folding her arms in irritation.

Meanwhile, I grinned smugly, pleased with my own villainous victory. If my friend wanted to play dirty, then I had to fight back with even dirtier tactics.

Sure, NumNim might know self-defense, but she had zero skills when it came to deception. That meant I had to protect her.

Because she was mine.

...There it was again. That word.

*Mine.*

Just thinking about it made me squirm.

. .

And not long after, I successfully parked my car in front of NumNim's house. However, this time was different from before. As I drove into the property, I noticed the spacious area, the wide lawn, and two Thai Ridgeback dogs running toward me, barking-either welcoming me or trying to chase me away.

The twilight atmosphere, combined with the barking, made me a little uneasy. The fog was dense, the dogs were aggressive-everything together made the scene quite intimidating.

"Thanks for dropping me off."

I gave the sweet-faced person a small smile and was about to walk in with her when NumNim suddenly grabbed my arm, looking alarmed.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going in with you."

"G-Going in? Why?"

"I want to meet your dad."

"No..."

"I just want to see what he's like."

As we debated whether I should go inside, a deep clearing of the throat came from within the house. NumNim immediately straightened up, while I flinched slightly at the rough voice.

"How's the car?"

With that kind of question, I didn't need to guess who was speaking.

NumNim's father stepped out, wearing a simple Goose-brand T-shirt and black slacks, exuding an imposing aura. His tan skin and neatly trimmed short hair reminded me of a soldier or a high-ranking officer.

"There's just a small scratch,"

NumNim reported in a tone so formal it surprised me. Her father walked past me to inspect the damaged area, gently running his hand over the rear bumper.

"Oh, my poor Casper."

"Casper?"

"The car's name,"

NumNim whispered to me. I almost burst out laughing at the adorable name but held it in, pretending not to react.

"How did this happen? How did she end up hitting you?"

"My shoe got stuck on the gas pedal, so I accidentally pressed too hard and crashed into it,"

I quickly answered, covering for NumNim. That made her father turn his gaze toward me.

"And who are you?"

"I'm NumNim's friend... and also the one who crashed the car."

"Fah!"

NumNim nearly screamed when she saw me taking the blame.

"It's not like that, Dad! Actually-"

I locked eyes with the older man, as if we were in some kind of silent battle for dominance. A man like this probably liked to assert his authority over those who appeared weak, so I had to approach this strategically-not too submissive, but not too aggressive either.

"But it's unbelievable,"

I said, shifting the topic.

"My car is a brand-new European model, but when it crashed into Casper, its hood flipped open, completely wrecked!"

I exaggerated.

"The insurance guys were shocked when they arrived. They said your car is unbelievably strong, while my car-worth nearly two million baht-ended up like a crushed soda can. But Casper barely has a scratch! How is that even possible?"

"Because it's been through a lot,"

NumNim's dad said proudly.

"Before I bought it, I did extensive research."

"Was this car made with aircraft-grade materials? It's so sturdy!"

"Not exactly, but it's built really well. Plus, it's fuel-efficient. I even replaced the seats just last year."

"Wait... don't tell me you take care of the car entirely by yourself?"

"Of course!"

"Wow! That's amazing!"

"Yes.."

And just like that, NumNim's father and I were deep in conversation about cars. Meanwhile, NumNim stood there, looking completely baffled. I glanced at her and smirked, raising an eyebrow.

"Relax," I whispered.

"Your dad's in a good mood now."

Because of his love for cars, I had to endure an hour-long discussion about vehicles and engines-subjects I knew nothing about. Luckily, NumNim's mother had already prepared dinner, so at least we got to eat.

"How are you getting home, Fah?"

"I'll call a taxi."

"No way. It's late. A woman going home alone at night isn't safe."

"Then what do you suggest? NumNim won't drive her dad's car anymore, right? Or... are you saying I should stay over?"

I teased. NumNim, who had been about to protest, suddenly went silent.

"Wait... are you seriously inviting me to stay?"

I asked, grinning shyly.

She, on the other hand, was even more embarrassed. She nodded but couldn't even look me in the eye.

"I'm just worried about you."

"....."

**"Sleep with me tonight."**

.

*Thump...*

*Thump...*

.

I pursed my lips slightly, standing in the middle of my indecision. The silence between us made everything feel even more awkward. I noticed NumNim clasping her hands behind her back, rocking slightly on her heels as she waited for my answer.

"

**Alright...tonight, we'll sleep together."**

.

# Chapter 08: Kisses...so Exciting...

This is the most exciting sleeping outside I've ever had. Since I was born and grew up, I've slept at friends' houses, gone abroad, and slept at camps, but those were all fun. Here, it's an excitement that's hard to explain.

I'm not thinking anything inappropriate.

Actually, I did think about it a little.

Don't focus on that! I'm starting to think too much. No, get it out of my head! Get out!

I shook my head to get rid of mischievous thoughts out of my mind while looking at myself in the mirror. The bathroom is 23 square meters in the second-floor house of NumNim.

Here, we share the bathroom, and I am the last one to shower after NumNim. Her parents had already finished. I didn't dare to shower before them because I was worried about inconveniencing others, so I chose to wait until last. Now, I could only feel restless because I was so embarrassed.

After I finish showering, what should I do next? Should I go out and smile at her, then just lie down and do nothing?

*I don't know what to do. Oh no...*

While I was thinking about what to do first-whether to take off my clothes or sit down-my phone's notification sound interrupted me, and I almost screamed *"Sia!"* to the world about how clumsy I am.

My goodness, the message made my hands shake, and I hesitated to open it. But if I don't open it, I won't get my bag back. The thing is, I'm more afraid that the person will be really angry.

.

**Mae Khun:**

**Sorry for not replying to your messages. I had a little busy.**

**Mae Khun:**

**But I know that just saying sorry won't make you not angry. So feel free to scold me for missing our appointment.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Hey...**

**Mae Khun:**

**sent picture (a crying Chihuahua)**

.

I almost couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the message. It seemed like an apology. When I started to focus, I scrolled to see that the person had just replied. I didn't even notice this because I was too distracted by NumNim.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**No need to apologize. Actually, I had things to do too. I completely forgot about you.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I got caught up in something and didn't think it would get this complicated.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I'm Sorry...**

.

Even though I haven't done anything wrong, I have to say it so the other person doesn't feel too guilty. I sat down on the toilet and sighed with relief that it wasn't as serious as I had imagined. Then I typed a little question.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**By the way, what happened? Why couldn't you make it?**

**Mae Khun:**

**There was a little accident.**

**.**

I sat up straight, feeling worried.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**Are you injured anywhere?**

**Mae Khun:**

**No, I'm fine. But some things got damaged. I just finished the business. It's too bad, huh? Every time we plan to meet, we never actually meet.**

**Mae Khun**

:

**When will we exchange things?**

.

I smiled slightly when the other person typed that.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**If we exchange things, will we still be able to talk?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Yeah, that's true. After exchanging things, we probably won't talk like this.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Actually, talking like this is nice.**

**Mae Khun**

**: That's it..**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Or should we not exchange the bags yet?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Would that be okay? Don't you want the things in the bag anymore? Hawm Noi:**

**I want the stuff, but I also want to talk to you. It's like having a new friend.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Then why won't we talk after exchanging the bags?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Because we won't have anything to talk about anymore.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Well, then we'll have to find something to talk about.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**So, should we start now? I'll give you the chance to start first.**

.

I smiled slightly when the other person went silent, and then I clicked to read. About five seconds later, she sent a question back, which made my eyes widen so much that my eyeballs almost popped out of their sockets.

.

**Mae Khun:**

**Have you ever kissed?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Never.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Have you ever kissed?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Never did either. Ugh... who can I ask about this?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Why suddenly ask? Are you planning to kiss someone?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Hmm, I don't know.**

**Mae Khun:**

**What do you think it feels like to kiss?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I don't know. If I ever find out, I'll share it.**

. .

Then we parted ways without even exchanging a sticker. I stepped away from the screen to shower and change into the pajamas that NumNim gave me-a regular T-shirt and shorts. And yes, tonight I didn't wear any underwear.

Don't think too much about it. Who sleeps with underwear on anyway? Some people probably do, but not me. And if I suddenly did, it would look like I was being overly cautious.

Everything should look comfortable; nothing out of the ordinary. Women can sleep together anywhere, it's not strange about it.

I walked back into NumNim's bedroom, which was clean and white. The air conditioner was set to a chilly temperature, making the room feel cool and refreshing, and it made my heart race a little seeing that the room's owner was applying cream at the vanity. Today, NumNim was wearing a T-shirt and long pants, covering up a bit more than I was.

"Would it be weird if I said that under this outfit, I'm not wearing any underwear?"

I said it straightforwardly. The sweet-faced person hesitated for a moment and shook her head.

"No, it's not weird."

"Then, is NumNim wearing any?"

"I won't tell."

I smiled a little and walked over to sit on the bed, using a towel to dry my damp hair. I watched the sweet-faced person applying the cream. Maybe I was staring for too long, because I noticed she started to get embarrassed and blushed, then glanced at me through the mirror and made a pouty face.

"What are you staring at? Don't you dare do anything?"

"Can't I just look? It feels a little weird."

I sat cross-legged, resting my chin on my knees and answered directly,

"It feels like we're getting closer. How many days have we known each other now?"

"Probably the fourth day."

"Only four days and I've already slept at your house? Hmm, I wonder what the next day will be like."

"What do you mean?"

The person asking bit their lip and smiled shyly, acting like she was pretending to be annoyed. I just rolled my eyes.

"I don't know. Maybe we'll do this and that."

"Be clear!"

NumNim turned to face me and narrowed her eyes.

"What does 'this and that' mean?"

"How would I know? Does anyone know the future?"

"Vague."

"Let's do this then. If NumNim wants to do anything, just let me know and

I'll do it."

"Really?"

"Yep."

I made eye contact with the sweet-faced person for a moment, and before my mind could catch up, the small person lunged at me from where she was sitting.

I, who was preparing to receive her, closed my eyes and let myself fall onto the bed. However, NumNim just jumped over me to the other side and lay down, facing away, as if nothing had happened.

Huh?

"Haha...."

A faint sound of laughter floated through the air, followed by the sound of her shaking with suppressed giggles. Still lying there in confusion, I just pursed my lips, closed my eyes a little shyly, and then pretended to shift positions by rolling over onto my side and facing away from her as well.

"You're in such a good mood, huh?"

As soon as I finished speaking, NumNim hesitated for a moment before suddenly sitting up and glaring at me from behind. Even though I didn't look at her, I could still notice from the corner of my eye and raised an eyebrow.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Then why do you look so surprised?"

"I'm not surprised."

Then the small person laid down in the same position again.

"Good night, sweet dreams."

"Are we really going to sleep with the lights on?"

"Can you get up and turn it off? The light is by the door."

I pouted a little but reluctantly got up to turn it off. Since the room wasn't that big, once I turned it off, I could easily jump back into bed. And that gave me the chance to pretend to lie on top of the person lying with her back to me, making her cry out because of my weight.

"Why are you lying on top of me?"

"Oops, am I on top? Didn't realize. You're so small, you blend into the bed like one with it."

When I got the chance, I shifted positions to lie in the same spot but turned to hug her.

"You can be my pillow. It's so soft, NumNim."

"It's uncomfortable."

"Really?"

I pulled away in surprise, thinking I had made her uncomfortable.

"Sorry, I was just playing around. My bad."

As I turned to move away, one of the small person's hands grabbed my shoulder and squeezed.

"Why did you act so surprised?"

"Aren't you surprised, Nim?"

"Not really. Don't do that."

I could feel that NumNim was afraid I would get angry. From telling me not to hug her at first, she was now the one pressing my shoulder down to lie on my back. Then she climbed on top of me. Now I could hear our hearts racing, beating against the silence, clearly audible.

"You don't wear underwear."

"...."

"My hand is on your butt, so I know."

"You idiot!"

I got kicked lightly. The small person laughed, but didn't pull away like I thought she would. The silence from earlier changed into a playful mood.

NumNim and I smiled at each other a little in the darkness, where we could just about see each other, and continued to chat casually.

"When you asked me to sleep together, were you thinking about anything?"

I asked directly, and that made NumNim furrow her brows and pout.

"What could I have been thinking? Like I said, I was worried."

"You didn't think about anything at all?"

"About what?"

"About... anything more..."

"...."

"We've been flirting for four days now. I don't want to beat around the bush. So, I'll ask straight out: Aren't you afraid of getting rape?"

I expected the shy person to act tough, not acknowledging what I said. But instead, NumNim just stayed still and gently poked my chin with a finger, smiling arrogantly.

"I thought you want to fight."

"....."

"But I know you can't do anything about it."

"Challenge accepted. I'll show you."

"If you succeed, I'll give you ten baht. But if you fail, you owe me a hundred."

"Make it a thousand, I'm rich!"

After being mocked like that, I bared my teeth a little, like someone who can't accept defeat. As soon as I thought of flipping over and pinning NumNim down, the cruel person used a self-defense move to twist my wrist lightly, making me yelp.

"Ouch.... it hurts."

"See? You can't do anything. If I don't want to, what can you do? That's why I invited you to sleep together, because I'm sure it's safe."

"Bad temper."

"Heh heh."

"Right, I can't do anything to you. But if it were the other way around, if you wanted to do something to me, there's no stopping it."

I pouted slightly, sighed, and then groaned playfully.

"It hurts so much..."

My voice sounded weak, but probably still a bit enticing because even I was embarrassed. NumNim, upon hearing that, seemed to hesitate for a moment before letting go of my wrist as I had asked.

"Stop whining."

"But it still hurts. See for yourself."

I reached out to NumNim's face, but she turned away, so I grabbed her hand and did the most daring thing I could think of.... I pressed it against my chest.

"It hurts so much my heart is racing."

"Fah..."

"Do you feel anything?"

I leaned in close, our lips almost brushing, making my heart flutter.

"Feel anything?"

"My heart is beating so fast, I might have a heart attack."

I could feel the pressure from NumNim's hand, as if they were about to get carried away by what I was teasing. For a moment, the same electric shocklike sensation from earlier coursed through me, but I had to suppress it because I wanted to win.

"If you have a heart attack, you'll need CPR."

NumNim leaned in, hoping to kiss me, but I rejected it by turning my face away, even though I really wanted to.

"But since I'm not dead yet, I think I'll just sleep instead."

I lay down and giggled. NumNim, feeling awkward, looked at me for a moment before lying down with her back to me in a huff. It seemed that my competitive nature was making her annoyed, and it might lead to an argument, so I had to be the one to hug her and cuddle her first.

"I was just kidding. You said I couldn't do anything."

"But I didn't do what you did."

"So, what did I do?"

"Tease."

"That's right, I did tease,"

I laughed lightly, then explained,

"I just don't have the strength to compete with you. What I have more of than Nim is courage. That's why I do things like this, challenge you like this."

"Shameless."

"Well, I only do this with Nim. I've never done this with anyone else."

"Should I believe that?"

"I'm serious. What I did earlier was just a spontaneous thing. If something like that happens again, I won't even know what to do." I said softly, acknowledging the truth.

"I can't even kiss properly. As for wrestling, forget it."

"Then where did you get the confidence to say you'd pay a thousand?"

"I can't resist a challenge. And I don't know if nature will lead me that way. It's worth a try, right? Or if the other person has experience, they can teach me,"

I added with a laugh.

"Like a mentor."

The small person was quiet for a moment, then turned back to face me. Now, we were lying close together, our foreheads and the tips of our noses brushing lightly, and it didn't seem like we were going to pull away.

"I've never done that either."

"Never done what?"

"Never done any of it,"

NumNim confessed honestly, not daring to make eye contact.

"Actually, when I invited you to stay the night, I secretly thought a little naughty."

I tried to hold back a smile when I saw the sweet-faced person admit it honestly. Who could say anything about it? I still had bad thought.

"Nature, right?"

"But I thinks it's too soon, and... I am scared."

When NumNim said that, she covered her face with her hands like a little child who believes that if they hide their face, they won't see ghosts. As for me, when the shy person did that, I couldn't help but move my lips to gently touch the back of her hand that was covering her face, acting bold.

"So cute, so adorable."

"You see? You act so bold, but how can I believe you've never done anything like this?"

"If I hadn't been brave enough, how could we have gotten to this point? Have you ever seen anyone who's just met someone and immediately says they like them, wants to marry them?"

"No, never."

"Well, it's good that I'm brave like this, and brave only with you. As for you, you should be brave and do this and that with me, too. Not too much, just take it slow, think it through, and talk about anything you don't understand. That's all it takes."

Then the sweet-faced person lowered her hands, as if thinking about something, before deciding to speak their mind.

**"Shall we kiss?"**

Though I was a bit stunned, I felt more happy than surprised. I nodded slowly, then slipped my arm under the small person's neck and pulled them toward me.

**"Sure, I want to try, too."**

.

# Chapter 09: Once In a While

We slowly leaned toward each other, every passing second feeling like a moment of life itself. It was a second to be remembered forever-the first kiss of my life. I imprinted it deep in my subconscious. If I had children, I'd tell them. If I had grandchildren, I'd tell them too.

I'd finally write in the diary I bought just because it had a cute design. I'd post on Facebook for the world to know that I had finally touched someone else's lips-other than my own reflection or my own arm.

NumNim's face drew closer, and I moved in too. And then...

*Bump....*

Our noses and foreheads lightly collided with a small pop sound. We flinched slightly and tried again from the same angle.

*Bump...*

We stared at each other. It didn't feel like puzzle pieces fitting together. Why didn't the angles align? We had already flinched twice.

"Fah, try tilting your head the opposite way. If we tilt in the same direction, it won't fit."

"Ohh, so we're not supposed to line up exactly?"

NumNim smiled.

I wondered-did other couples go through this too? I took a deep breath, steadied myself, and tilted my head as NumNim suggested, but in the opposite direction.

This time, everything fit perfectly. Our noses touched lightly, but we didn't bump. Our lips met exactly as they should. A spark of electricity rushed through me, sending shivers down my spine as my heart pounded.

We quickly pulled apart, staring at each other in stunned silence, still processing what had just happened.

It was electrifying.

It was exhilarating.

And it was just the beginning, it van lead to another.

We both pursed our lips for a moment, we leaned in again-this time, without hesitation. Our lips met and stayed together for a long time. Our breaths synchronized as we moved in slow, natural rhythm.

*So this is what is call nature.*

Everything moves along its own course. Our lips, our breaths, our tonguesthey all know exactly how to tease and play with each other. Our hands begin to wander over each other's bodies, knowing their roles well.

And the first one to pull away is the sweet-faced one, leaning their head weakly against my shoulder.

"Let me catch my breath."

I smile in response, pressing my nose into her hair as if unwilling to stop. The soft one tilts their head slightly, as if giving me permission to do whatever I want. And that only fuels my selfishness, until a quiet, unintentional moan escapes her lips.

"Mmm..."

"You smell so good."

My hand starts to get a little mischievous, slipping under the fabric of her shirt. Just as I unintentionally move higher, my wrist is suddenly grabbed and twisted.

"

*Ouch!*

Hey!"

"That's enough for today."

"Already? But..."

I pout, trying to sound as cute as possible, hoping for just a little more. But NumNim simply push my face away and shake her head.

"No. It's too fast."

"Alright, alright."

I sigh, reluctantly letting go.

"Step by step, then."

"Are you mad?"

"If I got mad over something like this, what kind of person would that make me?"

"A cute one."

The sweet-faced one smiles and pinches my cheek lightly.

"Now go to sleep. Sweet dreams, good night."

The smaller one lies down, turning to face me. And as I take it all in, I rest my head on the pillow, mirroring her position. My fingers gently trace the tip of her nose.

"Do you like it?" I asked.

"Like what?"

"Well, what do you like?"

She hesitate for a moment, then shyly smile before answering.

"I like to kissed you."

"Yeah... it's nice, isn't it?"

"

**And... I like Fah too."**

This time, it was me who got so flustered that I had to look away. NumNim reached out and gently lifted my chin, clearly amused at how easily I became shy.

"So, you're not as bold as I thought. You get embarrassed too, huh?"

"Hey!"

I bit my lip and poked her waist slightly. NumNim giggled, and I quickly realized she was ticklish.

"Oh? So you're ticklish, huh? Do you think I'm shameless? Take this!"

I playfully poked her again and again, making the sweet-faced one laugh uncontrollably. Unable to resist, I straddled her and planted playful kisses on both cheeks, knowing full well she would let me.

"Getting carried away, aren't you?"

"Can't I?"

"Four days in, and you're already like this?"

"I actually want to do more, but..."

"But you don't know how?"

"Exactly."

"Wow, you admitted that so easily."

"But it's fine. I like moments like these more-the moments when my heart beats fast."

I leaned in, at first thinking about stealing another kiss, but instead, I decided to lie on top of her.

"I like being close, snuggling like this. I don't want everything to move so fast, like people nowadays."

"What do you mean?"

"When people get to know each other too quickly, fall in love too quickly, they end up getting bored just as fast. I'd rather take my time getting to know you, step by step."

"Are you saying you'll get bored of me?"

Her voice carried a hint of worry. I quickly shook my head.

"No, not at all. But... anything can happen, right? Maybe you'll be the one who gets bored of me. We never really know what the future holds. There's no such thing as forever."

"You're so pessimistic."

"I just see things as they are. I don't want to live in a dream world for too long."

I absentmindedly played with her hair.

"We've already passed our teenage years. That kind of fleeting excitement doesn't last. What truly lasts is the bond we build."

"I get what you're saying. Honestly, when I date someone, I want it to last, too. I don't want things to move too fast and fall apart just as quickly." "Then let's take it slow, step by step."

"Alright, let's take our time. Maybe in five or ten years, we can have sex."

"What?"

"That way, we can really take our time getting to know each other."

*That's way too long!*

*. .*

I lay awake all night thinking about what NumNim said. Even after waking up, I couldn't shake it off. Okay, I was the one who suggested we take things slow because I wanted to be romantic.

But

*"taking it slow"*

meant letting things happen naturally over a few months-not five to ten years! Is she crazy?!

.

.

"You look exhausted. Couldn't sleep?"

After taking my morning shower, I walked back into the room to find NumNim already dressed and ready for the day. Meanwhile, I was still pouting, stomping my feet like a five-year-old who didn't get to play in the ball pit as promised.

"A little."

"Probably because you're not used to sleeping here, huh? Sorry if my house isn't comfortable."

"It's not because of your house."

"Then what is it?"

"Are we really going to 'take it slow' for five to ten years?" I blurted out what had been bothering me all night.

NumNim paused for a second before bursting into laughter.

"Wait... Are you seriously talking about what we said last night? How did this even come up again?"

"I thought about it all night! Last night was really nice, but then you dropped that five-year bomb, and it ruined the mood! I do want to take things slow, but not that slow!"

"Oh? So you don't want to get to know me for a long time anymore?"

She smiles teasingly, clearly enjoying how flustered I was. That only made me more frustrated, my nose flaring like an angry little boar.

"That's too long!"

"You're so naughty, always thinking about things like this."

"Who else am I supposed to think about this with, if not my own girlfriend?!"

I snapped, pouting in frustration.

NumNim blinked, stunned for a moment. Then, they raised a hand to scratch their neck shyly.

"Girlfriend?"

"Oh..."

I bit my lip after realizing what I had just blurted out.

"We are dating, right? I didn't misunderstand... did I?"

"Of course we are. We already kissed, didn't we?"

"Exactly! We already kissed, so... other things should naturally follow."

I stepped closer, nuzzling into her and hugging tightly, whining,

"Just not too fast... but definitely not five or ten years!"

"Can't I joke around a little?"

"A joke?"

I pulled back slightly, starting to smile.

"So it's not actually five or ten years?"

"Of course not. But we should take our time-at least long enough to learn a thing or two. We need to study first, experiment a little."

"Are we even talking about the same thing?"

"Stop asking so much!"

She playfully pushed my face away and turned to leave. But before she could escape, I grabbed her wrist and pulled her back. She could've easily twisted my arm like before, but instead, she just let me hold her and smiling.

"What now?"

"Then I'll go study first."

"Such a diligent student."

"In that case, can I have my first lesson now? A morning kiss?"

"You're getting bolder, huh?"

NumNim wrapped her arms around my neck, pulling me closer.

"I'm letting you because I like it."

"Like what?"

**"I like both kissing and you, Fah."**

.

. .

So this is what love feels like. No wonder my friends were obsessed with it back in school-and still are. I used to be so annoyed when they talked about their partners as if their love stories were as legendary as world history. But now that it's happening to me, I get it.

I want to shout to the world that I have a partner now. That they're cute, sweet, and-most importantly-soft in every way.

As NumNim walked me to the front gate, we had to act like just close friends in front of her parents. As much as I wanted to hold her hand, swing our arms together, or even pull her into a big hug and squish her into a little ball to keep in my pocket, I had to restrain myself.

"I feel bad for not driving you back,"

She said softly, her voice so cute that I couldn't resist reaching out to pinch her cheek.

"Stop that! My dad might see. What kind of friends pinch each other's cheeks like this?"

"I just can't help it! Don't be too cute, I might want to flirt again."

"Enough! My lips are swollen from all the kissing!"

"Then next time, no kissing."

"Fine."

"Let's do something else instead."

"Like what?"

"I don't know..."

I rolled my eyes dramatically, and that made NumNim reach over to pinch my waist.

"Hurry up and go back already."

"I'm going, I'm going... Oh, wait! I almost forgot."

As I was almost at the front door, I remembered to pull out the business card my dad gave me and handed it to NumNim.

"What's this? Whose business card?"

"It's from the HR department. So, here's the thing: my company is looking for new employees,"

I stumbled a bit, not sure how to explain.

"Something like... security..."

"You want me to be a security guard?"

"No!"

I laughed and waved my hands to explain better.

"So, here's the deal. My boss is worried about people trying to harm him.

Lately, his car windows have been smashed, and his tires have been slashed. He wants someone reliable close by. I remembered you wanted to be a bodyguard, so I thought I'd suggest it to you."

"Ugh, no thanks. The job I have now is great, and the pay is amazing. If I worked there, when would I even have time to train you?"

"Well, you could train me after work. The pay's good there too, and it's what you've been wanting to do, right? You can at least go talk to them first. I'm just giving you the option."

"I'll think about it. By the way, what position does your boss hold? Is he a manager or something? Why would someone at that level need a bodyguard?"

"Well, he's the owner, obviously."

"Aren't you just an employee? Why do you talk to him about this instead?"

"He is... my dad. How can I explain it?"

So I took the chance to bring it up. I'm not just giving her this opportunity, I'm also helping myself. Kill two birds with one stone, right?

"You say ' *my girlfriend*

' a lot."

"Well, I do have a girlfriend. My first one, actually."

"I'll think about it."

"Just do it. I want to see Nim's face, even though I have to go to work. It'll be great! I'll be working, and I'll get to see my girlfriend's face, giving me the motivation to get through a boring day at work."

"Go, go! Hurry up and leave!"

The sweet-faced one pushed me toward the door. I was going to stand and watch her off, but I let her go back inside the house because I didn't want to worry about saying goodbye.

The moment I was out of NumNim's sight, I froze when I saw the convertible European car from my friend, whom I immediately recognized.

"Seriously?"

I stared at my friend who got out of the car and walked directly toward me, looking like he was about to pick a fight. The car had been parked outside NumNim's house since morning, and I knew he was the one I hated seeing right now.

"I should be the one asking if this is surprising. Should I be surprised to see you coming out of Teacher Nim's house?"

Yeah, it's true. He should be the one surprised to see me there. This is like I backstabbing friend.

"I dropped NumNim off at home last night and didn't have a car back. So, NumNim asked me to stay. And, well, that's what you see."

"You stayed over at NumNim's?"

"Yeah."

"You stayed over with her?"

"Yeah."

"You stayed?!"

"Seriously, you're wasting space asking the same thing over and over. What are you so shocked about?"

"You've only known them for a few days, and now you're already staying over? You're a ghost of a friend!"

My friend's face was clearly full of jealousy as he said that. Then he acted like he just remembered something.

"And why, did you dropping Teacher Nim back home last night, instead of following me for having dinner? You left me hanging, trying to call you and getting no response!"

"Because NumNim felt uncomfortable about going to eat. She was stressed out. Who can be happy and go out for dinner when they're feeling like that? Do you know what NumNim went through last night, because of the trouble you started?"

"What trouble?"

"You were the one who drove and hit her father's beloved car, remember?"

"What happened?"

"You know, NumNim's father!"

"My dad's at home."

"No, I mean Numnim's father, idiot."

I crossed my arms, a bit annoyed that my friend had caught on to my little joke and turned it back on me.

"NumNim's dad was really mad that you crashed his car. I had to step in and take the blame so NumNim wouldn't get scolded even more. And when I was walking out, NumNim's dad came out with a baton."

"Did he really bring out a baton and hit her?"

"It was a cactus baton. I told him it was better to place it in front of the house so the plants could breathe."

"Oh my god, stop joking around. So, what actually happened?"

"Nothing happened yet, but I think something will."

A deep voice came from inside the house, and I saw NumNim's tall father appear, likely overhearing our conversation.

"So, the person who hit the car wasn't you, but it was this guy here, right?"

"Uncle!"

I clasped my hands together instinctively, and as soon as my friend, Plerng, heard that, his eyes widened, clearly realizing the situation.

"Is NumNim's dad?"

"Is it true that you pretended to hit the back of my daughter's car just to start a conversation?"

*Oh, shit!*

*.*

# Chapter 10: Bright Working Days

NumNim's father pushed Plerng, causing him to stumble backward, then shouted at him with a commanding voice. Plerng raised his hands in a respectful gesture, gave a quick bow, and hurriedly ran to his car before driving off, leaving me behind in a vastness of distance.

Now, only NumNim's father and I remained, standing face to face. I started trembling, feeling guilty for lying last night-saying that I was the one who had driven and caused the accident. Just as I was about to raise my hands to apologize, he glanced at me briefly and then gave me a warm smile.

"You're such a good friend. You took the blame so Nim wouldn't get into trouble."

"I... um..."

"I'm glad Nim has a great friend like you.

"....."

NumNim's father gently placed his hand on my head.

"Stay friends for a long time, okay?"

"Oh... okay."

Then, he walked back into the house, leaving me tilting my head in confusion. How did everything fall into place so perfectly? Had I done something incredible in a past life to be born into such a wealthy family, have a beautiful girlfriend, and even impress her dad?

Just as I was lost in my little bubble of happiness, NumNim returned from inside the house, looking deeply touched.

"Fah, my dad really likes you."

"I guess so."

I smiled at the petite girl, just as happy as she was.

"That means I can visit your house often, right? In that case, I'll come again tomorrow, and the day after, and every day!"

"You're crazy! Who has that much free time?"

She stood on her tiptoes, clasping her hands behind her back and swaying shyly. Then, she suddenly looked surprised.

"Wait... if you come every day, don't you have to work?"

"Ohhh?"

"You work in the purchasing department, right? Don't you have fixed working hours? I've been meaning to ask-why do I never see you going to work?"

"Oh, right. I actually do have to go to work."

I scrunched my nose slightly.

"Ugh, that means I won't get to see you as often."

"You can come after work."

"...."

**"Or you could just stay over."**

.

.

.

I took a taxi home and rushed to find my dad as soon as I arrived. It was perfect timing-he was just about to leave for work, as if he had read my mind.

"Dad!"

I dramatically jumped in front of his car, striking a pose like the cover of The Da Vinci Code, before running to knock on the back window.

"Where are you going?"

"To workkkkk!"

Dad dragged out his words like he was talking to a five-year-old, then reached out to scratch my chin.

"You're back early in the morning."

"I had to wake up early at my friend's place. If I slept in, I was afraid her parents would scold me."

"I see. So, what do you want? Money?"

"What?! Do I look like that kind of person? I just wanted to tell you that I'm ready to start working! Ohhhhh!"

I declared enthusiastically.

Dad raised an eyebrow before bursting into laughter.

"That fast?"

"Yes, yes! Let me work with you right away! I need a job!"

"Why the rush?"

"I just... I just need a job! Open the door, Dad! I'm coming with you!"

I didn't wait for permission. I opened the door and slipped into the seat next to him.

"Let's gooo!"

"Nope."

Dad shook his head slightly before explaining.

"I want you to apply for a job properly. But don't worry, I'll have someone I trust bring you in. A little bit of favoritism, you know."

"Why make it so complicated?"

"Because we agreed that no one in the company should know you're my daughter. Plus, the department you'll be working in-I need you to keep an eye on things. If I personally bring you in, it'll be too obvious."

"Oh wow, Dad actually makes sense." I nodded in agreement.

"So, what do I need to do?"

"Fill out a job application and send it in."

"I don't know how to write one."

"I'll have my secretary do it for you."

"Okay!"

"You can't even write a job application, and you want to work?"

"People have to learn, you know!"

"And what about the bodyguard? Have you arranged for the person you were going to recommend?"

"It's taken care of. Now we just have to wait for her decision. But Dad, let's do it like this-if she do start working, don't tell her we're father and daughter, okay?"

"Why not?"

"She'd feel awkward! Besides, it's better if fewer people know I'm your daughter, right?"

"I don't want to ask for a reason. Whatever you say."

Dad chuckled, clearly amused, before waving me off.

"Now, get out and get ready for your first day."

"When is the soonest I can start?"

"The day after tomorrow."

"Okay!"

. .

I had no idea how to prepare for a job, but if millions of people in Thailand could manage to start work in the morning, surely I could do it too... right?

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"Do I really have to wake up like this every day?"

I leaned my head against the car window as we drove to work with my dad. My eyes refused to stay open at this ungodly hour of 8 a.m.-which meant I had to wake up at 6 a.m. to shower, wash my face, brush my teeth, get dressed, eat breakfast, and then brave the horrendous traffic.

"Isn't there a job that starts at 1 p.m. and ends at 3 p.m.?"

"Sure, if you stay at home,"

Mom chimed in, scratching my chin with her finger while I kept my eyes closed. The atmosphere felt just like twenty years ago, when I started kindergarten with my parents cheering me on. This time was no different.

"So, you suddenly gave up on your dream of being a Perfume Stylist to become an employee? I'm so confused."

"I haven't given up! I'm just doing something in the meantime. How can anyone start working without experience?"

"That actually makes sense. Before you set off on your own, working for someone else first isn't a bad idea. You'll understand what employees go through."

"This is our stop," Dad announced.

"Are we here?"

I forced my eyes open, stretched, and looked outside-only to be surprised.

"Wait... Dad's company is in a pavilion? I always thought it was in a highrise building!"

"What?!" Dad scoffed.

"That's a bus stop! The company is just down the street."

"Then why are we stopping here?"

"How would it look if a new employee stepped out of the owner's car?"

"Oh... you're right. That makes sense again." "What?! Are you seriously making her take the bus?"

Mom protested, horrified.

"She's never taken public transport before!"

"Well, there's a first time for everything."

"What if I get off at the wrong stop?"

"No matter which bus you take, just get off at the next stop. You'll be fine. My Fah can do this. Good luck!"

Dad winked at me, leaving me no choice but to smile back.

"Alright! It's a new experience. I've been wanting to try riding the bus for a long time!"

. .

After confidently saying that, I stepped out of the car and took a bus as Dad had instructed. No matter which bus I got, it would stop at the same stop, so getting off wasn't a problem. The real challenge, however, was squeezing into the packed space, keeping my balance while the bus jerked forward, and enduring the mix of sweat and cigarette smoke clinging to some passengers.

Being sensitive to smells wasn't exactly a blessing in the working world. Finally, I arrived.

I took a deep breath as if I were about to face my doom. But as I stood in front of the company building, relief washed over me. I knew it! When I was a kid, I used to visit Dad at work, and it was definitely a high-rise, not a bus stop. At least my memory wasn't that bad.

"Good morning, Miss Fah."

"Khun Kiart!"

I beamed at the familiar face-Dad's trusted secretary. Normally, in dramas or novels, secretaries were always women, right? But that was never going to happen in my family. Mom wouldn't allow it.

"Are you waiting for me?"

"Yes. I was worried you might get lost."

"Isn't it a bit suspicious for the CEO's secretary to personally escort a new employee who hasn't even passed probation?"

"We're just walking together. We won't be acting close."

"So cruel!"

"Oh..no."

"What?"

"It's a script."

"I know. I was just teasing. Let's go! I'm excited to start working!"

Khun Kiart led me to the elevator and pressed the button for the 24th floor. The moment we stepped inside, we both switched to acting like complete strangers. I even straightened my posture, pretending to be a respectful junior employee.

Once we arrived, he simply nodded toward the department entrance before heading back to the elevator.

Looks like it's my turn now.

I walked inside and asked for a person named Wipha. Dad had drilled this name into my head-she was the department head I needed to report to.

"Are you the new employee? Head straight inside to the glass-walled room. Ms. Wipha is already waiting for you."

"Thank you."

"I'm Mai, by the way."

"Nice to meet you, Ms. Mai. I'm Fah."

I introduced myself with a friendly smile before making my way inside as instructed. The entire department stared at me like I was a new student entering class for the first time-curious, maybe a little gossiping.

I wasn't surprised, though. As soon as I reached the room, I pushed the door open and met Ms. Wipha immediately.

"Hello, I'm the new employee."

"Close the door, nepotism hire."

Her sharp voice, coming from a woman in her forties, told me loud and clear that I wasn't exactly welcome. But did I care? Not really. I was just here to work and prove to NumNim that I wasn't useless. That was all.

I did as she said and pulled out a chair to sit, only to be stopped by her stern voice.

"Did I tell you to sit?"

"Oh... am I not allowed to?"

"If I didn't say you could sit, then you don't sit."

She scanned me from head to toe before curling her lip slightly.

"You can't just do whatever you want here. For example, when you came in, you didn't even knock."

Who does she think she is? Some kind of noble lady from an old Thai drama?

"My apologies. I'll be more careful next time."

"Do your job well. I'm telling you now-it won't be easy."

"Understood."

"Now get out. Your desk is in that cubicle."

She pointed two fingers at her eyes, then at me.

"Remember, I'm watching you, nepotism hire."

"Got it."

**Go ahead and watch me all you want.**

*. .*

I plopped down in my assigned cubicle, staring at an ancient computer that looked like it couldn't even run a simple game of Snake.

Seriously? This is what office workers have to deal with, being oppressed just because of a higher position but with a salary difference of only 1,0002,000 or something like that.

I leaned back in my chair, bored because I didn't know how to start working. In the end, I picked up my phone and started reading something random before sending a message to Khun Mae.

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**Hawm Noi:**

**What are you doing?**

**Hawm Noi: So bored.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Working, obviously.**

**Mae Khun:**

**What are you bored about?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Bored of working with a power-hungry lunatic.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Have you started designing perfumes yet?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Nope. I'm trying out office life at my dad's company.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**But there's literally nothing to do.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Well, the economy's tough right now. Gotta hustle to survive. Makes sense.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Not really. I just took this job so people wouldn't call me useless. But funnily enough, working here makes me feel even more useless.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Maybe just work one day then quit.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I just wanna sleep.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Are you crazy? You already started-stick with it for a while!**

**Hawm Noi:**

**No. It's not like I plan to make this my career. And besides, this is my dad's company. I can do whatever I want.**

**Mae Khun:**

**So spoiled. If it's really your dad's company, then why is someone bossing you around?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Because I came in without telling anyone I'm the owner's kid.**

**Mae Khun: Like in a movie?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Yep. Thought it would be fun, but now that I'm actually doing it... not fun at all. I just wanna sleep.**

**Mae Khun:**

**If I were you, I'd totally mess with the department just to make things interesting. You can't get fired anyway, right?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Mess with them? Like how?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Just do all the things that annoy your boss but won't get you kicked out. Sounds fun. And since you don't even need the money, there's zero pressure.**

**Hawm Noi :**

**That's so devious... but I kinda love the idea.**

.

"I told you I was keeping an eye on you. Why are you just playing on your phone and not working?"

The angry tone of Ms. Wipha, who suddenly grabbed my phone from my hand, made me jump up quickly and stare at the old auntie.

"Well, there's no work to do. No one told me what to do. Since I don't know what to do, I just play on my phone."

"You applied for this job, so work!"

"Well, give me something to do then. If you don't tell me what to do, I'll just play on my phone."

I reached out and snatched the phone back like a snake striking and held it close to my body, making everyone in the office stare at me as the center of attention.

"And if I get bored of playing on my phone, I'll just sleep."

Now, my department head and I were glaring at each other like we wanted to eat each other alive.

"Aren't you scared at all that you won't pass probation?"

"I'll pass no matter what."

"Where do you get your confidence from?"

*My dad.*

"My skills. Alright, we've talked enough. So, where's the work? Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

When Ms. Wipha saw I wasn't backing down, she seemed to step back a little and made an uncomfortable sound.

"You're bold. Fine. Let's try. I'll make sure you won't last."

Oh, I'm so scared. Not really.

Then Ms. Wipha walked away, and I plopped down in my chair, a little annoyed. In the end, there was no work for me to do, so I had to swat imaginary mosquitoes in the air-conditioned room. Yes, I was swatting imaginary mosquitoes.

"Wow, you're really good at this,"

The male employee at the next desk leaned back in his chair, chatted with me for a bit, and then smiled. I glanced at the name tag that said "Phum" and smiled back.

"But be careful with that old lady; you might get frozen out."

"Frozen? What does that mean?"

"Well, it means no work for you. It's like being frozen. It's a subtle pressure that makes you feel useless and worthless, and eventually, you'll quit."

"Really?"

I said in a high-pitched voice, not understanding at all.

"Is not working that stressful? It can seep into your conscience like that? Hmm, well, never mind. Keep punishing me then."

That's good. I thought that once I came in, I'd have to do the things like in the dramas, getting bullied to go dig up files from ten years ago, photocopying them, sorting out budgets, and all that. Well, it's fine. If there's nothing to do, I'll just sleep.

*Ding.*

The message sound from my phone rang out just before I could slump down onto the desk. When I saw it was from NumNim, I quickly opened it and jumped up excitedly.

**Numnim:**

**I came to the company that you recommended! Now I'm on the 50th floor. I want to meet you, that's why I messaged you."**

.

Without wasting any time, since I had nothing to do, I rushed out of my department and took the elevator up to the 50th floor. NumNim, who had just left the boss's large office, gave me a big smile when she saw me, and I couldn't help but smile back.

"Your smile is really nice."

"I've never seen you in a staff uniform before. My heart's racing."

I turned around slightly and spread my arms to show off.

"Doesn't it look great? I think it's a bit old-fashioned, but it's okay; I'm just a staff member. I can't expect to look like I'm at a Valentino show. But what about you, Nim? What did they say after your meeting?"

"They said I can start working tomorrow."

"Nim actually agreed to work here!"

I jumped into NumNim's arms with excitement and inhaled her signature scent, which was uniquely hers.

"Nim is the reason I wanted to work here."

NumNim hugged me back and said the same thing.

**"Because of Fah, I agreed to come. I want to see you every day too."**

.

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After NumNim left, since she didn't have to start work just yet, she had to sort out her class schedule with her students private class. Meanwhile, when I returned to my department, I felt a cold chill in the air.

The office was dead silent. As soon as I walked to my desk, I saw shredded paper scattered across it. I was left confused and asked Phum, who would probably know what was going on.

"What's all this?"

"These are the documents that were shredded. I need you to piece them back together like new,"

Ms. Wipha, who had successfully found a way to mess with me, said triumphantly. I looked at her and couldn't help but roll my eyes.

"Watching too many Korean dramas, huh? I've seen this trick before. Is this the kind of task I'm supposed to do as an employee? Stop being ridiculous."

"I'm the boss. Whatever I say, it must be done."

"It's useless. I won't do it."

"Then quit!"

"I'm not quitting!"

"If you don't quit, you have to do it."

Right now, Phum and Phannee hurried to stop things from escalating further by holding me back and trying to calm the situation down.

"Just do it. We'll help you," they said.

"But-"

"Come on, or you'll get fired. It's tough in this economy."

The two of them were trying their best to help. When Ms. Wipha saw that she seemed to be winning, she walked out smiling.

As for me, I almost wanted to spit fire at the two people who were meddling in matters that didn't concern them. If I didn't accept, that aunt couldn't force me to do anything.

"Why do you have to give in? This isn't right."

"It's true it's not right, but it makes the boss happy. You have to know how to protect yourself first. Today, we're helping you with this paperwork,"

Phum said, rubbing his hands together as gesture gratitude.

"Remember, you owe us."

.

You said you would let me off! Why do I have to deal with this nonsense now? It's already past 6 PM, and I still haven't finished this stupid paperwork, with a big pile left to go.

Meanwhile, the three of us were diligently working on this useless task. Khun Kiart, who stopped by to check on me, cleared his throat.

"What are you doing?"

"Khun Kiart,"

Phannee and Phumi immediately stood up and bowed, clearly nervous, and reported with hesitation.

"We're fixing the documents that were damaged,"

Phum reported. As for me, I didn't act nervous because I'd known him since I was little, so I took the opportunity to complain.

"The documents that aren't important,"

I pointed to the papers I had just finished fixing.

"A brochure from a competitor company from last year-no, actually, two years ago."

"Then why are we doing this?"

"Well, the department head said it was important, and Fa-uh, I mean, I have to finish it. I'm so sore,"

I complained in a pitiful tone. Khun Kiart picked up the brochure, glanced at it briefly, then put it back on the table.

"You don't need to do this anymore. You can go home."

"Huh? But-"

Phannee was about to object, but Khun Kiart interrupted her first.

"It's wasting the air conditioning."

That was a much more reasonable and logical excuse than Aunt Wipha's, so the three of us decided to stop doing everything, grabbed our bags, and got ready to go home.

After parting ways with the other two, Khun Kiart, who had been waiting for me in the lobby downstairs, walked alongside me without showing any expression while talking.

"Ms. Fah, you should take the bus to one stop. Your father is waiting to go home together. He's really angry right now."

"Angry? Why is he angry? I was just being picked on."

"Your father isn't angry at you, Ms. Fah."

"Huh? Then what is he angry about? Traffic? Is he going to argue with the Minister of Transport?"

"Your father is angry at Ms. Wipha for making you come home late and having to wait. Inefficient work means working overtime, and the boss made the employees suffer, especially someone like you."

"....."

"He doesn't like it."

**Serves her right! My first day at work was so much fun!**

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# Chapter 11: My Love

After getting into Dad’s car, I immediately complained to him like a spoiled daughter. I’m not one of those drama heroines who keeps quiet when bullied. If something happens to me, the world must know!

It’s not my fault that I was born rich, with a father who’s Aunt Wipha’s boss. Aunt Wipha must be mad at herself for making me an employee of this company.

“Look at this, Dad! The paper cut my finger. It hurts so much, really!”

I held out my finger, putting on the most pained expression possible as the car moved along the road. The more I acted like I was suffering, the angrier Dad became. His rage was practically blazing.

“This is too much! Bullied on your very first day at work? What’s wrong with people these days?”

“They probably don’t like that I got in because of connections. They won’t even call me by my name! So mean!”

“My poor daughter.”

“Can you fire them?”

“I’d love to, but the law doesn’t allow it.”

“What a shame.”

“Don’t worry, sweetheart. I’ll handle this little thing for you.”

Dad held my hand, looking at my wound with concern. Not long after, the car reached home. That’s when I saw my dear friend—whom I had betrayed —sitting in front of the house, hugging his knees like he was crying. “Plerng? Is that you?”

“

*Hic*

…”

Plerng lifted his face, tears streaming down his cheeks. I gasped. I had seen him sad before, like when his father sent him abroad to study, but he had never cried this hard.

“Why are you crying?”

“Teacher Nim called to cancel my lessons and refunded all my money. She hates me now.”

My eyes widened a little at the unexpected news. I sat beside him and gently patted his back, like comforting a sad puppy.

Dad, seeing how close we were, shot him a sharp look, protective of his daughter. Then, he cleared his throat.

“Go inside, Fah.”

As I stood up, Dad frowned slightly, just noticing something.

“Is your shirt really that thin?”

"But it's the company uniform, Dad. They require us to wear white shirts, all made from the same fabric."

"It's too thin. No way. Go inside and change into something else before you come back to talk to your friend."

"Okay."

I grabbed my friend’s head and made him stand up with me.

"You came too. Let’s go sit inside. Why are you crying out here?"

"Crying out here makes me look more pitiful than crying inside…

*Hic*

…"

. .

After changing into a more comfortable home outfit, I came back to find Plerng still sitting there, his eyes swollen from all the crying. Honestly, I felt really guilty, but I didn’t know what to do. If I told him the truth, he might feel even worse.

"Do you really have to be this heartbroken? You haven’t even had a serious conversation with her. What exactly made you this upset?"

"She is the one."

Plerng sobbed as he gulped down a glass of water, like someone who had just walked through the Sahara Desert.

"I’ve never met anyone who made my heart race this much. Have you ever seen me act crazy like this before?"

"I’m not sure. I was studying abroad, so I don’t know if you've had other crazy moments like this."

"Never!"

"Why are you yelling? That scared me!"

"

*Hic*

… I’m heartbroken! I’m shocked!"

Plerng wiped his tears away with his finger and flicked them aside before launching into a long monologue about his sorrow.

"I followed her around until I found out where she worked. I got close to her. But after just four lessons together, she canceled all her classes with me."

"What reason did she give?"

"She said she got a full-time job and can’t do private lessons anymore."

I let out a sigh of relief that NumNim had given a reasonable excuse. Then I smiled at my friend.

"See? She had a reason. Do you really need to cry your eyes out just because she got a job?"

"And she also said she never intended to be friends with me. She knew I deliberately crashed my car into hers. She asked me to stay out of her life. And most importantly… she already have someone she love."

My heart pounded when I heard that. Because that

*"someone"* could only be me.

While I grinned, my friend continued sobbing uncontrollably. No, wait. Not "sobbing uncontrollably"—that sounds weird too…

*Tears streamed down his face.*

"Wow, she really cut you off that harshly?"

"Yeah! My heart is shattered. How did she even know I liked her?"

"I told her."

"Why did you do that?!"

"Didn’t you want her to know?"

"Oh… yeah, that’s true…

*Hic… Hic*

…"

At this point, Plerng was barely making sense, still sobbing like crazy while I just sat there, looking as lost as a puppy left in the sun, unsure what to do.

Then, my backup phone rang. I didn’t even need to check who it was—I already knew.

"You keep crying. I need to take this call."

"Oh… okay…"

As soon as I stepped away, I answered the call, twisting my body shyly and using my sweetest voice, knowing for sure that it would earn me some affection.

"Hello.."

[You didn’t call me at all.]

"Oh, I just got home."

[Really?]

The slightly dejected tone on the other end made me a little suspicious.

"Is something wrong?"

[No, it's nothing.]

"Come on, you have to tell me everything. I always want to know what’s going on with you. Everything about you is important to me."

[I just thought you’d come over today.]

.

I furrowed my brows, trying to remember why I was supposed to go, when the voice on the other end reminded me.

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[The other day, you asked if you could come visit again, and I said yes. Then you said you'd come as often as you could.]

.

I smiled a little, leaning against the wall, then bit my fist in embarrassment.

.

"So you wanted to see me, huh? Took you long enough to admit it. Sneaky!"

[No, I just thought you were coming, and when you didn’t, I got worried. Never mind. Not talking anymore. My mom’s calling me for dinner.]

"Even when you're sulking, you’re still so cute. Wow… we’re so close that where you’re even sulking now? So cuuuute!"

[I said I’m not sulking!]

"You're still cute even when you're sulking, my love."

[What did you say?]

The tone of her voice made it clear that NumNim was feeling flustered and wasn’t used to being called that. When I accidentally let it slip, I felt pretty embarrassed too. But there was no taking it back now. Besides, calling her that wasn’t so bad—I liked it.

"My love."

[You're crazy!]

Ah, do you think you're the only one missing? I want to see NumNim too!

With that thought, I quickly went back inside the house, put on a sympathetic face, and patted my friend's shoulder lightly.

"Plerng, being sad won’t change anything. I think you should just move on and find someone new."

"You think it's that easy? I've never been serious about anyone like this before in my life! But look at me now—everything fell apart the moment her father kicked me out like a stray dog. She must've found out about my intentional car accident from her dad. There's no way out of this."

"Well, since there's nothing you can do about it, then you have to let it go. Just go home and rest. Tomorrow is a new day."

"I don’t want to go home yet."

"But I’m tired. I just got back from work and I want to rest."

"Work?"

Plerng stopped and stared at me for a moment, as if just realizing something.

"Oh yeah, I did notice that you were wearing something like an office uniform. I was too caught up in my own misery to pay attention. Since when did you start working? I never knew about this."

"I work with my dad. Gaining life experience."

"You? What got into you?"

"I'm just being responsible for my life—becoming a mature adult with a future. Anatomy, you know? Instead of wasting time crying over a girl, maybe you should focus on your career. No woman wants a man who's just going to be a breeding stock with no direction in life."

"Pretend to talk nicely. Since when have you ever worked? Besides, I already help my aunt with work every day. When I told you that, did you ever care?"

"Nope. You're not that important to my life. Now go home. I need to shower and sleep."

"What the hell? Your friend is heartbroken here!"

"Cry about it some other time. I can only handle so much stress today. Goodbye. Chill out."

I grabbed my friend by the head, dragged him to the front of the house, and forced him into the car and driving off. Once I was sure he had disappeared into the night, I ran back inside, grabbed my car keys, and sped off straight to NumNim's house—to see the love of my life.

Even though my physical body was still on the road, my spirit had already floated ahead, eagerly waiting at NumNim doorstep.

Ah, surprising her like this is so exciting. I can't wait to see her happy face when she realizes I’m here.

"Hello?"

I parked the car just outside her house and called the sweet-faced girl, unsure if she was still awake. When she answered, her voice carried a slight pout, as if playing hard to get.

No need to act hard to get, my love—you’re already precious to meeeee!

.

[What's up? Do you feeling guilty? And called me two or three times already?]

"What are you talking about? If I miss you, I just call. I’ve never even counted how many times a day I called you. Do you count, Nim?"

[Don’t try to sweet-talk me. Why are you calling at this hour? It’s almost 10 PM—why aren’t you asleep yet?]

"I can’t sleep unless I see your face."

[How can you see me when you’re not even here?]

"I am here, but I couldn’t find you. So in the end, all I could do was stand by the fence and stare longingly at your rooftop."

[Stop messing around.]

"If you don't believe me, come down and see if what I'm saying is true."

.

She sounded unconvinced, but still, she came downstairs to check. And when she saw me, she ran straight to the fence, gripping it tightly, her face filled with shock—but her lips were already curling into an uncontrollable smile.

.

"You really came."

"Of course I did. I miss you. Even though we saw each other at work today, it’s not the same as meeting outside."

.

I blinked innocently, making my voice as soft and pleading as possible. NumNim smiled to herself, then reached through the fence to gently tug at my cheek.

"You talk too much. And stop acting cute."

"If I’m cute, then love me."

"We’ve barely met, and you’re already talking about love? Your words can’t be trusted."

"But my actions are very clear. Look at me. I'm exhausted from work but still drove all the way here because I missed you. Aren't you going to give me a little reward?"

I pouted my lips and gave her a pleading look.

"Hold me, please."

"Fah, what are you trying to do right in front of the house? What if my dad sees us?"

"Nobody will see us, come on. I came here just so you could hold me, then I'll leave. I have to wake up early tomorrow—just thinking about it is torture."

I rolled my eyes dramatically in the shape of an eight and jumped up and down, trying to get attention.

"Hurry up! Just hold me already!"

NumNim pursed his lips slightly, looking left and right. Although she hesitant but also like she wanted to challenge me. She walked forward cautiously, then reached through the gate’s bars with both hands to gently cup my face.

"Are you satisfied?"

"Ahh, yes, I’m satisfied."

I slipped my hands through the gate and pulled NumNim's waist closer. The small-framed person let out a tiny protest but didn't really resist—if anything, she seemed to give in easily and even laughed.

"Now kiss me."

"A kiss again?"

"Just now you held me, so now kiss me. Kiss me with tongues. We've already done it before, you know how to do it?"

"Fah, you're getting carried away."

"My love."

"....."

"From now on, let's call each other 'my love' when we're together. I'll call

you 'my love,' and you'll call me 'my love' too. It'll be like our little nickname. What do you think?"

"Do we really have to? It’s kind of embarrassing…"

"I always thought that if I had a partner, I'd call them that. It sounds cute. Don’t you like it?"

"I do."

"You do what?"

"I like it

*'my love'*

."

NumNim leaned in and kissed me just as I had asked, then pulled back slightly.

"And I like Fah, too."

We kissed passionately right at the front gate, separated only by the iron bars. Our breaths intertwined, and it nearly made me weak in the knees.

This was the second time we had done something like this, and it felt so much better than the first. It was as if we had learned each other's rhythm— how to move, how to respond, when to inhale and when to exhale.

As our hands roamed instinctively, grasping for something to hold onto, my senses blurred for a moment. Then, I suddenly heard a strange sound. It made me furrow my brows and, despite my reluctance, I pulled away from NumNim to figure out what it was.

NumNim, who had been completely lost in the moment, blinked in confusion at the sudden separation, her eyes hazy with dazed affection. She asked, still a little out of breath,

"Is something wrong?"

"I don't know, but never mind."

I tugged at NumNim to pull her closer again.

"I don't want to waste time and miss this chance. I'm not satisfied yet."

**Thud!**

"Ouch!"

Something hard hit me on the head, making me pull away from NumNim to check what it was. I froze in shock when I saw Plerng standing there, fist clenched, baring his teeth.

"So, you're the one who stole Kru Nim from me!"

"Plerng... What are you doing here?"

"So you're Kru Nim’s lover?"

"....."

**"You're my best friend!"**

.

# Chapter 12: New Rule

Plerng looked at us both with a painful expression. His body language screamed that he was ready to strangle me out of anger. To be honest, I had already thought about how the truth would eventually come out, but I never imagined it would happen this fast.

Still, the love I have for NumNim grows every day. And things like this were bound to happen one day, I had to prepare myself for this situation.

"Plerng, I know you're angry right now, but for the sake of our friendship, please let me explain."

"For the sake of friendship?"

Plerng's voice was full of rage, and even NumNim, who had been standing behind the gate, stepped outside, positioning herself as a barrier between me and my friend, wanting to protect me.

Plerng halted his steps when he saw NumNim standing in front of me, and it was clear that Plerng was more heartbroken than NumNim had let on, seeing that she had chosen me.

"Mr. Plerng, we're adults now. Please don't use force."

"Do you think I'm going to hurt Fah?"

Plerng asked, his voice full of anguish as he locked eyes with me, clearly in pain.

"Do you think I'd hurt her?"

"If you don't plan to hurt her, then don't approach her with such a scary look. I don't know what you're thinking, but I will protect her."

"I've known her for almost twenty years. Don't act like you're the one who should protect her when you don't even know her well enough."

"Yes, I haven't known her as long as you have."

"...."

"But I will get to know her for the rest of her life, and I believe our relationship will last long enough."

"Nim,"

I reached out to grab the shoulder of the person standing in front of me, feeling grateful for the moment, despite how inappropriate it was. Plerng couldn’t bear to witness this and shouted out in frustration.

"Stop acting like you two are the only ones on this planet! Do you really think that if I wanted to hurt her, you could protect her? You're just a

woman!"

It seemed that Plerng’s anger had clouded all sense of propriety. The handsome friend stepped forward, raising his hand, clearly hoping to grab some part of my body as if he were trying to dominate me.

But Numnim, prepared for this, grabbed Plerng’s wrist and twisted it, showing her strength like a skilled fighter.

"Yes, I'm a woman, but I'm a woman who knows how to defend myself."

The small person managed to twist the wrist of the bigger person, making him cry out in pain. When the larger person lost balance, the small one used a kick to his knee, causing the larger person to fall to the ground. After that, she rolled him along the ground without much effort.

"Wow, what I learned really works! Even though I’m smaller, I can handle someone bigger than me with ease, without needing much strength in my punches."

"What's going on? The noise reached inside the house!"

NumNim's parents ran out, holding a handgun, looking worried. Upon seeing the person, Plerng—the same one who had caused trouble the other day—he pointed the gun at my friend.

"You again? The one who pretended to be hit by a car? Now you're causing a scene again?"

"Sir, please calm down. It’s not serious,"

I quickly intervened, worried the gun might go off.

"Plerng is my friend, we just had a misunderstanding. Plerng, you should leave now."

"Don't try to talk nicely to me."

"Okay, I won’t. You ghost! Go home, or the gun will go off!"

Plerng bared his teeth a little, seeing that NumNim’s father was ready to shoot. He glared at me, then drove off, which finally allowed me to relax.

After Plerng left, everyone fell silent, and all eyes were on me. NumNim’s father looked at me and asked in surprise:

"And what about you? What are you doing here at this time?"

"Huh?"

I pointed to myself, glancing at NumNim nervously.

"Oh, I... I remembered I forgot something, so I came to see Nim. I left it here when I stayed over the other day."

"What did you forget?"

I glanced at NumNim for help, but it seemed like she couldn’t come up with anything either. Then I suddenly remembered and quickly said:

"A novel! The other day I stayed over and left it here, so I came to get it. I planned to finish reading it."

"Is it really that important? What kind of novel is it?"

"It's a romance novel, 'Pluto!' It's really rare in the market now. I started reading it but didn’t finish, so I came to get it,"

I said. NumNim looked at me with a surprised expression.

"And everything happened just like you saw, Sir."

"By the way, are you friends with that guy from earlier? I saw you defend him,"

NumNim’s dad asked.

"Yes, he's my friend. He’s a friend of Nim too, but your daughter doesn’t play along."

"And what did you two argue about earlier?"

This time, it was NumNim’s mom asking. NumNim quickly tried to help me by making up a story.

"Fah tried to tell her friend to leave me alone, but Plerng wouldn’t listen, so he got all worked up, just like you saw."

"Ah, I see. Guys these days just don't make sense. When a girl doesn’t play along, they throw a tantrum like little kids. Well, if that’s all, let’s go to bed. Fah, are you staying here tonight?"

NumNim’s dad asked. It was a simple question, but it made me hesitate for a moment before I declined, feeling a little disappointed.

"I have to get up early for work tomorrow, so I can’t stay."

NumNim’s face showed a bit of disappointment at my answer, but she smiled again with my follow-up sentence.

"But I’ll stay over on the weekend, okay? I’ll stay until the owner of the house gets annoyed."

. .

It turns out that Plerng and I are now in an unspoken argument. Although I tried to reach out to him, there was no sign that he was calming down. In the end, I sighed and told myself I would have to make it up to him one day or another.

I’ll wait for the situation to cool down before I try to fix things with him. Even though what I did was quite wrong, Plerng isn’t narrow-minded. We’ve been arguing since we were kids, and this issue should be easy to solve in no time, just like all the other things we've gone through—casually, in the Mayura style.

Wow, that show really made me feel old.

.

My life continued disguised as a lady working at my father’s company. Today, after putting on the company’s standard uniform—a white shirt and neat skirt or trousers, preparing to leave for work—I was ready to get into the car when my father suddenly handed me a brown company T-shirt and ordered me to change.

"From now on, wear this shirt to work every day."

"Every day? Why?"

"It's too thin."

"But this outfit is for Thursdays, isn't it? If I wearing it today, will it be a problem?"

"No, Fah, you're the leader of the generation."

Though confused, I couldn’t argue when the boss said so. Once I changed into the T-shirt and went to work, everyone in the office stared at me in surprise.

But this wasn’t school anymore where wearing the wrong shirt would get me teased. Out of the blue, a new rule was posted on the glass door, and it was announced throughout the entire company.

.

**From now on, all employees must wear the company T-shirt to work every day.**

**If it's not convenient, only a black shirt will be acceptable.**

**Thank you,**

**Methee Assawarachan,**

**Managing Director**

. .

The order was signed with my father's blue pen, making it official. I just understood what my father meant by being the " *leader of the generation"* when I saw this announcement.

"Wow, so we have to wear this company T-shirt every single day of the work week now? How did this rule come out of nowhere?"

Mai, who was standing and reading the notice on the board, frowned thoughtfully. I, however, could guess my father’s intention and smiled inwardly.

He just didn’t want me wearing thin shirts anymore. You're making a big deal out of it. Who's father is this?

"What's going on today?!"

Aunt Wipha, who had stormed into the department, glanced at me before sighing dramatically.

"Is there such a coincidence? You’ve only been here for one day, and now the company changes the dress code for everyone because of you!"

Then the old lady stormed off into her office, still visibly irritated. Once everyone was sure Aunt Wipha wouldn’t overhear, we all started gossiping immediately.

"Today’s going to be rough for us,"

Phum said with a deep sigh. Still clueless, I looked at him in confusion.

"What do you mean?"

"About the brochure we were working on yesterday evening. You know, Mr. Kiart asked to meet with the department head. I bet he was scolding them," he explained.

"How did it turn into such a big deal? This never used to happen before," Phannee said, narrowing her eyes at me.

"It seems like since you joined, the company’s been doing all sorts of things. It’s all too coincidental."

"That’s not it, you’re overthinking,"

I waved my hand dismissively in the air, trying to brush off the suspicion, even though I too found it quite odd.

"Really, though. I mean, Mr. Kiart, who never visits our department, usually just passes by in the lobby when the boss is here, suddenly shows up in our department and just happens to meet with the head."

"We're doing nonsense work right now,"

Phum nodded in agreement with Pannee before rubbing his chin and looking over.

"Or are you the...?"

"What?"

"It must be you. You are....,"

Pannee said, and I started to feel anxious.

"What? Just say it. Why leave space for words? I don't get it."

"A lucky charm!"

Both Phum and Pannee snapped their fingers, making a loud pop. I raised an eyebrow, a bit confused.

"No matter what I do, everything will just go along smoothly, right? When I don't want to work, Mr. Kiart, show up to make us stop working. When I wear the wrong uniform, the company will change the rules to make everyone wear the same shirt. Wow, what a coincidence! If it's not luck, then what is it?"

"...."

"Because I'm the daughter of the owner of the company!"

I joked, mimicking a line from a TV show, and that made everyone laugh. But it seemed my words reached Aunt Wipha, who had just stepped out of a room and managed to interrupt with a sarcastic remark.

"If you're the owner's daughter, then I must be the wife of Mr. Methi, the chairman of the board!"

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"Dad, please sue her!"

I felt like a villain in a drama. I wouldn't let pressure push me to work harder. Why? Well, one, I don’t know how to work, so I don’t know what to push myself to do. Two, I’m the daughter who won’t accept it, if Aunt Wipha becomes my stepmother. After I explained the details, my dad got even angrier, his voice rising through the phone.

"What? She dares to be my wife? Is your department head pretty?"

"She's not as pretty as mom."

"Then there's no way she will be my wife. My women must be beautiful, whether she's my wife or my daughter, like you, Fah,"

My dad praised me, like any father who has been in love with his daughter since birth. I smiled happily and replied joyfully.

"Yes, I’m very beautiful."

"By the way, aren't you working?"

"Same as usual, the boss won’t let me do anything, but it’s fine because I like doing nothing. I want to sleep."

"You can’t, Fah! If you come to the company, you have to work."

"You're so mean. I just want to watch and not be bothered. Oh, it's lunchtime. I have to go now; my stomach's growling,"

I hung up the phone with my dad before returning to my department and inviting my friends to eat together.

"It's lunch break, everyone, let's go eat."

"Are everyone who I invited on Line, ready? We’ll go with my car,"

Aunt Wipha came out of her office and loudly announced, as if trying to dominate.

"I'll treat everyone to lunch today."

Everyone exchanged uneasy glances, not daring to comment. I furrowed my brows a little because I hadn’t received any invitation from her on Line. Actually, I don’t even have a Line group to chat with anyone.

When I met her eyes, everyone quickly looked away, as if they didn’t want to do anything. That made me realize this was a tactic to split sides. The boss disliked me so much that she’d push me out of the group of friends just to make me eat alone.

Fine, if she can treat everyone to lunch, so be it!

"Alright, no problem. I’ll just eat alone," I said.

"Fah,"

Pannee looked at me with pity, though I smiled. Everyone probably thought I was trying to be strong.

No, I don’t care. If I don’t eat, then I don’t. I can invite NumNim to join me.

"It’s okay. Let’s go. See you later."

I grabbed my wallet and walked out, calling my dad's bodyguard, NumNim, cheerfully. NumNim answered with her usual sweet voice.

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"My love, let’s go eat."

[Always with the ‘my love’.]

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NumNim teased, but I could tell she was smiling, her cheeks almost splitting from the grin, because I was smiling too.

[But I can’t, Mr. Methi said he’s taking me to get a suit, then we’ll have lunch. Sorry!]

"What? Getting a suit? Why?"

[Mr. Methi said that as a bodyguard, I should wear something more dignified. I just wear a shirt, and it doesn’t look right.]

"True, like in the movies, bodyguards wear cool suits. Are you eating outside? Sounds good. I’ll go with you."

[No, you can't.]

"Why not?"

[I just started working today. It would look weird if I went to eat with the president and brought a friend along.]

.

*Ah, true, I’m an employee here too.*

*.*

"Ugh.... But never mind."

"You're not angry, are you?"

"If I'm angry, what can I do? Nim has business to attend to."

[I’ll make it up to you later.]

.

I smiled mischievously, licking my lips slightly.

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"How are you going to make it up?"

[I don’t know. Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do. Is that okay?]

"Okay. You definitely need to make it up to me. This weekend, I’ll collect everything, no exception."

[Crazy.]

"Crazy? Do you know how I’m going to make you pay?"

. .

I giggled and hung up before heading to the canteen to grab some food. Honestly, eating alone felt a bit lonely. Everyone else had friends to talk to during lunch.

I was the only one sitting by myself, eating curry and scrolling through my phone, looking like I had nothing to do. However...

"Why are you eating alone?"

The nasal voice of the person who was supposed to go suit shopping rang out, and that made me look up from my phone in surprise.

"So that Nim can eat with Fah, of course."

"Eating food?"

"Eating you."

"You're crazy."

"Since you started the joke, I’m just going along with it. You said you were going to get a suit, so why are you here?"

"I wanted to see your face before I went. I told Mr. Methi I’d stop by to visit a friend for a bit."

"That's it."

I smiled, feeling thankful, before noticing Nim’s outfit for today, agreeing with my dad.

"Come to think of it, Nim should really have a more dignified outfit."

"But I think it’s a bit over the top. Wearing a suit like in the movies... Honestly, I could just wear the employee uniform like what Fah is wearing."

"It’s good that they asked you to wear a suit. Looks like the boss is fond of you, taking you to get a suit and to lunch."

"It’s just..."

Nim made a slightly uneasy face, and I could tell something was off.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, nothing."

"Nim."

My father's voice interrupted our conversation. At that moment, everyone in the canteen suddenly went silent, as if a swarm of flies had encountered something and became dizzy.

"Hurry up. I have to go talk business soon."

"Okay."

My father glanced at me and then acted as if I were a stranger, just like we had joked before.

"Is this your friend as you mentioned who would come to visit?"

"Yes."

"You're the one who recommended Nim to work here. Thank you so much for bringing such a good person to me."

My father smiled warmly at me before looking around and asking, surprised,

"Why are you eating alone? Don't you have any friends?"

"Oh, the people from my department went out to eat."

"Why didn't you go with them?"

"They didn't invite me."

I saw my father press his lips together, as if he had begun to piece things together.

"Well then, how about this? Put your fork down and come eat with us so you won't be lonely."

I almost smiled, but I caught myself, trying to act modest.

"Is that really okay? I feel bad about it."

"Don't feel bad. Think of it as me treating you for bringing such a lovely person to work here."

"Are you sure? It feels awkward."

"Come on, please."

"Really?"

"Yes, please."

"Give me one good reason why I should say yes."

"Pleaseee!"

I often joke with my father, and I got carried away, playing along like we were alone. But NumNim watched us and looked slightly stunned that I dared to joke around like that with the president.

"Mr. President is in on the joke, huh?"

I pretended to laugh it off once I realized what happened. My father, who had also just realized, laughed and replied casually:

"I play like this with my daughter at home. So when I saw you doing it, I just followed along naturally. It happened automatically."

"Is that so? Well then, I won't hold back,"

I said as I stood up, ready to go eat outside, feeling a bit lucky. My father nodded at NumNim slightly before raising his hand, patting her on the back and gently rubbing it up and down.

"Let's go."

I looked at my father in surprise and noticed NumNim's expression, which seemed a bit uneasy. However, she didn’t resist much and simply followed along.

Oh, I wasn’t imagining things. My father was flirting with NumNim right in front of me, and it made me unable to stand it.

**"Dad!"**

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# Chapter 13: Mistress

"Dad!"

My shout pierced the air, making everyone there freeze. Every eye in the canteen turned toward us in unison. Dad turned to me, raising an eyebrow slightly, while I clenched my fists tightly, forcing myself to exhale slowly and handle the situation with a calmness I had momentarily forgotten.

"What is it, Fah?"

NumNim asked curiously. I casually explained while still eyeing my dear father's hand, which remained too close to my girlfriend.

"I just suddenly missed my dad,"

I said, looking straight at the older man with the most insincere smile I could manage. He seemed slightly wary as he glanced between me and his hand, then quickly pulled it back, realizing his mistake.

"Seeing Mr. Methee take such good care of you reminded me of how my dad takes care of me, so I accidentally called Dad out to our Boss like that,"

I added, my tone innocent.

"Oh.."

NumNim nodded, while I keep glancing at my father.

"My father is also a kind person like you, Mr. Methee. Speaking of which, you really does give off a fatherly vibe. The age gap is just right. If you're this close, why doesn't Nim just call you

*Dad*

, Mr.Methee?"

"Fah! What are you saying?"

NumNim scolded me, glancing nervously at my father. He, on the other hand, cleared his throat and pretended not to understand-though he absolutely did.

"I'm hungry. Let's go eat," he said.

"Great idea," NumNim quickly agreed.

I deliberately positioned myself between them as we walked, knowing full well that I could. At the same time, I pulled out my phone and called someone, making sure Dad saw it. His whole body tensed when he realized who I was calling-"Mom".

"Who are you calling?"

He asked, his voice unusually tight.

"Mom. Just giving her an update on today's work."

"You're such a good kid,"

He said, draping an arm over my shoulder absentmindedly, forgetting that most people around us didn't know our relationship. Then he squeezed my shoulder firmly.

"But you don't need to report everything. You're an adult now. Your life is your own."

"But you and Mom always say you still see me as your little girl,"

I replied sweetly.

"And this job is no different."

"Not at all. Your mom and I see you as a grown-up now, so you don't need to call her,"

Dad seized the opportunity to snatch my phone from my hand, then wiped his sweat like a guilty man. I shrugged slightly and stopped in front of the company building, waiting for the car to pick us up.

"Fine, I won't call. But don't do that again."

**She's mine...**

I tried to send that message to Dad through my gaze, though I wasn't sure if he understood it. Not long after, his van pulled up. We all got in, and I pulled NumNim to sit beside me, creating a barrier between her and my father. As we sat in silence, Dad and I started texting each other.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**If you flirt with my friend, I'll really tell Mom.**

**Daddy: I didn't do anything!**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Oh, really? Hugging her in front of your daughter doesn't count?**

**Daddy:**

**I was just being friendly. I'm nice to everyone.**

**Hawm Noi: Not with this one, Dad.**

**Daddy:**

**But NumNim is my employee. If we're not close, working together will be difficult.**

**(Daddy sends a sticker.)**

**Hawm Noi:**

**But NumNim is my friend. I don't want her to feel uncomfortable at work just because she took the job I recommended.**

**Daddy:**

**What kind of man do you think I am?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**A womanizer, obviously. No wonder Mom is always suspicious of you. Not this time, Dad. I'm asking you to back off.**

**Daddy: Alright, I won't get involved.**

**Daddy:**

**But what if she likes me first?**

**Would that be an exception?**

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"I really miss my Mom,"

I said suddenly as the car drove down the road.

My father snapped his head toward me for a brief moment, then immediately looked down at his phone.

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**Daddy:**

**Just kidding! I was teasing you!**

**Daddy:**

**She's your friend, Fah. I won't cross any lines.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Please, Dad, just this one person.**

**Hawm Noi: I love her.**

. .

Dad glanced at me through the rearview mirror, intrigued by what I had just typed. But he didn't say anything.

Our chat ended there, and we switched to a more formal conversation-boss and employee.

"What do you ladies want to eat today? My treat."

"Anything is fine, Mr. Methee. I already feel bad enough that you're taking me to get a tailored suit, and now you're buying us dinner too."

NumNim responded politely.

"Should I suggest a place?"

Khun Kiart, who was sitting in the front seat, spoke up as if he had an idea. Dad gave him a small nod of approval.

"Go ahead... you can choose."

"Fah, do you know where your department head usually takes her team for dinner?"

Kiart's question made me frown slightly in confusion.

"I do. Why?"

His smirk widened, a devious gleam in his eyes, as he answered smugly. "We're going there."

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. .

The restaurant Auntie Wipha often took her team to was in a nearby mall. It wasn't anything fancy-just decent enough to snap a picture, post online, and check in for store discounts.

When we arrived, Dad hesitated. The place was more crowded than he expected. He had probably imagined a more private, upscale restaurant on the mall's upper floors.

"Are you serious, Kiart?"

Dad asked, eyeing the restaurant with slight skepticism.

"It looks delicious," I said excitedly.

"I've wanted to try barbecue like this for ages!"

"It's called shabu,"

NumNim corrected me.

"Yeah, yeah, that's it. It looks fun!"

Dad still wasn't convinced.

"How is piling raw meat on a tray fun?"

He muttered, clearly unfamiliar with the experience. Without thinking, I grabbed his hand.

"It's no big deal! Just try it. If you don't like it, we can just pay and leave.

And do you know why?"

"Because we're rich, rich!"

Dad and I always joked like this whenever we wanted to try something new. If we didn't like it, we'd just pay and leave-it was all part of the experience.

But I forgot that it wasn't just the two of us here. I only realized my mistake when I dragged Dad into the restaurant and noticed NumNim staring at our hands, still clasped together. That's when I let go.

"Aren't those our company employees?"

Kiart asked, even though he clearly knew the answer. I shot him a knowing look and raised an eyebrow.

"That's right. I'll go say hi. You guys find a table first."

I casually made my way to my department's table, flashing a friendly smileespecially at Auntie Wipha, my boss. She looked at me with suspicion. "Who invited you? This table is for people in the chat group only."

"Oh? There's a group chat? No one ever added me. But that's fine-if they had, I wouldn't have joined anyway. Who even uses LINE for work conversations? Only people with too much free time do that, right?"

I grinned at them before pretending I had more important things to do.

"Anyway, I won't bother you. You guys should hurry up and eat so you can get back to work."

"You should be saying that to yourself. If you're late back to work, you'll be in trouble."

I gasped dramatically.

"Oh no! I'd better remind our big boss to eat quickly. Our department head is such a hard worker."

I gestured toward my father's table.

"Don't worry, I'll make sure we finish in time. After all, I want to be a good employee."

"Wait... You came with Mr. Methee?"

Mai squinted at my table, eyes full of disbelief.

"You mean

*the*

Mr. Methee? The chairman?"

"Seems like the same guy to me."

"How do you even know him?"

"Oh, we just ran into each other. He invited me to eat. But talking too much is cutting into work time! Gotta go remind him to eat fast-boss's orders!"

I flipped my hair like I was in a commercial and strutted back to my dad's table at a deliberately slow pace, making sure everyone could clearly see that I was dining with the chairman.

As soon as I sat down, the other table fell into hushed murmurs. They'd been talking loudly before, but now everyone was eating in silence, clearly intimidated by my father's presence.

Straightening up, I smiled at my father proudly.

"Thanks."

"For what?"

*For made me born as your daughter.*

*Checkmate.*

I didn't say it out loud-just smirked to myself as I grabbed the menu, ordering this and that. Then, cupping my hands around my mouth, I raised my voice just enough for the other table to hear.

"Fine, fine! But I can't order too much-I'll have to grill for too long. I need to get back to work, Mr. Methee." "You came with me-with your *father* ."

Dad deliberately emphasized the last word, subtly shifting the meaning.

"Why do you need to rush back?"

NumNim frowned slightly at the change in his wording, clearly displeased. She didn't show it outright, but since I was paying close attention, I noticed right away.

"I need to get back to work. My boss is very diligent. If I'm late, I'll be under scrutiny, and if that happens, I might get fired."

"No one can fire you-"

"....."

"Except me."

Dad intentionally say that loud and clear, effectively silencing the nearby table. It was all part of our little scripted performance-to shut them up once and for all.

In the end, I stayed out over an hour past my lunch break, and Auntie Wipha couldn't do anything about it.

When I finally returned to the office, my coworkers swarmed me, eager to know how on earth I ended up having lunch with the chairman.

"It's nothing, really. The chairman saw me eating alone and invited me to lunch outside."

"That's it?" Pannee asked skeptically.

"I've been working here for years, and he's never even spoken to me once."

I just shrugged. What could I say? He's my dad. Having lunch together wasn't weird at all. The fun part was rubbing it in Auntie Wipha's face at the barbecue restaurant.

"Do you think the chairman likes you?"

Mai, who had been sitting further away, joined in on the gossip.

"He has a reputation for being a flirt, you know. And you're cute. Be careful."

"I will." I chuckled.

"Don't just brush it off! You really need to be cautious. Successful men like him-rich, powerful, still good-looking despite their age-they're dangerous. Girls like us, especially someone as young as you, wouldn't stand a chance."

"Thanks for concern, Mai, but I can handle myself. Moreover being close to the chairman might actually benefit me."

I glanced at Auntie Wipha's office, where she sat looking tense behind her computer.

"So that no one will do anything to me."

"You'll be target even more, Fah,"

Pannee sighed, slightly worried about me.

"Khun Wipha hates nepotism. She worked really hard to get where she is, so when she sees someone like you getting special treatment, she'll despise you even more. And now, you're close to the chairman."

"Didn't you hear what Mr. Methee said? No one can fire Fah unless he allows it. Even the boss can't do anything. Come on, Fah isn't even stressed, so no one else should be either."

I told everyone with a bright smile, completely unbothered. Why should I be worried?

*That's my father!!*

. .

**"Nim might not be able to work here for long."**

After work, Noomnim arranged to meet me in the lobby. Today, I told my father I'd go home on my own because I wanted to drop NumNim off at her house. So now, we had some time alone together.

"Why?"

"I don't like him."

"Who?"

"Mr. Methee."

*Uh-oh...*

I flinched slightly, feeling uneasy. My lover not liking my own father was an obstacle I had no idea how to overcome.

But before I could fix this, I needed to know why NumNim disliked him in the first place.

"Did something happen? I saw you two having lunch together just fine earlier."

"It was fine until you showed up,"

She said in a dark tone, sending chills down my spine.

"Did I do something wrong?"

"I think you're too close to Mr. Methee."

"Hmm? What makes you think that?"

"Mr. Methee seems really fond of you-taking you out for meals, chatting and joking around like you're close. And you, too, are quite touchy with him. Plus, he gives me easy tasks to do because of you. If there was nothing special going on, these privileges wouldn't exist, right?"

NumNim stared at me suspiciously, making me smile awkwardly, unsure of what to say. Just as I was scrambling for an explanation, my father, who I thought had already left called out from afar in a friendly yet terribly illtimed manner.

"Girls, you're still not heading home?"

"We're about to head home,"

NumNim replied calmly but politely. Meanwhile, I stood still, unsure how to act so I wouldn't seem too familiar with my father.

"How are you getting home?"

"By bus."

"Bus?"

My father glanced at me, knowing that I planned to take NumNim home but didn't bring my car.

"How about this? I'll give you a ride instead. Traffic is bad right now-might as well sit in the air-conditioned car comfortably."

"That won't be necessary,"

I quickly refused, hoping to show NumNim that we weren't as close as she thought and also because I felt a little guilty accepting the offer.

"We usually take the bus after work. This is normal for us."

"No way."

My father rejected my refusal outright, unwilling to let me take a long bus ride. Normally, the farthest I'd go by bus was just one stop before riding home with him.

"I'm taking you, and no one can argue with me."

His word was final, so NumNim and I had no choice but to get in the car. We sat in silence the whole way, still upset with each other. Besides, the car was so quiet that even whispering would be heard throughout.

About an hour later, my father pulled up in front of NumNim's house. The sweet-faced girl got out, gave a respectful wai like a little kindergartener saying goodbye to her parents at school, and we exchanged a glance without saying anything.

Then, we parted ways.

It was probably the first time we'd had a argument. Although we didn't yell at each other like other couples, but the tension was uncomfortable.

*Damn it.*

Have we already reached a point of quarreling?

That was fast!

"Think about it-if you had to take the bus to work every day, how many transfers seat would you need? Nim doesn't live nearby," My father commented once we were on the road again.

"Do you even know how to take the bus? After dropping her off, how would you get home? By bus too?"

"I'd take a taxi."

"That's even more dangerous!"

"Then what do you want me to do? I can't drive to work. People would start wondering why a temporary employee waiting for her probation to end is driving a Benz convertible when her salary is only 15,000 baht a month."

"Then why are you even taking NumNim home?"

"She's my friend. Besides, I don't do it every day."

"And what about her? She works so far away but doesn't have a car?"

"That's just how she prefers it."

"Really? I still find it odd, especially after what you told me on LINE."

"What did I say?"

"Fah loves her."

*Again.*

I swallowed my saliva again before shrugging my shoulders.

"Because she's a friend. Can't I love my friend?"

"Why, when we're texting, I didn't feel like it was a friendship."

"Then what did you feel, Dad?"

"I don't know, I can't explain it. But never mind."

Dad shook his head slightly, then returned to the original topic.

"But no matter how you love your friend, she's just a friend. If you're going to drop her off like this every day, I'm not okay with it. I'm worried."

"Worried about what?"

"Well, I have to be worried about Fah, of course."

"Let's be real here."

"She is working this far, she should have a car to drive."

"But she doesn't have much money, Dad."

"No, if she works this far and then you come to pick her up and drop her off every day, I'm worried. Since you can't drive you, Nim should have a car." "What?"

"My personal bodyguard should have a car assigned for ease of mobility. How's that for an excuse? Does it sound good?"

My father smiled happily, but I looked at him with a lot of doubt.

"Is this car really because you're worried about me, or are you just trying to spoil a girl? I already told you not to mess with her."

"Hey, I'm giving you the car so it's convenient. Why do you have to look at it in a negative way?"

"Because your reputation as a womanizer is well-known in the company. Do you know how much people are gossiping about you today? They said to be careful or you might get tricked by Mr. Methee. They said you're a tiger."

"What?! Who's putting these ideas in my daughter's head? Am I really like that?"

"You

*are*

like that."

"Cruel!"

While my father and I continued arguing as usual, with me being good at rebutting him, my phone rang. Only one person could call me on this phone - NumNim.

"Hello.."

[....]

"How's it going?"

Normally, I answer calls with a cheerful tone, but today, we still haven't figured things out, and it seems like we're still not happy with each other.

So, when I picked up the phone, it felt a little stiff - not as lively as usual.

"Why aren't you saying anything? Did you press the wrong button?"

[I just wanted to call and chat as a friend because I saw you riding with Mr.

Methee alone, but it seems like you are more annoyed with my called.]

"It's not true, I an not annoyed at all."

I glanced at Dad for a moment, then moved to the back of the van to talk on the phone, out of Dad's hearing range.

"I just don't want to sound too cheerful, or you will get even angrier. We're in the middle of an argument."

[Are we really fighting like that?]

"If we're not fighting, then what do you call it? You don't look in a good mood."

[Do you like Nim?]

"Of course."

I closed my eyes, both embarrassed and frustrated by the question, as if she didn't know.

"I like you a lot. But we're arguing, and I don't even know what about. I don't know what's bothering you, Nim."

[Nim is suspicious of the relationship between you and Mr. Methee. Can you tell me?]

"...."

**[Are you Mr. Methee's mistress?]**

"What!!!"

My voice even raised with an angry shout. The driver and Dad both turned to look at me, shocked by the sudden outburst.

I bared my teeth a little, almost screaming, while the person on the other end seemed startled by my reaction.

[So you're not?]

"How could that be? Where did you get that idea from?"

[Are you mad at me?]

"If it were you, would you be angry? What if I asked you, if you are Mr. Methee's mistress?"

[Crazy! I don't even know him.]

"Exactly! But just an example. Where did you get this idea?"

[Well, there's a rumor spreading about it. It's on the company's Facebook group, posted by someone anonymously.]

"Wait, there's something like that in the company? Nim, you've only been here for one day, and you already know more than me, who's been here for three days."

"Why you took longer to reply?"

[Is it really that important? But if you aren't involved, I am fine.]

"But I am not comfortable. Give me that Facebook group, I'll go and take a look!"

"How can I get it? I don't even have a Facebook yet."

"That's true. It's okay, I'll find it myself. That's all for now."

[Fah..]

. .

I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye to NumNim like I usually do, because I was too frustrated that my own girlfriend thought I am my father's mistress.

I used Line to message Pannee to ask about the company's private Facebook group, and fortunately, Pannee allowed me to join successfully. Once I got in and read, I almost screamed.

.

**"Being good-looking is great, right? No need for talent, just put your arms around an executive's shoulder and brush them near your chest a little, and you're working. Recently, they went to eat together and disappeared for a while. Be careful, one day, this intern will become the president of the company."**

.

There were many comments, enjoying the bullying this time. I took a deep breath, preparing to blow up, but that wasn't the worst part.

"Are you crazy? I don't have a mistress! Why are people spreading these crazy rumors about me?"

My father's sharp words made me feel relieved for a moment. I looked and saw that he was talking on the phone with someone. I guessed it was probably Mom.

"Yes, the new bodyguard is a woman. She's Fah's friend, just working for one day, and now she's a mistress? No way! Don't spread rumors like that! Stop it, just stay put. Every time you come, the company's on fire. I'm telling you, there's nothing at all."

".... "

**"I already told you, Nim is not my mistress!"**

Here we go. People at the company and my girlfriend think I'm my father's mistress, and now my own mother believes my girlfriend, NumNim, is another concubine.

Is there anything worse than this? Please, tell me!

.

# Chapter :14. Me, You, and Mom

"Really, nothing. That's your daughter's friend."

As soon as we got home and heard the rumor that someone posted on that board, my parents started a conversation about the new bodyguard and the news.

What's surprising is that it's a secret group only for people in the company. But my mom somehow managed to sneak in there, which is amazing. This doesn't even include the mystery of when she joined because I just found out today that this group exists.

"How can I believe there's nothing going on? A new kid works for just one day, and someone already posts about her in that secret group? If there's no truth to it, why would anyone talk?"

"Well, people might try to slander her. You can't believe everything, you know."

"Is the new kid pretty?"

"Not pretty at all!"

Dad quickly waved his hands to deny it. Mom turned to me and asked for the truth.,s

"Tell me, is Dad's new bodyguard pretty?"

"Yes."

"Now you're lying to me."

"Oh, if I say she's pretty, you'd just get angrier!"

Dad made a face as if he were about to cry because there was no way out, no way back.

The jokes I see on Facebook are even showing up in this Chao Planoy's novel? That's crazy.

"But the more you lie, the more I won't forgive you."

"It's nothing, Mom. The person they were talking about in the secret group isn't Dad's bodyguard."

"If it's not Dad's bodyguard, then who is it?"

"It's me."

"What?"

"Today, I went to lunch with Dad, and I guess someone got jealous, so they spread that rumor. Luckily, they describe me being beautiful, or else I would have been even angrier."

Mom, who was angry at my father, immediately changed her attitude. Seeing me, her beloved daughter, being targeted, made her unable to tolerate it.

"Damn it, who dares insult my daughter? Someone like Fah doesn't need to care about them. My daughter is the strongest, the healthiest sperm in the world. This company should belong to her! Who the hell dares insult my daughter?

My father raised his hand to his heart, looking at me as if thanking me for coming to the rescue just in time, as if we were in sync. As for me, seeing my mother getting all emotional about my own sad story, I quickly took the opportunity to ask for sympathy, acting like a little tattletale.

Because, yes, I really am a tattletale.

"Mom, I am so pitiful! Just think about it. If I hadn't been born into a rich family, how hard would it be for me? I'd have to wake up early, wash my face, brush my teeth, take the bus to work, then take the bus again after work, just to reach a rented room with bad conditions. There'd be political campaign posters stuck on the walls, just to make life bearable."

"Why did you have to be born into such a pitiful life, my child?"

"Right? I was born so pitifully, and I even hated by my boss and coworkers. How could I live like this?"

"Who is it? Find out who it is!"

Mom, getting into the drama I created, was getting upset.

"If we catch them, I'll make sure they resign in misery. Just wait!"

"Fah's not completely sure, but I think I know who it is."

"Tell me who it is!"

"Not yet, Mom. I love the reveal the most. What could be more fun than revealing that I'm an undercover police officer? It's going to be amazing. Hah hah hah!"

"That's right...Hah hah hah."

Seeing us laughing, my father came over and hugged both of us, laughing in unison, and the sound echoed throughout the house.

"Hah hah hah!"

*Is this a family of comedians?*

.

.

.

As for me, I still hadn't spoken to NumNim. Part of it was because I was upset that my girlfriend thought I was a mistress, but I wasn't really angry.

If that little one had sent me a message, I would've pretended not to notice and just kept chatting. But there was no sign of her texting me. We only said goodbye over the phone.

I couldn't even try to make up with her.

*Hmph!*

So, during this lonely moment, the only friend I could talk to is...

.

**Hawm Noi : I'm so bored.**

.

I waited for Khun Mae to reply until I almost threw my phone far away. Then, finally, she replied just in time. This time, it took about ten seconds, and it made me, already upset with NumNim, even more annoyed with Khun Mae.

.

**Mae Khun:**

**I am bored too.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Why are you late reply? What are you doing?**

**Mae Khun:**

**Just thinking about random things. Today's not a good day.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**It's true.**

.

Seeing Mae Khun was tired and frustrated too, I didn't dare to act too demanding. After all, I'm not the only one who's having a hard day. I'm sure she's been through something too. The sense of boredom just radiated from the screen.

.

**Mae Khun:**

**Do you want to share something? I can't help much, but at least I can listen.**

.

I hesitated for a moment, unsure whether I should share or not. But keeping everything inside only made things worse.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**Today, I was misunderstood.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**By the one who should understand me the most.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**But I'm not really angry. Just a little upset. If she**

**had called and talked to me for just a bit, everything would've been fine.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Misunderstandings can be cleared up with explanations. Why didn't you talk about it?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**We talked about it. She**

**understood everything, but it still seems unresolved.**

**Hawm Noi: She**

**is being stubborn. If she just let it go and reach out first, it wouldn't be that hard.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Is it just about pride?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I think she want to be pampered. It's like want getting attention.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I am sorry for talking only about my own issues. By the way, how about you? What happened today? Want to share?**

. .

The message was read, but I didn't get a reply right away. I could feel Mae Khun's have many thoughts. Not long after, my online friend responded with several lines, like someone who had been holding back.

.

**Mae Khun:**

**I had similar problem today too. It was a misunderstanding.**

**Mae Khun:**

**I was too emotional, so I couldn't see things clearly.**

**Mae Khun:**

**I know full well that the person wouldn't do something like that.**

**Mae Khun:**

**But I couldn't help but think irrationally.**

**Mae Khun:**

**I called a close friend to ask for advice, and my friend said...**

.

I waited as she paused, sensing that she still hadn't finished her story, so I asked.

.

**Hawm Noi: :**

**What did your friend say?**

**Mae Khun:**

**My friend said I'm too jealous.**

**Mae Khun: :**

**I guess it's reasonable for her**

**to be angry. I just don't know what to do anymore. I can't seem to get on her good side."**

.

I smiled a little at the advice spilling out and typed back, feeling like we were talking much more than before.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**You must feel really frustrated today. You're typing a lot today.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Is it? I can't talk to anyone, so I'm venting to my friend online. It's so ridiculous.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**It's not**

**ridiculous**

**. You're asking for advice just like you did with me. Your close friend doesn't know your situation as well as I do.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**You said misunderstandings can be cleared up with a conversation, right?**

**Hawm Noi:**

**If you can give advice to others, why not give it to yourself? If you realize you misunderstood and accept it, just talk to her**

**.**

**Mae Khun: What if** *she* **don't stop being angry?**

**Hawm Noi**

**: If** *she* **really like you,** *she*

**'ll stop being angry.**

**Mae Khun**

**:**

**And what about you? Will you talk to the person you misunderstood?**

**Hawm Noi**

**:**

**Because we both like each other a lot, so** *she*

**won't stay angry. So, we should both follow each other's advice. Tomorrow, I'll go talk to** *her*

**.**

**Mae Khun**

**:**

**You go ahead and try to talk. As for you, if** *she* **talk to you, you should stop being angry.**

**Hawm Noi**

**:**

**As long as** *she*

**is smile, I won't be angry anymore."**

.

We both went quiet for a while. I didn't want the conversation to end just yet, so I typed back, feeling good and thankful that she was listening to me.

.

**Hawm Noi:**

**It's great having you to talk to. Things that seemed difficult suddenly feel easier.**

**Mae Khun:**

**It's true. Even though we've never met, we can talk so comfortably. Thank you for reaching out today. Honestly, I was going to message you too, but I was afraid you'd be annoyed if I talked about my own problems.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**I'm not annoyed. You can message me anytime.**

**Mae Khun:**

**We talk often, but still haven't exchanged bags yet. So, I guess you don't want your stuff back.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**If I get the bag back, will we still be able to talk like this?**

**Mae Khun:**

**I'm not sure. Once I see it, I might feel shy. Maybe we won't talk anymore.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Then no need to return it yet. Let's keep talking like this. I enjoy talking to you.**

**Mae Khun:**

**I like you too.**

**Mae Khun:**

**'Talk'.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Oops, I am typo !**

**. .**

I laughed and rolled around on my bed, feeling shy. It felt the same as the first time we talked on the phone, and I curled up like a little worm, tickled by the awkwardness.

.

**Hawm Noi**

**:**

**I like you too.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**'Talk'.**

**Mae Khun:**

**Oh my gosh...this is a joke.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Oh, I got caught.**

. .

Because talking to a stranger helped me get through the lonely night, in the end, NumNim didn't even call me at all. So, I decided that tomorrow morning, I would be the one to reach out.

But when the next day came, I went to look for the sweet-faced person working on my father's floor, and I found that my father was now working alone on the 50th floor.

"What's going on? Shouldn't the bodyguard be with Dad?"

"He went to choose a car."

"A car?"

"Well, the official car that I mentioned yesterday. I sent Mr. Kiart to go pick

it."

My father smiled at me briefly before looking down and continuing to read the documents on the table while talking to me.

"By the way, don't you have any work to do? Why are you wandering around like this?"

"I really don't have any work today. I thought I would go through some old documents to organize them, but the boss, Aunt Wipha, won't let me touch anything. It's fine, though. If I'm not supposed to do anything, then I won't. And anyway, since no one is around, I..."

I walked over to the couch in my father's office and flopped down.

"Can I sleep here?"

"Are you sure about this, honey?"

"Are you going to kick me out if I sleep here?"

"You only say that because you know I won't kick you out."

"Exactly. I just want to nap. You know how much I love to sleep."

I looked for something to use as a pillow, then closed my eyes to take a nap. No one called me to go back to work, and my father was quietly working.

Occasionally, there were some noises from him, typical of old people. I woke up later when I felt someone put something over me. It was my father.

"Did you wake me up?"

"Yes, I woke you up."

"According to the script, I have to refuse and saying, 'you can't wake me up', something like that."

"...."

"But you did wake me up. By the way, how long did I sleep?"

"About an hour."

"I am just trying to investigate. I'll go now. If I stay longer, people will misunderstand."

I stretched lazily, then handed the jacket back to my father.

"Let me have this moment. I want the moment of my daughter putting a suit on for me."

"Fine, Dad."

My father turned his back so I could put the suit on him from behind. Just then, Mr. Kiart entered, with NumNim in a neatly fitted suit, looking at both of us with surprise.

"Is Fah here too?"

My father's secretary already knew who I was, so she wasn't surprised. Unlike NumNim, who stared at me.

My clothes weren't very neat since I had just woken up, and the way I was helping my father with his suit could easily be misunderstood. But NumNim, with her sweet face, kept her emotions hidden and remained indifferent.

"I'm about to get back to work. I just stopped by to discuss some things. Well, I'll take my leave now."

"Okay."

I walked past NumNim without greeting her, since it was still working hours. But instead of heading directly back to the 28th floor, I stopped and waited in a hidden corner to find a moment to talk to her.

As I had predicted, NumNim talked to my father for about five minutes, then came out to sit outside the door. There was no reason for her to stay inside. I saw this, so I quickly called her and secretly watched to see how she would react when she saw it was me calling.

NumNim glanced at the screen for a moment, then seemed hesitant whether to answer or not. She eventually hung up. That really annoyed me. Fine, if you don't want to talk, then I won't talk either. I even called first!

I heard NumNim shout, likely having noticed me. The annoyance made me rush to the elevator, pressing the button repeatedly, even though I knew it wouldn't make it arrive any faster.

"Fah, talk to me first!"

"I'm not talking to you anymore. You hung up my called."

"Sorry, I am sorry!"

And then I was suddenly hugged from behind. Whether from shock or embarrassment, I just froze. NumNim's breathing got heavier, and then it turned into sobs. I straightened up a little before turning around to see NumNim crying.

"Why are you crying, Nim?"

"

*Sob*

... I'm sorry. I don't know what to do."

NumNim, who was older than me, wiped her tears away, her face red with regret.

"I felt really upset not talking to you."

"If you're upset, why didn't you call me?"

"Normally, you're the one who calls me."

"Oh really? Am I the one who calls you?"

"But yesterday, you didn't call, so I didn't know what to do."

"But just now, I called you, but you hung up."

"I don't know what I should do. You're ignoring me, doesn't even make eye contact, and even makes weird faces with Mr. Methee."

The last sentence sounded unsure, like someone not confident in the situation. Then, when I gave her a stern look, she quickly spoke up,

"What do you want me to do?"

I was starting to get upset with the misunderstanding again, but it slowly turned into a smile I couldn't handle myself.

"That's right. You made me shocked."

"Did it really shock you?"

"Well, I didn't expect you to say it so directly."

I quickly hugged her softly and started playfully fussing over her,

"You're so cute!"

Her giggle showed she was a bit confused, and she quickly pulled away.

"Aren't you mad at me anymore?"

"How could I stay mad when you're being this cute? As long as you smile, I'm not mad anymore."

"Really?"

"As long as you smile, I can't be mad. I wasn't really angry, just upset for a bit. I missed you so much."

I went in for another hug, breathing in her sweet scent,

"We haven't talked for a whole day, I missed you so much."

"Can we stop fighting? I don't like it."

"I don't like it either. But when I realized you were upset, I couldn't help but feel happy in a weird way."

"Do you enjoy making me upset?"

She clenched her fist and hit me lightly like a child,

"What were you doing with Mr. Methee?"

"Just resting and sleeping."

But if I said that, it would make things worse.

"I was talking about work with Mr. Methee. He had a small problem."

"What about the picture I saw?"

"I was helping Mr. Methee put on his suit. He's a bit fat, so he couldn't put it on himself."

I said honestly, even though my dad was in great shape.

"Actually, shouldn't it be me who's jealous? You're working with him."

"Mr. Methee is even more attached to you than me. I heard you got a car to drive, even though you just started working yesterday."

"....."

"Huh, or maybe Nim is going to be the mistress?"

"Stop, don't bring up Nim's words. I get it, it hurts. Here, here..."

NumNim pinched my waist lightly, then nudged me to laugh and pushed me gently against the wall before pulling me in for a kiss. It was the first time NumNim made the move, and it made my heart flutter a little.

"What's going on here? Making up with a kiss?"

"Call it whatever you want."

"Then next time we argue, make it even more intense. Ugh!"

I was silenced as if I were being forced not to speak, and I simply followed along. Since this floor is for executives, there are no other employees besides Khun Kiart, my dad, and NumNim.

So, this place felt like a private zone, unlike other floors where it's crowded with people. The two of us continued to be close in front of the elevator, filled with longing, almost forgetting this wasn't our home or a private spot.

Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, we forgot all about what was appropriate.

.

**Ding...**

**.**

The elevator dinged, and I could hear it, but wasn't paying much attention. Suddenly, someone stepped out of the door and saw us.

Everything came crashing down immediately, and there was no need for more explanation.

My mom, seeing us both with lipstick all over our faces, didn't need to say anything.

"You....Fah."

"....."

"You're the bodyguard."

" ...."

"I'm a wife and a mother."

" ....."

"Wow, this is very cool!"

Mom quickly turned and went back to the elevator, closing the door without saying another word. Everything happened so quickly, like skipping through scenes in a movie. Every character at this moment was stunned.

The one who appeared from the elevator was my mother, who must have come to see my father about something. Her daughter caught kissing the bodyguard, and the bodyguard, who had no idea what just happened.

**Wow, this is so intense!**

..

# Chapter 15: Do you know who I am!

Everything turned silent around us as we were both stunned. The sweetfaced bodyguard looked at me shyly and then asked, confused:

"Did you know that lady earlier?"

"I know a little bit,"

I answered absentmindedly, still imagining where my mom’s elevator must be by now.

"Who is she?"

"Mr. Methee's wife."

"....."

"Nim, wait here!"

After I gathered myself, I repeatedly pressed the elevator button, hoping it would rush down to get me, like some kind of magic. But I had to wait for over two minutes before another elevator finally arrived, and I quickly jumped in and pressed the button for the lowest floor.

.

*Ding!*

As soon as the elevator reached the ground floor, I rushed out into the lobby, where people were walking around. My mom was still walking slowly, almost as if lost in thought. Before she could walk out the door, I called out without thinking:

"Mom!" .

My voice made people look at me curiously. I panicked, realizing I had shouted.

"Fuck!!"

My scream made my mom stop and turn around, looking confused. When she saw who it was, her face turned pale, like she had seen a ghost.

"What did you just say?"

"We need to talk,"

I said, walking toward her, but she quickly started walking faster than before.

"Is that a good idea? I think we should talk later. I still can’t focus. But what was that you just yelled at me?"

The familiar black van pulled up just in time to wait for my mom, as if it had been planned. As soon as the door opened, I jumped in and sat inside, while my mom hesitated, unsure if she should get in, not ready to make eye contact with me.

"I’ll get in, Mom, so we can talk while the car's moving."

"Alright, fine, let’s talk!"

As soon as my mom got in the car, everything fell into silence. Only the sound of the air conditioner and the cars outside moving around made it feel a bit uncomfortable.

Normally, when my mom and I are together, we talk endlessly, but today, what my mom had experienced must have been shocking.

I needed to explain things, but where to start?

"So, what brought you to the company today, Mom?"

I started the conversation. She cleared her throat a little, tried to sit comfortably, and answered without sounding too off.

"I just wanted to take a look at the bodyguard’s face."

"What made you suddenly want to meet her?"

"I heard that Dad bought a new car for the bodyguard, so I wanted to see what the fuss was about. Why does a bodyguard need a car? I thought I’d come over and make it clear what her role is and whether she should even be receiving something like that. But before I could do anything, I ran into an unexpected situation."

"...."

"She’s cute,"

Mom said, brushing my hair back like a shy girl.

"She's my friend."

I bit my lip, not sure how to react. My mom had seen everything, and since she didn’t cause a scene like she had planned, I guessed she understood something about what was going on between me and NumNim.

"Her name is NumNim."

"She’s so small. How is she supposed to fight anyone?"

"NumNim teaches me self-defense. She’s really good at it. She’s even won a championship before,"

I quickly bragged, wanting my mom to see the good side of NumNim. When Mom saw me acting this way, she narrowed her eyes and smiled faintly.

"Actually, the only reason you asked her to work with Dad was to keep her close to you, right? Does Dad know about this?"

"Know about what?"

"Does he know that you were fighting in front of the elevator?"

"Mom!"

I shouted, covering my face with my hands.

"We weren’t fighting! That’s not it at all!"

"Even her lipstick is still on your face, right here,"

Mom reached over to wipe the lipstick off the corner of my mouth, then sighed.

"What is all this? I wasn’t prepared to see something like this. I’ve always thought you and Plerng were together. So, how did this happen with a woman?"

"Mom, Plerng and I are not together. We’re just friends. Thinking about it gives me the chills."

"But it’s okay with a woman, huh? That’s good. Your dad won’t dare mess with your girlfriend."

"He doesn't know about this yet."

"Well, why didn’t you tell him?"

"You know how Dad is. He’s been pressuring me about having a boyfriend. He never let me have one."

"But that wasn’t a boyfriend, was it? A woman doesn’t count. That old man probably wants to claim my daughter’s girlfriend. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have bought a new car. He’s always acting generous. But after I found out who Nim is, I’m relieved. From the lipstick marks, it’s clear you two care for each other."

"Mom!!"

"Are you going to shout this to Halley’s Comet? I know, that Mom is Mom. But weren’t you embarrassed? You didn’t think about the consequences when you were kissing in front of the elevator, did you? What if someone had seen?"

"Well..."

I mumbled, then quickly changed the topic since I was feeling curious.

"By the way, why aren't you shocked that I kissed a girl?"

"What should I do,l. Should I just hold the pom-pom strings and wave them around?"

"No, usually parents can’t accept their children dating someone of the same gender, right? In TV shows, novels, and commercials, people are always shocked."

"Well, I was shocked, but who would have thought my own daughter would be so fiery?"

"Here we go again, Mom. Ugh,"

I said, almost ready to cry. Mom waved her hand in the air to change the topic.

"I’m not surprised at all. Before your father, I had a lot of lovers."

"Ugh, I’m embarrassed,"

I said, covering my mouth because I had never discussed anything so deep with my mom before.

"There are women also."

"Mom, you dated women?"

"Mom have been with a tomboy and a real woman. Love can happen in all sorts of ways. I’m not bothered, so I wasn’t shocked that you and the bodyguard are together, but I’m shocked that my sweet daughter would do something like this."

Now, it was the two of us, sitting awkwardly, both embarrassed. We were close, but we had never discussed anything so personal before.

"That's great, Mom. I was worried that if you and Dad found out about this relationship, it would be difficult, like in the dramas."

"Oh please, that’s a soap opera. Especially those rich people have to marry other rich people—what a drama. It shows that the authors of those novels don’t really understand that we can do a joint venture if we want to merge our businesses."

"Mom, you're so modern." "I'm even more modern than that,"

Mom smiled slyly and winked at me.

"Have you two... done it yet?"

"Mom!!!"

.

. .

In the end, my mother drove me back to the company as usual. But what was even more exciting was that after we came back, Pannee quickly told me to check the secret group chat where someone had posted pictures of me and my mother, along with gossip.

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*It seemed the main wife had caught her, and the mistress was dragged into the van to talk one-on-one. Looks like someone’s getting fired soon.*

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The image in the thread was of me and my mother getting into the van, with a wildly inaccurate caption. In reality, I was the one who rushed into the van because I wanted to talk to my mother.

I pouted slightly because I wasn’t enjoying the gossip, especially when it wasn’t true. Honestly, do these people not work? They just love making a fuss over others for no reason.

"Fah, so are you really the mistress of Mr. Methee?"

Pannee asked with a stiff smile, clearly worried I’d be angry but still wanting to be friendly.

"But we’re not judging, you know. Love can happen with anyone. Sometimes, it’s hard to control your feelings."

"You sound just like my mom. Thanks,"

I smiled genuinely at my colleague and replied,

"I’m not Mr. Methee’s mistress, don’t worry about it."

"Really? So what’s your relationship with Mr. Methee? I saw you two having lunch together the other day. And I heard someone saw you go up to the 50th floor and disappear for an hour until his wife arrived."

"I’m his daughter."

"Yeah, right!"

"Who would believe that?"

"Exactly! If you’re his daughter, why would you work as a lowly employee? Plus, letting Ms Wipha bully you like that? You must have a heart as wide as the ocean to put up with that."

"Actually, I’m very narrow-minded,"

I glanced at the clock on the wall, feeling excited.

"Oops, it’s time to leave. I’m going home!"

"You can’t leave yet."

Auntie Wipha, who hardly had any lines more than halfway through the episode, suddenly appeared like a villain. I, who was ready to go out and have fun with my girlfriend, stopped in my tracks and looked at the person giving those sharp orders with displeasure.

“Is something wrong? There’s no work for me to do, so I’m not sure why I need to stay here.”

“Today, our team is having a social gathering, and you must go.”

Everyone looked at our boss with confusion, including me. Usually, she didn't invited me to casual meals, so suddenly invited me to a social gathering was clearly suspicious.

“But it’s after work hours, and are you sure would be convenient if I went along, Ms. Whipa?”

“If it weren’t convenient, would I ask you to go? Alright, we’ll meet at the restaurant.”

“I’m not free today,”

I said confidently, as I had planned to meet NumNim to enjoy a drive and talk sweetly during the traffic. This sudden interruption was frustrating.

“I am sorry, but maybe next time.”

“There’s no next time. You must go this time.”

“No, I really can’t. I’m not free.”

“You must go.”

“Huh? Boss, I’ve already said I’m not free. Don’t make me lose my patience.”

“If you lose your patience, what will happen?”

“You’ll be shocked because you don't expect it. Do you know who I am?”

I said with confidence, puffing out my chest like someone fearless of any danger.

“Who are you?”

“I am…”

"...."

**“I am too!!!”**

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*I am just another woman!'*

The loud sound of karaoke box filled the room. The table was covered with dishes, and I was entertaining everyone, holding the microphone and singing a song by Ngern Ngern Boonsungnoen.

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**What’s wrong with me being myself? Who controls my life?'**

**.**

Damn it, how did I end up here with that dictator boss? Even though I said I wasn’t going, I ended up here. If NumNim hadn't told me about doing business with my dad today, I definitely wouldn’t be here, and everyone would have discovered my true identity as a fake police major working undercover. Definitely.

"Fah, you sing well too."

After the song finished, everyone applauded, except for the mischievous one sitting straight with a look of disapproval on her face.

Phum, who was praising and clapping to encourage me, made me wink with a sense of accomplishment.

“Of course! If I wasn’t worried about being too famous, I would’ve auditioned. And of course,I will be one of BLACKPINK member can't be anyone but me.”

“You’re unstoppable when you get going,”

Phannee laughed, clearly enjoying herself rather than mocking me, which made me smile. Everyone was enjoying the lively atmosphere, filled with drinks and music.

I, too, started to enjoy it after initially feeling bored and irritated.

“By the way, do you guys do this often?”

“Yeah,”

Phannee replied with a tipsy smile, her focus starting to fade.

“Our boss says strengthening relationships within the team is the most important thing.”

“If it’s that important, why is she shutting me out so much?”

I complained without thinking. But Phannee, who was fully loosened up, spoke as if it wasn’t a secret.

“Because you’re an outsider, Fah.”

“Outsider how?”

“Well, everyone here works with the boss, but you suddenly came in. So, your boss is suspicious that you might be trying to investigate something.”

“Is there even anything to investigate here?”

“There is, for sure!”

Phannee chuckled, cupping her mouth as she laughed.

“The stuff that’s been ordered—our boss takes a cut from it all. Just a small profit here and there, and she gets rich. We’re just here to follow along, so she consider us ‘ *insiders*

.’ But you just came in, so our boss is trying to push you out. The fact that you’re close with the chairman just makes her more suspicious.”

“But she still brought me along,”

I said, now genuinely interested. My initial light-hearted attitude was starting to fade with the growing tension.

“She might be considering bringing you to her side. Bringing you here is like a test. She’s probably observing your behavior.”

Normally, Phannee wasn’t a talkative person, but today she was spilling everything with ease, almost like a different person.

I looked at Auntie Whipa and felt real anger build up. The thought that this woman was enjoying my father’s money and bullying a new, beautiful employee like me was infuriating.

It was a good thing I had gone along with the flow today, or I would never have known such useful information.

I continued dancing the cha-cha with my colleagues to fit in with the group without a hitch, all while being closely watched by Auntie Whipa.

While singing along with Phum, who was showing off his moves like a professional singer, NumNim’s line rang through. I had to step outside to take the call, so the noise wouldn’t interrupt the conversation.

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“Hey, beautiful. Did you get tired working with Mr. Methee?”

[Not physically tired, but emotionally drained.]

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The voice on the other end of the line made it clear that NumNim wasn’t acting like herself.

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“Is something wrong? You can tell me.”

[I might not suitable for this kind of work. I don't know.]

“There must be something going on for you to feel like that. I feel bad for dragging you into this, especially since you seemed so happy when teaching self-defense art.”

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I spoke honestly and let out a sigh. If I had known, I never would have recommended someone so sweet to do this kind of work in the first place.

.

[Don't blame yourself. You just wanted to see me follow my dreams. Who would have known that those dreams wouldn’t be as fun as I thought? I didn’t think about the consequences.]

“What's going on with you?”

.

As I walked casually, I stopped in my tracks when I saw NumNim standing outside the restaurant, talking. I was shocked at the coincidence—it felt like something out of a drama.

I never believed in these things. Are you kidding me? There are hundreds, thousands of karaoke bars and restaurants. What are the chances this one would be the same?

[No, nothing’s wrong. I just wanted to say that if I quit, please don’t be mad at me, Fah.]

“Why would I be mad? Your happiness is the most important thing.”

[Thanks!]

.

NumNim smiled brightly, showing clear joy. When I saw that, I felt a pang of sympathy. It was my fault for bringing her into a job that wasn’t enjoyable.

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[Well, I’ll quit at the end of the month. I really don’t like this kind of work, but as long as you’re not mad, it’s okay. Oh, wait, I have to go now.]

.

Just as Num-lNim was about to hang up, my father appeared from somewhere, reaching over to put his arm around her shoulders in his usual friendly manner.

NumNim looked uncomfortable, but she kept it to herself, and I could see it clearly.

It was my father. The one who made NumNim feel uneasy.

Jealousy was driving me crazy, but the person in front of me was my father, the one who loved me more than anything. There was nothing I could do about it, even though I wanted to slap his face and spit on it.

My brain quickly processed the situation, like a computer RAM processing information. I couldn’t do it, but someone else could.

As soon as the thought occurred to me, I grabbed my phone, took a picture, and sent it to my mom, including the location. At first I only came for karaoke night but now I have become a voyeur to watch .

Various events unfolded, and we wondered how things would turn out. My dad took NumNim back to the karaoke room, as usual, where Mr. Kiart and two other customers were sitting. Meanwhile, I could only wait, wait, and wait.

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"Which room?"

My mom, dressed in a tracksuit, along with two muscular men beside her, asked me when they saw me standing there. I nodded toward the door and curiously asked my mom.

"Why are you wearing clothes like that?"

"The CCTV cameras will catch my face. You are waiting right here,"

She replied.

"Are you going to use violence? But NumNim is in there, too."

"Well, Aren't your girlfriend skilled? She should be able to handle it. If she can't survive, she should just quit!"

My mom, clearly furious, pulled up her hood to cover her face and put on sunglasses.

"Why put up with an old pervert harassing her? She should be resign now!"

As soon as she finished speaking, my mom kicked the door open with force, slammed it shut, and locked it. There was chaos inside.

When I peeked through the crack in the door covered by stickers, I could clearly hear a voice from inside shouting:

**"Today, if you don’t die, I will!"**

**!!!!!**

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# Chapter 16: The Scent

After my mother walked in, the door was immediately closed and locked from the inside. All I could do was stand outside and watch helplessly.

From the small gap I peered through, the only thing separating me from the room was a cloudy sticker on the glass. I saw my father raising his hand in a pleading gesture, while my mother, dressed in black, rolled up her sleeves and reached for the bottle of liquor on the table, preparing to strike.

But!

The delicate one, who was more skilled than she looked, made everyone tremble when the small figure quickly charged at my mother. She twisted my mother's wrist until the bottle fell to the floor.

Everything happened faster than light, faster than sound. My mother's body was slammed onto the floor, her arm was broken, her face was stepped on by a foot and she screamed in surrender.

*Damn it.*

The shock made me stop watching and try to break the door down. Someone inside, probably a customer, quickly opened the door for me and then ran out.

I stared at the mess of the room, my heart trembling in disbelief. But that wasn't as shocking as seeing Mom still lying in the same position, just screaming.

"Nim, please let me go."

I rushed to my mother and tried to pry the small one's hands off, but Nim, who had been well-trained, held my mother in that position until my father nodded in approval.

"Let go. She's my wife."

"Okay."

Nim complied in a calm tone, without hesitation. My mother, who was finally released, slowly got up, standing and holding her arm, probably sore from the pain.

"Honey, it hurts. Waaah..."

From initially looking for trouble with my father, my mother now seemed like a ten-year-old asking their guardian about being scolded unfairly by a teacher at school, and how my father would have to deal with the principal tomorrow.

This action by Nim made me fearful that my mother might not like her anymore. And since I didn't know what to do, I could only stand up, grab the small one's hand, and say:

"Let's go."

"But I still on duty."

"If I stay any longer, I might not be able to stay at all."

My mother will definitely fire me. My kind mother who has always been so good to me, but now being hurt like this, there's no way she'll forgive me, no matter how much I beg and plead.

NumNim obediently followed me until we leave. I looked left and right for a taxi, and just as I thought, a taxi that had been waiting came to pick us up.

"Where are you going?"

The taxi driver asked.

"To NumNim's house." I replied.

"Where is NumNim's house?"

The confusion made me forget everything. When NumNim noticed that I was starting to get lost and confused, she gave a small smile and told the driver where to go.

"To Inthamara."

The taxi drove along the route NumNim directed, and after I got in, I just closed my eyes to rest my mind because my temples were throbbing.

It was probably due to the alcohol, which I hadn't had in a long time. This is probably what they call having to 'socialize.'

But instead of making me enjoy myself, it only made the headache worse. I couldn't keep myself upright. The vibrations of the car and my dizziness made me lean my head on NumNim's shoulder, rubbing my head against hers like a little kitten.

"My head hurts so much."

"You really went all in, huh? How much did you drink?"

"Quite a lot."

"I really shocked by how small the world is. There are so many karaoke places, but I didn't think we'd end up singing in the same one. Honestly, is this just a coincidence, or did you intentionally follow me here?"

"Are you crazy? The boss picked the place. When I saw you, I was just as shocked."

"Oh, I secretly thought you followed me out of jealousy, who would have guessed that..."

"Well, it worked out anyway. In the end, I did find you."

"But when did you see me?"

"What?"

"Well, suddenly you rushed into the room and dragged me out. That means you already knew I was in the room. I'm curious, when did you find out I was here?"

"Uh..."

I rolled my eyes, trying to think of a way to lie, but it seemed like I didn't have a good excuse, or I just couldn't think fast enough.

"Actually, when I went outside to take a call from you, I saw you. I was going to greet you, but then I saw Mr. Methee, so I just watched from afar." "You saw, didn't you, that Mr. Methee was acting rudely to me?"

What should I say? Maybe my father didn't really mean to do something like that, but I can't say for sure. It must be uncomfortable for him, though. Looks like I need to talk to my father more seriously, or maybe just tell him what's going on between me and NumNim.

If I tell him, I wonder how will my father react?

"You saw, but you wouldn't help,"

Said the sweet-faced person in a low voice, making me feel a little uneasy. I raised both hands in a gesture of surrender.

"I saw, but I didn't know how to help. All I could do was take a photo of you and..."

I stumbled a bit, almost accidentally saying dad's name.

"...with Mr. Methee and send it to his wife. And it worked! It didn't even take five minutes for Mr. Methee's wife to show up in black clothes with two bodyguards and immediately handle the situation."

"Did you call them?"

"Well....not exactly. Heh heh."

I made a face as if I were about to cry.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know what else to do. Only Mr. Methee's wife could handle it, but things turned out a bit differently because..."

"Because I was the one who threw Mr. Methee's wife, even though she came to help me? Oh my god."

The sweet-faced person nodded, clearly understanding the situation. I looked at my girlfriend and felt incredibly guilty.

"Are you angry?"

"Angry? About what?"

"About how I didn't help but made things worse? You even threw your boss's wife."

"And it looks like you might get fired today or tomorrow. She seems really mad."

I scratched my neck awkwardly, unsure of what to do. NumNim shot me a cold glance, then slowly smiled before lightly tapping my face.

"Crazy. I am not angry. Stop making that scary face."

"Well...I can't guess what you're thinking."

"We've talked for so long. We just arrived home. We'll continue talking at home."

NumNim took out her wallet and paid the taxi as we got out of the car. It was then that I remembered something.

"What about your car?"

"Oh, I totally forgot about it. It's at the office. I came with Mr. Methee today, but it doesn't matter. I was going to leave anyway. The car will probably be for the next bodyguard."

"So you're definitely quitting, right?"

"Even if I'm not fired, I'll hand in my resignation tomorrow. I plan to write the letter tonight. Looks like I can't working under anyone. I can't stay in a job for long before quitting. If my dad finds out, he'll say I am a real jerk."

. .

We both walked into the house and happened to run into the person we were talking about. NumNim's father greeted me with a bow when I raised my hand to greet him gracefully.

However, the elderly man's face furrowed with a frown, then he sniffed, his nose twitching, as he seemed to pick up something about the atmosphere around me.

"What's that smell? Did you go drinking?"

"I drink alone. Nim didn't drink with me."

I quickly defended my beautiful girlfriend, knowing that her father was strict.

"Today, my department treated me to dinner, so I had to socialize a bit to please my boss."

"And why didn't Nim drink?"

"We went in different groups, but we happened to end up at the same restaurant."

"Like in a drama? There are so many places, why did you both end up at the same one?"

It's just that a lot of people think like I do. The classic scenario of meeting in the same restaurant, shopping in the same mall, staying at the same hotel by the beach. There's no need to explain it, it's just realistic.

"I'll be staying here tonight,"

I said in a cute voice.

"I don't want to go home alone, it's too dark."

Seeing my cute pleading expression, her father smiled faintly, a smile that looked exactly like his daughter's.

"Sure, I told you, you can come anytime."

In the end, I stayed at NungNim's house. After I finished showering, it was her turn to shower, and it was the perfect time to have a private phone call with my mother.

As expected, my mother was furious about the girlfriend I was seeing-the same one who had thrown her down.

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[How could you be with someone like that, Fah? The girl who threw your mother to the ground, causing me to almost get hurt! What if one day she gets angry and cuts your throat or breaks your arms?]

"Oh, Nim's not that aggressive. Besides, I didn't do anything to make her that angry."

[But what if one day she does get mad, Fah? Do you know what will happen in the future?]

"I'll try my best not to do anything wrong."

[Here's the deal. First, tell her that the person she threw down today was your own mother. The man who acted roughly like an octopus is your dad, who loves you with all his heart, and you're the daughter of the owner of the company. If you tell her that and nothing happens, then I'll approve of your relationship.]

"Eh?"

[You're too scared, huh!]

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I was stunned, then started to imagine what would happen if I told the truth. If NumNim hadn't thrown my mother or if my father hadn't acted roughly, maybe I wouldn't have been so angry. But...

The thing is, everything has already happened, so it's even harder now.

.

"Mom, you were joking, right? When you said I should break up with her."

[I'm not joking. If you don't do it, I'll make sure to do it for you.]

"Her name is NumNim."

[I can't accept that! Someone like her should only be called Nubnub. That crazy ghost. Where are you? Why don't you coming home?]

"I'm staying at NumNim's place."

[Get back home right now! If not, I'll throw a fit.]

"Who are you talking to?"

NumNim, who had just opened the door, heard me talking to my mother. To avoid raising suspicion, I gracefully said goodbye to my mother.

"Mom..... I love you so much. I'm going to bed now. I'm so tired. Byeee."

[Fah!]

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I quickly hung up and smiled, seeing NumNim in her thin white pajamas, which I could tell didn't have a bra underneath. And yes, I wasn't wearing one either.

"What are you smiling at?"

"I'm smiling because we're staying together again. Hehe."

I twisted my body, shy, and made a heart shape with my fingers.

"I love you."

"What's that? Did you drink?" NumNim leaned close to me.

"I can still smell the alcohol."

"Really? But I brushed my teeth already. Do I still smell?"

"Yes, you do."

"You're so honest. Normally, I have a really good nose, like a dog, but the alcohol made me not smell it at all. This isn't good... for me, scent is the most important."

I reached for my handbag, took out a small perfume bottle, and sprayed a little on my neck and wrists.

"It should be better now."

NumNim paused for a moment, then slowly leaned toward me to sniff the perfume. She pulled back as if deep in thought.

"This perfume smells familiar."

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"Because I made this scent myself. There's no other perfume like it in the world. You must be mistaken."

"Actually, I'm really familiar with this scent, but I can't remember where I've smelled it before. But come to think of it, I've never seen you wear this perfume."

"I want to use up the old bottle of perfume first, then I'll use the scent of the new one I just invented. It's soft and sharp. You'll be the first person to smell this scent!

"Really? Then where did you get this perfume? I heard it's the only one of its kind in the world, did you order it?" "No, I made it myself. I mixed it myself,"

I winked coolly.

"If you likes it, I'll make a bottle just for you. A scent that's only for you, made by me, the one who loves you."

I laughed out loud even though there was nothing funny at all. Weird, right? Even I knew it wasn't funny, but I still laughed, senselessly. This alcohol really does something to me.

"Stop talking. You should sleep now."

"By the rules, if Fah says 'I love you,' Nim has to say it back."

"Okay, I love you."

"What's that? You don't sound like you mean it. Are you upset?"

I lay down and turned my back, pretending to be mad. NumNim went to turn off the light, then lay next to me. She hugged me from behind, burying her face in my neck while trying to make up for it in a cute way.

"Aw, don't be mad. If I apologize and you're still upset, I will throw you."

*If one day I do something wrong, will she really use a knife to cut my throat, or break my arms and legs?*

**Gasp!**

When I realized that thought, I quickly sat up and imagined being thrown over by NumNim. The sweet-faced person who saw me startled quickly sat up and asked with a mix of curiosity and concern:

"Is something wrong with you?"

"Uh... no."

"No? Then why does your voice sound off?"

"Well, I was... a little scared."

"Scared of what?"

"Scared of being thrown over...Ouch!"

I got lightly hit on the arm but still reacted to show I was hurt.

"I was just joking. Are you crazy? Who would be that rough? What do you think of me?"

"A strong person. Heh heh."

I kept making excuses, and that made NumNim smile. Then she leaned down, gently held my cheek, and asked softly.

"Are you not mad anymore?"

"Oh, are we doing this now?"

I pretended to roll my eyes a little and tilted my cheek to the side. I offered the other side for a kiss, saying,

"Kiss this side too, and the sulking will ease."

The sweet-faced person agreed and kissed the other side of my face, which only made me more confident.

"How about the forehead too?"

NumNim gently agreed, and I pointed to my nose, chin, and then to my neck. By this point, NumNim switched from light kisses to more lingering ones.

I felt butterflies fluttering in my stomach, as if I were floating in the air. It all happened so naturally, and before I knew it, I was lying on the bed with NumNim straddling on top of me.

How did we get this far?

My hands were now in an interesting position, both my palms and my five fingers squeezing, grabbing the small breasts that fit in my hand under the loose white shirt. There were soft, muffled groans from time to time, and neither of us could stop.

It felt like something I had been curious about for a long time was about to happen-something I had been eager to try with her for the first time.

To keep NumNim from getting too carried away, I chose to sit up and used both arms to hug the little person's body. Right now, she was soft and sitting on my lap, with our heights quite different.

My face was buried right on her chest and I inhaled her body scent, feeling dizzy from the closeness. There was a soft sound coming from the mouth of the person above, close to my ear, making me feel good.

"I love your scent, Fah. It makes me feel good."

"I love your scent too. It makes me feel good,"

I replied.

The sexiness of the sweet-face made me bold, and put my hand into her pajama before telling myself....Let my instincts to take over. As I touched her, I could feel warmth and wetness.

"Nim, this is...?"

Nim's eyes widened in shock, and she quickly covered her mouth, embarrassed.

"I'm sorry, Fah. I forgot,"

"....."

"I forgot that today... I'm on my period."

*Oh no....why does it have to be today? I was just getting to the important part.*

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# Chapter 17: Menstruation Mood

This morning, the two of us acted as if nothing had happened last night. And that’s because… nothing actually did happen. It was a bit frustrating since everything was going so well, but I understood—after all, I’m a woman too. These things are natural.

But it seemed like NumNim was quieter than usual. She didn’t even make eye contact this morning, spoke very little, and seemed to be in a hurry with everything. Even when her father drove us to work, she barely said a word.

"This is my first time seeing the company you work at. It’s pretty big,"

Her father commented.

"But I won’t be working here anymore,"

NumNim replied.

She then gave him a respectful wai before stepping out of the car. I quickly did the same and rushed after her, walking beside her to start a conversation.

"Are you mad at me?"

"No."

"Then why are you so quiet this morning? Did I do something wrong last night—wait, where are you going?"

Before I could finish my sentence, NumNim suddenly ran toward the reception podium nearby. She crouched down behind it in the cutest way, making everyone around her look at her in confusion. I caught up with her and peeked over.

"Nim, what are you doing?"

"I don’t want to talk right now."

I rolled my eyes, trying to figure out what was going on. Then I remembered—she was probably feeling embarrassed. What started as concern quickly turned into amusement, and I couldn’t help but giggle before motioning her to come out.

"Come on, talk to me. It’s natural. Everyone goes through it."

"But it shouldn't have been last night..."

She mumbled, hesitating for a second as if afraid others might hear.

"No, I’m not talking about this."

"Well, staying there like that is making you look even more awkward than what happened last night."

"No way."

"Come on, you’re just on your period. Why are you so embarrassed?"

"Fah!"

NumNim's loud outburst made several employees stop in their tracks and turn to look at us. The receptionist, clearly annoyed, finally spoke in a flat tone, her patience running thin.

"If you don’t have any business here, please step aside so I can do my job,"

The receptionist said flatly.

“I...I am sorry…”

NumNim slowly crawled out from her hiding spot and gave a polite bow. But before the matter could be dropped, another voice chimed in.

"What kind of nonsense is this? People on their periods so annoying."

"I already said I’m sorry!"

The usually sweet-faced NumNim, who never even frowned at anyone, turned and glared at the speaker with piercing eyes. Her unexpected fierceness seemed to intimidate the receptionist, who quickly looked away.

NumNim then straightened her clothes, walked off with perfect posture, and muttered irritably,

“I swear, if she keeps this up, I’ll throw her away.”

I heard every word loud and clear and placed a hand over my chest in exaggerated shock. NumNim, who had been walking ahead, stopped in her tracks and turned to look at me, confused by my sudden lack of movement.

"What’s wrong?"

"You seem different today."

"The receptionist was being annoying."

"Well, she’s on her period."

"So am I."

"Yeah, I know,"

I replied with a playful smile.

Realizing what I meant, NumNim's eyes widened, and she quickly covered her ears.

"Nope! I’m not talking to you about this! No way!"

Her shifting moods were so amusing that I couldn’t help but run up, loop my arm through hers, and pull her into a tight hug before she could escape again.

"Come on, it’s nothing to be embarrassed about."

"It is embarrassing! At a time like that…!"

Her face turned red, her ears even redder, as she bit her lip.

"Everything was going so well..."

"It’s okay. We can always start over. Once I’m done with work today, I’ll do some research to fully understand what to do in this situation. And once your period is over, we can start over.... Hahaha."

"You perv! I’m not talking to you anymore!"

NumNim pressed the elevator button. No matter what, we’d have to go up together, so we used the time to talk about her resignation.

"You’re really submitting your resignation today?"

"Yup. I can’t take it anymore. You can call me lazy if you want. Besides… after nearly breaking the owner’s wife’s arm, I’m either quitting or getting fired. Same outcome."

"It might not be that bad."

"No matter wha. I am going to leave anyway."

"So that means we won’t see each other every day anymore?"

I said, feeling a little down. I even started thinking about resigning too.

"If you're not here, I don’t see the point of working either."

"You work to earn a living, obviously. What kind of question is that?"

"But you won’t be here anymore."

"That has nothing to do with it. You were working here before Nim even came. Besides, with the economy like this, finding a new job after quitting would be really tough. Why would you leave?"

"I don’t need to work to have money."

"Hmm… now that you mention it, I don’t actually know much about your family,"

Nimnim said thoughtfully.

"You know my family and our situation, but I barely know anything about you. I don’t even know where your house is, what your family is like, or how many family members you have. I know so little about you."

"Huh?"

"Before we go any further like last night, I need to know you better first."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Everything. If you love someone, you have to truly know them. What if you turn out to be a con artist tricking me? What if you break my heart?"

.

**Ding.**

**.**

The elevator reached the 28th floor, where the purchasing department was. I had to step out, and that marked the end of our conversation.

NumNim waved goodbye before pressing the button to go up. I made sure to give her the saddest, most pleading look—like a little puppy begging its mom not to leave.

Damn it. So, before doing anything like that, NumNim has to know my home and family first?

And if she finds out where I come from… she might not only refuse to get to know me better—she might just strangle me and throw me off the 50th floor of this building instead.

Suddenly, I regretted my decision to copy a Thai drama, planning a grand surprise reveal to impress my love.

But now, things had taken a completely different turn.

After seeing how NumNim broke my mother's arm and my father who like to touch her this and that, a happy ending seemed so far away from my life.

I kept pacing in front of the elevator, trying to figure out the best way out of this situation. First of all—I should be honest with my family. That means

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[What's up, sweetheart?]

.

My dad, always cheerful whenever I called, greeted me in his usual easygoing tone, even though he had just been through something intense yesterday.

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"I have something I want to talk about."

[Go ahead and say it.]

"I want to talk face-to-face rather than over the phone."

[You miss Dad, don’t you?]

"Sweet talk like this, huh? No wonder girls fall for it. You really know how to set your own trap."

[Just joking, like how Dad lovingly teases his daughter. Anyway, I was about to get on the elevator. Let me hold back my strength for you. You’re already at work, right?]

"Yes, I’m on the 28th floor."

.

Within less than 20 seconds, the elevator doors opened, revealing my father and Khun Kiart standing together. Khun Kiart walked off to the side to give us space to talk.

Not knowing where else to go, we decided to have our conversation right there by the elevator. This whole floor, apart from the purchasing department office, only had restrooms.

"So, my beautiful girl, what do you want to talk to Dad about? By the way, you didn’t come home last night, did you? Where did you sleep?"

"I stayed over at Nim’s place."

"Wow, you two are really close. I was actually thinking of giving Nim a bonus. She did a great job yesterday. Even though she looks small, I saw her skills with my own eyes, and I was impressed."

"But it seems like Mom doesn’t think the same way."

"That’s expected. Your mom got hit hard. Well, at least she might stop using violence against me now. Haha. Anyway, what did you want to talk about? I almost forgot!"

"It’s about me and Nim."

"You and Nim? Alright, what’s the matter?"

I looked into my father's eyes with determination. Just as I was about to speak, the elevator doors opened again. Auntie Wipha, the department head, stepped out and was startled to see my father. She quickly greeted him with a respectful wai.

"Good morning, Mr. President. What brings you here?"

"The elevator doors opened, so I just stepped out to talk."

Auntie Wipha confused by his reasoning but went on her way, still glancing back at us with curiosity.

"What kind of excuse was that? The elevator opened, so you stepped out?"

"Oh? If I didn’t open it, how could I walk out? Besides, I didn’t know how to respond either. Honestly, I don’t even have to answer questions from lower-level staff. What I do is my own business, ho ho!"

My father laughed, mimicking Santa Claus, then raised an eyebrow.

"Now, back to our topic, baby. What’s this about you and Nim?"

"I thinks Dad has been too inappropriate with Nim. I believe it’s time we talk about this."

"Hey, you’re overthinking just like your mother. I already told you—I didn’t do anything like that. It’s just affection."

"Dad’s ‘affection’ makes Nim uncomfortable. And today, she came intending to resign, which I completely support. If a job makes you unhappy, there’s no reason to stay."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely!"

"What could I have done to make Nim that uncomfortable? But alright, I’ll handle it. I won’t let her resign."

"She has to resign. Because I can’t stand seeing Nim put up with your behavior any longer."

"Jealous? Wow… you really take after your mom. Not only is she protective of me, but now you’re taking on that role too? That’s my girl!" My father stretched my cheek like rubber, completely forgetting that this floor wasn’t the 50th—the ivory tower where he usually did whatever he wanted.

"I’m not jealous of you, Dad. I’m talking about Nim."

"You’re leaving Nim? Oh? Is that some new slang between friends these days? Sounds weird."

"We’re not friends."

"If you’re not friends, then what are you?"

**"We’re lovers."**

"Ah-ha, nice joke."

My father was still grinning while I wasn’t. His smile slowly faded.

"Wait, say that again—lovers?"

"Yes. We are lovers. It’s not unusual for women to date women nowadays. Mom knows and she’s fine with it. Well, she wasn’t fine with getting her arm twisted yesterday, but other than that, she’s okay."

Dad fell silent for a moment before furrowing his brows.

"Hold on. You’re dating a woman?"

"Well, you never let me date men, so dating a woman is the correct alternative, isn’t it?"

"What part of this is 'correct'!?"

"So, does that mean you’ll let me date a guy like normal, then?"

"No way! How could I let some rough-handed man touch my precious daughter, the light of my life, setting my heart ablaze and tearing my chest apart!?"

"Then I have to date a woman. Their hands aren’t rough, and their fingers are long and slender like candles."

"AAAH! I CAN’T TAKE IT ANYMORE!"

Dad covered his ears, and I immediately lunged forward, hugging him like a little puppy.

"Don’t try to be cute! Don’t make that face!"

"Dad, I deserve to love and be loved too. And who could be better than Nim?"

"Wait… so you recommended Nim for this job because she’s your girlfriend?"

"Yep. What’s better than working at the same place as your partner? It’d be even better if you weren’t being inappropriate with her."

"It’s fine. Dating a woman never lasts long. You won’t be getting married anyway." my father was grasping for any excuse to shield himself from heartbreak.

"Who knows what the future holds? I might want to settle down with her for life."

"I can't accept it!"

"Daaad,"

I whined, tugging at his suit jacket and swinging it side to side. He pulled me into a hug, swaying me gently, clearly at a loss. "My little girl… why do you have to have a partner?"

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*Ding!*

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The elevator doors opened again. But this time, it wasn’t an office worker stepping out—it was NumNim. She must’ve gotten bored and decided to come find me, only to be met with a sight she never expected.

The CEO of the company, hugging a female employee.

For someone who had already been suspicious, this was the worst possible thing to see. Maybe it was the bad mood from her monthly period, or maybe she had just decided she was done with everything. Either way, she strode forward with determined eyes, reached for my father's collar, and

then… "Ahhhh!!!"

**THUD!**

My father was slammed onto the floor—hard. The sheer force and intensity left me stunned. His loud scream echoed through the office, drawing everyone’s attention. In no time, Khun Kiart and a bunch of employees rushed in to see what was happening.

Nimnim grabbed my wrist, squeezing it firmly. Then, as she pressed the elevator button to head downstairs, before saying anything cool.

"I've put up with this long enough. Starting today, both Fah and I officially resign! And don't you dare act inappropriately with any other woman again. Consider this a warning!"

.

**Ding!**

Right on cue, the elevator doors slid open. NumNim pulled me inside and pressed the close button.

I could only stare in shock at my father, lying motionless on the floor. My mouth opened and closed wordlessly, panic creeping in. Seeing my stunned state, NumNim tried to comfort me.

"It’s okay. I’ll help you find a new job. No matter how bad the economy is, I know there are still companies hiring. I believe that."

But right now, I wasn’t thinking about work, the economy, or anything like that.

All I could think about was my unconscious father, sprawled out on the 28th floor.

**Help! What do I do?! Things are getting out of control!**

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# Chapter 18: Death threat

Right now, NumNim and I are escaping to the mall after causing chaos at work, leaving it in ruins. Honestly, I'm really worried about my father, but I have no idea how to slip away from here.

Things are getting way out of control. I thought surprising everyone with the fact that I'm the owner's daughter would be a cool moment-but somehow, it turned into a complete disaster.

"We've basically been wandering around all day, right?"

"Hmm? Oh... yeah."

Lost in my thoughts, I quickly nodded and forced a smile. Right now, I'm pretty nervous about NumNim's mood swings. She was just throwing my father around like a pro wrestler a moment ago, and now she's humming a happy tune like nothing happened. It's like she flipped personalities in an instant.

"Fah, what's wrong? You seem distracted."

"Well, of course, I'm distracted! I don't even know what to do with myself right now."

"Didn't you say you were rich? What's there to worry about?"

"Aren't you worried too much?"

I shot back playfully.

"I haven't even done anything right yet. I haven't sent in my resignation letter. Running off like this just feels wrong."

"You're quitting anyway, so who cares what happens next?"

NumNim shrugged, then suddenly changed the subject.

"Since we're both free today, why don't you take me to your house?"

"Huh? My house?"

"Yeah, like I said, I've never been to your place before. I don't know anything about your family or your life beyond work. Today's a perfect chance to get to know each other before we... y'know, skip a few steps ahead."

She clasped her hands behind her back, rocking on her heels with a grin.

"I wanna meet your parents."

"Uh... I don't think that's a good idea."

"Why not?"

"W-Well..."

I struggled to come up with an excuse. Noticing my hesitation, NumNim suddenly narrowed her eyes at me.

"Could it be...?"

"Could it be what?!"

"Are you afraid your parents won't accept our relationship?"

"W-Well... something like that."

"Oh... I totally forgot about that. To be honest, my parents don't know about us either. But it's fine! I can just go as a close friend. I just want to see what your house looks like, whether it's big or small. Let me learn more about you."

I started looking around, trying to find an escape.

"Listen, Nim, I've never brought anyone to my house before. How about I talk to my family first?"

"It's just bringing a friend home. Do you really need to ask for permission?"

"It's... complicated."

"You really seem uncomfortable about this."

When I saw her looking a bit sad, I quickly waved my hands in denial. The truth is, I'm overthinking everything.

Normally, introducing NumNim to my parents as a friend wouldn't be a big deal at all. But I've made it complicated myself. The mess I've created is so tangled that even trying to unravel it feels impossible.

"It's not that I don't want to. How about this-let's do it the day after tomorrow. It's Saturday, so I'll take you to my house then. There's a lot I want to share with you."

As soon as I said that, her face lit up with a big smile.

"Okay! Whenever you're ready. So, it's a plan for this Saturday!"

"Saturday it is. D-day."

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After dropping NumNim off at her house, I took a taxi straight back to the company-only to find out that my father had been rushed to the hospital. I had planned to sneak away from the office quietly, but Auntie Wipha caught me before I could leave.

"Where do you think you're going? Skipping work all day and just causing trouble!"

"Even if I stayed, you wouldn't let me do anything anyway. I was going to visit the chairman."

"And who do you think you are to visit him? I'm starting to think the rumors might actually be true."

I glanced at her and rolled my eyes slightly. Seriously? The same person who spread the rumor that I was some mistress, using an anonymous account to post gossip in private groups-that was her, wasn't it?

Acting all innocent now?

Please... I know exactly what you're up to.

"Anyone with a kind heart can visit a patient. Now, if you'll excuse me."

"If I don't let you go, you're not going anywhere."

"Oh, but I can."

"....."

**"Because I'm the chairman's mistress."**

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Actually I wanted to say I was his daughter, but no one would believe me. I had tried to tell my coworkers before-half-joking, half-serious-but they all laughed it off.

So, playing into the mistress rumor seemed easier. And sure enough, after dropping that line, I walked out of the office freely, leaving behind a hot new gossip topic for the secret office chat.

Well, I only said it to Auntie Wipha. If the rumor spreads, who else could have leaked it but her?

After calling Khun Kiart to check on my father, I found out his injuries weren't too serious-just some bruises. He was already back home, resting. When I arrived and saw my parents, I immediately launched into an overly dramatic apology performance.

"Eeeng-ei! Now, let me recite my sorrowful tale-your daughter, bound to you by fate and blood-"

"Enough...

*Ouch*

."

Dad reached for his own neck, wincing like he had pulled something, then let out a loud groan. My mother, who had been by his side, quickly steadied him and sighed.

"The doctor said you're fine. Stop being so dramatic."

"She broke your arm once! You should understand how painful this is!"

"Fair enough."

My mother nodded before turning to me with a sharp glare.

"And you! What do you have to say for yourself?" I immediately switched tactics.

"A mother's love is the greatest blessing of all-"

"What?"

"Waaah!"

I ran and slid dramatically to the floor, hugging my parents legs. "I was wrong! Please forgive me, or karma will strike me down!"

Mom wasn't amused.

"In just two days, both your father and I got thrown across the room by your girlfriend. And you're telling me she's not violent? Break up with her. Now."

Her tone was so firm that I froze in terror.

"But I love her!"

Dad waved his hand dismissively.

"How can women love each other? You're using the wrong setting."

That made me a little annoyed, but I had already messed up too much today. So, for now, I held my tongue and accepted defeat.

"Well, in Nim's eyes, Dad is a flirt. When she walked out of the elevator and saw Dad acting suspiciously in the hallway, it was natural for her to misunderstand."

"But was violence really necessary? Why not just ask what happened first instead of-"

"And if she asked, how should I have answered? I never told her that we're father and daughter. Besides, there have always been rumors about us. Anyone who saw that scene would have thought the same thing. Dad is always getting too close to Nim, so of course, he'd assume Dad was doing the same to me."

"Makes sense."

My mother nodded in agreement and smirked in satisfaction.

"You deserved it. Serves you right."

"What? Just a moment ago, you were on my side! Have you already forgiven her for breaking your arm?"

"Oh, right.I still mad!"

My mother bared her teeth as if she had just remembered. I quickly tried to smooth things over with sweet words.

"But Nim only did that because she thought Mom was the attacker. You were dressed in a hoodie like that. If Nim hadn't defended Dad, what was she supposed to do? That's her job."

"But I'm your mother!"

"Besides, Dad already knew that the person sabotaging him-putting nails under his tires, scratching his car with metal, smashing his windows-was Mom. He was even satisfied when he walked over to talk to me about how you got thrown down and had your arm broken as a lesson."

"Were you satisfied?!"

"Fah! How could you betray your Dad?!"

"At this moment, we all have to look out for ourselves. Please forgive me."

I made a pitiful face. My mother, who had been against Nim earlier, suddenly changed moods like someone with PMS.

"Go tell Nim that I love and admire her. When will you ask for her hand in marriage? If she becomes my daughter-in-law, I'll have her step on your Dad every day!"

"I can barely handle you alone!"

"By the way, Dad, you're not hurt too badly, right?"

"It hurts."

Dad pouted and turned away in a sulky manner. So, I went to massage his legs and spoke in a sweet voice, knowing he'd forgive me in five seconds.

"It was all just an accident, Daddy~ You know I love you the most."

"If you love me the most, then break up with that woman!"

"Dad, didn't you say you'd support me in every step I take? Even Thai Life Insurance stands by your side. So, Fah is by your side, right?"

"Oh, you talk too much! How can I possibly accept my daughter's lover as a woman?"

"But when I wanted to date a guy, you blocked me at every turn! Anyone who tried to court me got chased away. You even had people watching the school gates and the university entrance until all my suitors disappeared!"

"Don't talk bad!"

"Dad, I'm in love. I don't know how far this will go, but it would be nice if you and Mom could support me. Nim makes me want to be a better person. Before this, all I cared about was eating and sleeping-you both know that." I started persuading them with the soothing voice of a life coach.

"My heart beat fast. I want to grow up. I've never felt so awake, so alive, so enlightened before. She makes me wake up early in the morning."

"....."

"She taught me how to take the bus."

"....."

"She protects me when I'm in danger."

"....."

"She cares for me more than Thai Life Insurance."

"Are you secretly working for an insurance company or something?"

My mother, who had been deeply moved, furrowed her brows slightly before sighing.

"From what I'm hearing, she doesn't sound too bad. She just-"

"......"

"Broke my arm."

"....."

"She threw your Dad so hard until his neck sprained."

"....."

"That's all."

And everything silence over the room. After listing all of NumNim's pros and cons, my mother and my father exchanged glances before reluctantly responding.

"It won't hurt to try dating her first...."

Dad cleared his throat.

"But I'm not over it yet."

"That's more than enough, my darling Daddy!"

I leaped onto his lap, snuggling against him affectionately.

"Falling for her tricks again,"

My mother muttered, shaking her head as she watched my father hug me back with a pleased smile.

"But what now? You've sweet-talked us, but does she even know that the people she threw around were your parents?"

"Not yet."

"Hey, deal with that first before you come and bothering us. I'm telling you, be careful. If your dad and I ended up like this, imagine what'll happen when to you if she finds out the truth."

"Why? What will happen?"

"Dead."

*Huh....*

I swallowed hard, even though I knew it was just an idiom. But the weight of it felt real. Just thinking about how disappointed that sweet, adorable face would be made my heart sink.

As I was thinking the best way to break the news to NumNim without making things worse, the perfectly timed, sound of a comedic drum rollseemed to echo behind me, as if someone had arranged it just in time.

"Oh? Someone's going to die? Good thing I got here just in time to hear that."

The moment I heard that voice, I knew exactly who it was.

Plerng, who had been missing for a while, stood there with a gift basket of bird's nest soup, flashing a sweet smile at me.

And that smile? It told me everything-it meant he had heard everything.

**"I missed you so much, my dear friend Fah."**

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As I've mentioned before, Plerng is the son of my dad's close friend, which meant we practically grew up together. He can go in and out from our house was totally normal. But what wasn't normal was he showing up right in the middle of a life-or-death discussion.

Yes, Plerng was a life-or-death situation. Once upon a time, the poison of love had left my dear friend suffer.

"Didn't you cut me off already?"

"Fah, my beloved friend."

Plerng casually slung an arm around my shoulder, completely at ease.

"No matter what happens, we'll never stop being friends. We swore a blood oath, remember?"

"I never swore a blood oath. If it was period blood, maybe."

"If it's blood, I don't mind."

"Well, I do!"

I nearly screamed at his complete lack of concern, my body trembling with unease.

"How much did you hear?"

"Judging by how freaked out you look, it must've been something really important. I heard a little, just bits and pieces... but those bits and pieces might be enough to cause a huge disaster."

"You heard everything."

I clutched my chest dramatically.

"Swear on the worms in the dirt that you'll just listen and do nothing." "Come on, what kind of person do you think I am? I would never ruin my dear friend's love life. Even if you did deceive her by playing the poor little rich girl, fooling Teacher Nim into loving and trusting you completelywhile she has no idea that beneath her pure, genuine love, you're standing there laughing, enjoying the show like the spoiled rich kid you are."

"Aahh! Stop making it sound so bad!"

"But it is really bad! Damn, this feels good. I finally hold all the cards." Plerng laughed, shaking his shoulders rhythmically.

"I swear on the worms that I won't tell Teacher Nim. You can relax."

"Why are you being so nice today? Normally, when we're out for revenge, it's an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

"Because I'm a good person."

"Look me in the eye."

"Why?"

"Say it to my face-you won't tell NumNim about me before I do."

"I won't tell."

"....."

"Within today."

"You traitor, Plerng!"

"You sneaky rat, Fah!"

Now, we were baring our teeth at each other like feral animals. And I realized-this was a race against time.

"It's not my fault you gave me the upper hand. I won't tell Teacher Nim before midnight. So, you'd better find a way to come clean as soon as possible."

"That's too soon!"

"If you don't do it before my deadline, after midnight... you're dead."

*Ahhhhhh!!!*

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# Chapter 19: Emergency Meeting

"Everyone, emergency meeting!"

This was our secret code among friends. Since our school days, we all knew that if something serious or life-changing happened, this was the code to call.

No matter how busy we were, we had to drop everything and gatherwhether we were trapped under a boulder, stuck inside a volcano vent, or even mid-flight, we had to find a way to get in touch.

Right now, everyone was in a video conference because this was an emergency meeting. The three friends appeared on a split screen, instantly curious.

"What's going on, Fah? You rarely use the black code,"

Penguin asked. He was somewhere in Japan, and his background looked like a traditional ryokan hotel.

"Ugh, my hair isn't even dry yet, and I had to rush over,"

Preaw complained. Her usual extravagant hairstyle was now simple, making me unable to resist teasing her.

"You're not Shiva anymore?"

"Even Shiva has to wash his hair sometimes. Now, what's up? If it's not urgent, I'm ready to roast you in poetic verse."

"You can't even sing on key, and you want to compose poetry?"

Aoy interrupted, wrapped in a towel, her head covered like a peanut vendor.

"Okay, just get to the point. No beating around the bush."

"I'm being blackmailed by that damn Plerng."

"What? Why would your one and only best friend suddenly turn against you?"

Preaw leaned in closer and slammed the table dramatically.

"Did he confess he liked you, and when you rejected him, he got you drunk, took advantage of you, filmed everything, and now he's threatening to expose you?"

"Oh my god, shut up and just listen!"

Aoy scolded.

"I'm meditation as Shiva, fully awakened and enlightened,"

Penguin joked.

"Enough! Let me tell the story, no interruptions. Ask questions only when I'm done. Understood?"

I started from the beginning, explaining everything in detail. My friends already knew I had feelings for a woman who taught self-defense, but I delved deeper into how things unfolded-our connection, my new job, and then how Plerng overheard everything and gave me an ultimatum:

*by midnight tonight*

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"That's some serious grudge-holding,"

Penguin said, stroking his chin as if analyzing the situation.

"But honestly, you brought this on yourself. She had feelings for you from the start, but you did this. If this happened to other women, you'd have been slapped."

"If you could actually beat your girlfriend, then maybe you'd stand a chance. But both your parents got slammed like rotten jackfruits by her." Shiva sighed, shaking her head.

"And why the hell did you suddenly decide to act like a drama heroine? You've seen enough shows to know that every time someone pulls this move, it backfires spectacularly. No one ever actually appreciates the big reveal that the protagonist is secretly rich."

"Yeah, well, that's just how dramas work,"

I mumbled, feeling defeated.

"Exactly, that's just fiction. If my husband confessed that he was secretly a billionaire heir to King Power, not only would I not be mad, but I'd be dancing my way straight to bed. What's so wrong about being rich? You probably just wanted to surprise your girlfriend for fun, but you miscalculated. The lie went on too long, got way out of control, and now it looks like you treated her like a fool. And instead of stopping, you kept piling lies on top of lies,"

Aoy shrugged and sighed.

"So, what do you need us to do?"

"What are friends for?"

"To talk to, that's it. Friends can't really do much. And if you're about to ask for money, I'm not lending you a damn cent. Honestly, friends these days are pretty useless,"

Preaw said with a laugh. We all stared at her silently until she started to shrink.

"I was joking! I don't even know what friends are for. But if I didn't have you guys, I'd have no one."

"God, that was a waste of words and paper,"

Penguin groaned.

"Look, if you want advice-just confess to her... quickly."

Penguin replied with a blunt voice, which I know that already.

"If it were that easy, would I be here talking to you?"

"Just do the simple thing. Don't overcomplicate it. Call, text, go meet herjust pick one. Tell her slowly what happened. If she yells, then you have to listen. If she slaps you, you have to accept it."

"And if she breaks up with me?"

"Then you break up."

"No!"

I shot back, voice firm, but my eyes welled with fear.

"That's exactly why I haven't told her yet-because I'm terrified she'll leave me."

"Then why did you lie in the first place?"

"I didn't think it would blow up like this."

"Before she hears it from someone else-and trust me, if Plerng tells her, it'll be way worse-you have to tell her yourself. Then beg for forgiveness. That's all you can do. And honestly? It's what you should do."

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Their words had already been echoing in my mind, but even if I wasn't ready, I had no choice. Plerng had given me a deadline-midnight.

And now, I was standing in front of NumNim's house. A quick glance at my watch told me it was just past 9 PM. It had taken me this long to navigate the evening traffic, build up the courage, and yet-I still hadn't done anything because I was still in fear.

Getting yelled at? That was fine. Even getting slapped-I could handle it. But being dumped? Just because I let a silly idea spiral out of control? That was what I couldn't accept.

Before calling NumNim outside, I needed to talk to someone else-someone who had never even seen my face.

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**Hawm Noi : are you free?**

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It took barely five seconds before the reply came back, cheerful as always.

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**Mae Khun: What's up?**

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Even without hearing her voice, I could sense something in her toneconcern, maybe?

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**Mae Khun: Something wrong?**

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People always say that women have strong intuition. I knew Mae Khun did, too, because we'd spoken over voice chat before. I sighed, hesitating before typing out my thoughts. I kept my confession vague, afraid she'd judge me if I told her everything.

Why was I even afraid of her hating me? We were friends, weren't we?

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**Hawm Noi: I did something wrong to my girlfriend.**

**Hawm Noi: I want to confess, but I'm terrified she won't forgive me.**

**Mae Khun: What did you do?**

**Hawm Noi: I lied.**

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She read my message but didn't reply right away. Maybe she was waiting for me to explain further. Or maybe she didn't know what to say.

I took a deep breath. If I was being honest, this wasn't just about seeking advice-I needed reassurance, a push, something to keep me from running away. In just a few minutes, I would have to face reality.

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**Hawm Noi: I didn't think it was a big deal at first. I just wanted to surprise her. But things got out of hand. If she finds out from someone else, she's going to be furious, so I figured I should tell her myself.**

**Mae Khun: You're doing the right thing.**

**Mae Khun: You made a mistake, and you're owning up to it. That's how it should be.**

**Hawm Noi: But what if she breaks up with me?**

**Mae Khun: Then you have to accept it.**

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I froze for a second at her response. I had hoped for something softer, some words of comfort-anything that made it seem like this wasn't as bad as I feared. But instead, her reply made my anxiety even worse.

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**Hawm Noi: But I don't want to break up.**

**Mae Khun: Then why did you lie in the first place? If you weren't honest from the start, you should be prepared to face the consequences.**

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I didn't know if I was imagining it, but I could almost feel the emotion in her words. Was she upset? Frustrated? Disappointed? Whatever it was, it made me feel even worse. I stared at the screen, unable to reply. The more I talked to her, the more I felt down.

So, instead of continuing the the text, I took a deep breath, picked up my other phone, and dialed NumNim.

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**Hello?]**

Just hearing her voice made my heart race like I was about to pass out. How would she react once she knew the truth? Would I even make it out of this alive?

**"Nim, it's Fa."**

**[I know.]**

**"I'm outside your house. Can you come out for a second?"**

**[You're at my house? What's going on?]**

**"Just come out, please. I need to talk to you." [Is it important? ...Alright, I'll be right there.]**

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Maybe I was just paranoid because of my guilt, but her tone sounded... off. Not quite suspicious, but different from usual. But I didn't have time to dwell on it.

A moment later, NumNim opened the gate and stepped out, greeting me with her usual bright smile.

"Don't tell me you came all this way just because you missed me?"

"Well... I did miss you."

"Sweet talker."

She still looked and sounded like the NumNim I knew-kind, warm, playful. Maybe I was just overthinking. Maybe it really wasn't a big deal.

She gestured toward the house.

"Come inside. The mosquitoes will eat you alive out here."

"Yeah..."

I followed behind NumNim, staring at her small frame. But in that moment, she felt massive-like a giant ready to crush me in just a few seconds. The fear in my chest was paralyzing, so strong that my legs refused to move. I stopped in my tracks, frozen.

She turned around, her expression puzzled.

"What's wrong, Fah? Why did you stop?"

"Nim... I have something to confess."

Our eyes met, and my hands fidgeted anxiously. NumNim tilted her head slightly and gave me a soft, unbothered smile.

"Confess what? If it's a love confession, I already know."

"I... I did something wrong to you."

Without thinking, I dropped to my knees, raising my fists over my head in a desperate plea.

"And I can only hope you'll forgive me."

Her expression didn't change. No anger, no shock. She just walked over and crouched in front of me, eye-level, calm as ever.

"What did you do that's so bad you have to kneel? Did you cheat on me?"

"No!"

"Are you secretly married to Mr. Methee?"

"What?! No!"

"Are you the company president's daughter?"

"......"

"You lied to me about everything, right?"

As soon as she spoke, my head snapped up, meet her eyes with shock and my heart nearly stopped.

She knew.

She already knew.

I stared at her in horror, my mind racing. But she wasn't angry. She was smiling. And somehow, that was so much worse than if she had screamed at me.

It was terrifying.

"Nim... you knew?"

My voice was barely a whisper. Then my eyes widened as I suddenly realized-Plerng.

"What did Plerng tell you? He said he'd give me until midnight!"

NumNim's expression finally shifted. The warmth faded, replaced by something unreadable.

"He told me that you had fun playing the role of a struggling poor girl. That you saw me as a joke. That you laughed about me with your friends like I was just some amusing little side story in your life."

"That's not true!" I gasped.

"I never did that!"

"Even if you didn't do it, it's still a bad thing!"

NumNim pushed me so hard that I lost my balance and fell. The sweetfaced person quickly stood up and said in a cold voice,

"Leave now. I don't want to see your face."

"It's not like what Plerng said, Nim. Please listen to me first."

I crawled on my knees and hugged the legs of the person who was about to walk into the house, not knowing what else to do.

"I never meant to deceive you, Nim. I was just planning to reveal the truth later, like in a drama. It was just for fun."

"Stop talking. I don't want to argue. I don't want to be loud and let my parents hear. Just go back."

"I'm not going back. Please listen to me. Plerng twisted the truth to drive us apart. Please don't trust him, Nim!"

"And can I trust you instead?"

"...."

"Is there anything I can believe from you?"

"I love you, Nim. That's something you can believe."

"It's too bad I don't believe that anymore."

The sweet-faced person slowly pulled their leg away from my grasp, stepped back about a foot, and crossed her arms tightly.

"Just go. I don't want to talk anymore. I feel so stupid for letting you fool me like this."

"....."

**"Being my first love is already bad enough. Please don't make me regret it even more."**

"No, please."

Tears welled up in my eyes as I got up and reached out to grab her, but she pushed my hand away with disgust.

"Don't do this to me. I really love you. I'll do anything."

"There is something you can do."

"Tell me, anything!"

"Don't ever let me see you again. We're nothing to each other now."

"Are you breaking up with me?"

"That's right."

"I'm not accepting it."

I stubbornly refused to give in, as if I didn't understand the words she was saying. I thought that if I kept trying, she would see my worth and recognize my love.

"I'm not breaking up. My mistake wasn't that serious."

"You have some nerve saying that! You tricked me into working, never explaining that the man flirting with me was your dad. You never told me that the woman I fought was your mom. When you saw me react that way, what were you thinking?"

"....."

"Did you find it funny? Did it amuse you? Even for a second, did you ever think about telling me the truth?"

"I wanted to... but I was afraid you'd be angry."

"Afraid I'd be mad?"

This time, NumNim's voice rose so loud that the entire neighborhood could probably hear. She couldn't stand it anymore.

"And you thought doing this wouldn't make me mad?"

"That's why I'm here admitting my mistake! And you really are mad!"

"Get out. Get out right now!"

NumNim shoved me toward the front door. I stood my ground, refusing to budge, making her clench their teeth in frustration.

"Don't make me hate you. Please."

"You won't hate me. You love me, Nim-

*Ouch*

!"

Suddenly, I was yanked by the arm and shoved against the metal gate, my cheek pressing against the bars before I could react. The sweet-faced woman grabbed my hair made me shudder, and then a chilling whisper brushed against my ear, cutting straight into my heart.

"I don't love you anymore. Not from today onward."

"....."

"Accept it. We're over."

NumNim opened the door and pushed me outside. I stared into her eyes, unwilling to believe it. My hand wiped away my tears, but my heart refused to give up.

"It's not over. I won't let it end like this. We love each other."

"No, we don't."

"But I love you."

No answer. Only the sound of the door shutting in my face.

I could only stare at that closed door, my chest burning with heartbreak. Tears spilled freely as frustration and regret overwhelmed me.

No. I won't accept this.

We can't end like this.

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# Chapter 20: Genius Trick

"Sweetheart, how long are you going to lie there staring at the ceiling?"

"Dad's heart is breaking, my dear. Please eat something."

Right now, my parents are sitting beside my bed, pleading with me to return to normal. Ever since NumNim broke up with me that day and cut off all contact, I've been utterly lifeless.

I can't do anything except lie still, letting my tears flow like I'm in a music video, secretly hoping someone would tell NumNim how miserable I am.

"Fah got dumped."

I sniffled, eyes still fixed on the ceiling.

"Nim doesn't love me anymore."

"There are so many people in this world who love you, sweetheart. Dad loves you. And so does Mom."

My father took my hand and gently stroked the back of it, trying to comfort me.

"What do I have to do to make you get up and walk around?"

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"Oh Fah, you look really bad. I thought your dad was exaggerating."

Plerng, who had just barged in, spoke in the most indifferent tone. At first, I was in full-on bedridden mode, but the moment I heard his voice, an unstoppable energy surged through me.

I shot up from the bed, jumped toward him, grabbed his head, and yanked his hair as if trying to rip his scalp off.

"Argh! What the hell are you doing? I thought you were on the verge of death!"

"I can't die yet-not until I kill you first!"

"I come for make up!!"

My father, who saw me rushing towards Plerng, stood up with a look of gratefully.

"I can't believe Plerng can make Fah stand up."

"If it were me, I'd get up too,"

My mother added, smirking with satisfaction.

"It might seem bad, but it's actually good."

My mother clearly knew that Plerng had played a role in this and was both amused and relieved to see me finally out of bed.

"Uncle, Auntie, help me!"

Plerng cried out.

"But I'm still happy that Fah has the energy to fight."

**"HELP!!!"**

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In the end, Plerng's sudden appearance got me out of bed-and even gave me a new purpose in life: to destroy him.

A clump of his hair was in my hand, making me look like I had just finished a round of chemotherapy.

Meanwhile, Plerng was hiding behind a pillar, anxiously rubbing his head, terrified that he might actually go bald after seeing how much hair I had yanked out.

"You have no right to be mad at me. This is just a little revenge for how you betrayed my feelings. I'm just getting even."

"Oh, so now you're trying to sound reasonable?"

"If this had happened to one of your female friends, they'd have cut you off and never spoken to you again. But I'm still here because I don't want our friendship to break up just because of love."

"Who even wants to be your friend?"

"So, after getting dumped, you also want to lose a friend? Come on, be a little more generous. Let's just call it even!"

"You're the worst, Plerng!"

"Right back at you, Fah!"

We stared each other down, neither willing to back down... well, except for Plerng, who flinched slightly, probably afraid I'd grab his hair again. Still, his argument made sense, and I had to accept it with irritation.

He wasn't entirely wrong. I was the one at fault first. I should have stayed away from the person my friend liked. But my feelings for NumNim were real, and they were mutual.

If I was wrong, then I was only half-wrong. So I decided-I'd take responsibility for Plerng's feelings only halfway. I'd stay mad at him for a little while longer, but I wouldn't cut him off.

"Why do you still want to be friends with me? I hurt you."

"Because I love you more than Teacher Nim whom I just met. It'd be ridiculous to stop talking to you over this."

"You just don't have many friends, huh?"

"I'm more worried you won't have any friends. So, are you done being mad yet?"

"No. You're such a liar. You said you'd wait until midnight, but you went and told her first."

"That's because I was afraid she'd forgive you too quickly once you confessed. So I told her first to make sure she stayed mad at you longer."

"....."

"Revenge only works if it actually hurts the other person. If it doesn't, what's the point?"

I was ready to pounce on him again, but this time, Plerng was prepared. The moment I jumped, he caught me, locked my arms and legs, and held me like a baby monkey.

"Let me go, damn it!"

"If I let you go, you'll just attack me again. Come on, let it go already. We're even now. You understand everything, don't you? The angrier you get, the more I feel like I won. Remember that."

I stopped struggling, unwilling to give him the satisfaction of my defeat. When Plerng saw that I had calmed down, he finally put me down. Then, just to be safe, he took a step back, keeping some distance before continuing the conversation.

"Come on, Fah. Time to go back to being the great Fah. I heard you've just been lying around, not eating. I can't stand seeing you like that."

"Liar."

"...."

"Oh, don't act like you love me that much."

"But I do love you. That's why I'm forgiving everything and being your friend again."

"You just said you love me,"

I said, hugging myself and pretending to shudder.

"I won't have sex with you, idiot."

"Did I ask you to? Love comes in different forms, idiot. I just care about you, want you to eat, get your energy back, and do something besides lying around all day. I even heard you're skipping work. Love really messed you up, huh?"

Hearing that, I side-eyed Plerng and hesitantly asked,

"Before.....Were you like this? When you got rejected by Nim?"

He let out a small "Tsk" and answered sincerely.

"Not exactly. I didn't stare at the ceiling all day because nothing ever started between us. The most physical contact we had was when she threw me during training. We barely talked outside of class. So, no, it didn't hit me as hard as it hit you. But yeah, it still hurt."

"Then consider this my way of making it up to you,"

I mumbled, half-apologizing.

"We're even now."

"Looking your condition, I'd say so. I mean, you've bullied me since we were kids, but this time, I really got you good."

"I cried so hard till my eyes out."

"That's love for you."

Plerng reached out and ruffled my hair, but I jerked my head away, not wanting to feel like a puppy being petted. Still, he didn't let up and ended up tugging at my hair, playing with it.

"Ugh, your hair's a mess. Feels greasy too. Did you dip it in something nasty?"

"Oh my God, are you here to comfort me or insult me?"

"So, what's your plan with Teacher Nim? You were basically on your deathbed, so I assume she dumped you?"

"Yeah! Because you made it sound like I was tricking her! She barely even looked at me when I was begging her to listen!"

"Well, she was mad."

"What should I do?"

"What else can you do? You have to make it up to her. Do you even have another option? Just be straightforward."

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What a painfully obvious piece of advice. But Plerng had a point. If I want to apologize, there's no need to overcomplicate things. Just admit I was wrong and say sorry. Simple.

But then again... being straightforward has become difficult for me. Because I always had a way of making things more complicated than they needed to be.

After Plerng left, I finally got up, took a shower, and ate something-much to the joy of my parents. Then, I picked up my phone and typed a message to someone I hadn't spoken to in three days. Our last conversation had ended as if we hadn't quite finished talking.

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**Hawm Noi: What are you up to?**

**Mae Khun: Nothing much. Was just wondering where you disappeared to.**

**Mae Khun: Was gonna ask how things are going with your girlfriend.**

**Hawm Noi: How do you think? She's mad, obviously. Maybe even hates me.**

**Hawm Noi: She broke up with me.**

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Silence stretched between us for over thirty seconds.

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**Mae Khun: Does that mean you broke up with your girlfriend?**

**Hawm Noi: She asked for a breakup, but I won't accept it.**

**Hawm Noi: I feel like I need to do something to show her I love her and won't let this relationship go so easily.**

**Mae Khun: If something starts the wrong way, it usually ends the same way. Why are you still holding on?**

**Hawm Noi: Why do you sound so angry? Have you ever been cheat on?**

**Mae Khun: Yeah. And I'm never forgiving that person.**

**Mae Khun: She made me feel like a joke.**

**Hawm Noi: Does your love fade away that easily?**

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I asked the question as if I were asking NumNim herself.

I felt hurt and I was scared if the other party will reply in a way that would hurt my feelings.

Because right now in my mind, I had already replaced Mae Khun as NumNim. And whatever Mae Khun said next... might just be exactly what NumNim was thinking too.

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**Hawm Noi: Don't you love her anymore?**

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Because the other party still hadn't replied, I asked again, almost as if trying to buy time. It took about two minutes before she finally responded, and I could sense the pain in her short reply.

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**Mae Khun: I still love her.**

**Hawm Noi: If you still love her, why make it so complicated?**

**Mae Khun: Because if I forgive her, it becomes too easy.**

**Mae Khun: And in this relationship, she'll keep easy-going with this kind of feeling.**

**Mae Khun: Ending it quickly is probably less painful than dragging it out any longer.**

**Hawm Noi: Is there any way that person could make you forgive her?**

**Mae Khun: No.**

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Even though I received that answer, I had no intention of giving up on NumNim. Mae Khun and NumNim were two different people. I believed that if I tried hard enough, she would see my sincerity, and maybe-just maybe-things could be fixed.

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With that thought in mind, the next morning, I focused on rebuilding my energy. I ate properly, took care of myself, and prepared to go see NumNim at her house. But just as I was about to leave, a call from work interrupted me.

I sighed, already feeling drained just seeing the caller ID.

"Yes, Ms. Whipa?"

As I answered, my parents, who were sitting at the table with me, looked up to listen. Sensing their curiosity, I put the phone on speaker so they could hear what kind of conversation my boss had in store for me.

[Where have you been? Why haven't you come to work? It's been three days already.]

"I..."

I glanced at my dad, quickly deciding that it was better to give a reason other than "heartbreak."

"I had to attend a relative's funeral in another province. It was sudden, so I couldn't inform you in advance."

[A funeral? So you think attending something like that is more important than coming to work?]

...And is work supposed to be more important than that?

"But this was an important event."

[What side of the family was it? Your mother's or your father's?]

I hesitated for a moment. Should I choose Dad's side or Mom's?

"...Just a relative."

Better not to specify.

[So, did your presence bring them back to life? Do you think this company is some playground where you can come and go as you please? Do you take me for a fool? If you skip work again without notice, I'll file a misconduct report. You'll have a mark on your record, and I'll fire you!]

"But even when I come to work, you never give me any tasks, Ms. Whipa."

[If I tell you to come, you come!]

"No one tells my daughter what to do except me!"

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My dad's voice suddenly boomed through the speakerphone, causing the line to fall silent. His patience had clearly run out with Ms. Whipa's nasty tone. Realizing this was getting out of hand, I quickly switched off the speaker and put the phone to my ear.

"Then I'd like to request another day off, please."

[Then I'll file that report...]

"Do whatever you want."

[You're really not scared, are you? From the moment you started working here, you've done nothing but challenge me. Who do you think you are?... And who interrupted our conversation just now?]

"That was my dad."

[Terrible manners-must run in the family.]

"Dad, she says our whole family has terrible manners," I reported calmly, annoyance creeping into my voice.

[Do you think tattling to your family will help you?]

"She's asking if telling you guys will make any difference, Mom."

My mother bared her teeth in a silent snarl, making the person on the other end fume even more.

[You're hopeless! Even after everything I've said, you still act shamelessly...]

"Alright then. See you tomorrow."

I ended the call, unsure what else to say. My parents clenched their fists in fury, clearly protective of me. Meanwhile, I sipped my water, feeling a warm sense of reassurance from their unwavering support.

"I will probably be fired. If this ruins my record, please don't take it to heart, Dad. Goodbye."

I pressed my palms together in a respectful wai to my parents, grabbed my keys, and was about to drive off to see NumNim, but was called back. "Where are you going, Fah?"

"I'm going to make up with Nim."

"And if she still doesn't treat you well, are you going to come back and stare at the ceiling again?"

"No. I have to succeed in making up with Nim. When you were upset, I could always cheer you up,"

I said with a confident smile. "This time, I'll succeed. Trust me."

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Honestly, taking leave just to go and make up with my girlfriend is not good behavior. If Auntie Wipha wants to fire me, I can't blame her. To be honest, I don't even want to work at that company anymore since NumNim isn't there.

Without inspiration, I don't know why I'm doing it at all.

I parked my car about 500 meters away from NumNim's house and stood there waiting since early morning. For over two hours, there was no movement from inside the house.

That made me feel discouraged. I stood there with slumped shoulders, staring at the ground, kicking small stones around like a troubled child-until I heard someone call out.

"Is that you, Fah?"

It was NumNim's mother. She had stepped outside and was calling to me softly from beside the fence. I lifted my head slightly and gave her a bright smile.

"Yes!"

"What are you standing around like that for? Why don't you come inside? Nim is home. She just resigned... By the way, aren't you working today?"

"I'm not working. I took the day off. I wanted to drop by and check on Nim, see how she's doing."

"I don't know how she's doing either. She locks herself in her room all day. The only time she comes out is to eat, then she goes right back inside. I've never seen her like this before. It's good that you're here. Go check on her."

NumNim's mother easily invited me inside. Even though I felt a bit nervous about coming in like this, it was still better than doing nothing. Once inside, she nodded toward the stairs, silently giving me permission to go up.

I felt a chill of anxiety, afraid that my presence might only make NumNim angrier, but I had already made up my mind.

I came here for this. Whatever happens, happens. Let's do this.

*Knock, knock, knock.*

"What up, Mom?"

" ...."

"What is it, Mom?"

NumNim opened the door with a troubled expression. Her clothes that she usually wears to sleep and her hair was slightly messy. Immediately her eyes flared with anger upon seeing me.

"How did you get in here?"

"Your mom let me in. Let me talk to you for a bit."

"Leave."

"Please.."

"Are you going to leave on your own, or do you want me to throw you out?"

"You can throw me out if you'll at least listen to me first."

The sweet-faced person bit her lip tightly before speaking again, her voice barely above a whisper, as if warning me.

"Leave. Now."

"Don't you love me anymore?"

It was the same question I had typed when chatting with Mae Khun last night. NumNim froze for a brief moment, but only for the span of a heartbeat, before answering in a loud, clear voice that sent a shiver through my entire body.

"I don't love you."

"That's okay. I'll make you love me again."

"Get lost!"

"Nim...."

I stepped forward, but the door slammed shut in my face with such force that it hit me head-on, making me stagger backward and fall flat on my back with a loud thud.

The whole world spun like a top, and I wasn't sure how much longer I could stay conscious.

"What's with all the yelling? Fah! Are you okay, dear?"

NumNim's mother, who had come up the stairs to check on the commotion, saw me lying sprawled on the floor and shouted in alarm.

Hearing that, NumNim opened the door to look. I took this chance to shut my eyes and pretend to be unconscious.

"Nim, why is Fah bleeding all over her nose?"

"Don't pretend to be unconscious, Fah."

The sweet-faced person shook me gently.

"Wake up, Fah."

"...."

"Fah!!!"

**This trick is genius!**

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# Chapter 21: Baby Shark Doo Doo Doo

I've passed out. Maybe my begging will make her feel soft toward me.

If people still have good feelings left for each other, when they see someone hurt and falling down, they won't hesitate to help. Even stray puppies and kittens-when they face hardship, there are still people who feel sorry for them and lend a hand.

Right now, I am also pitiful. If NumNim still loves me, she has to help.

And she really helped me. That means she still has some feelings for me, even if just a little... But her help was a bit half-hearted.

"Are you really going to let Fah sleep here, Nim? This is a hallway,"

Her mother said as she handed me smelling salts and breath fresheners. She feel a little displeased.

"You're so heartless! Your room is just this far."

"I can't carry her,"

The sweet-looking girl standing over me said while crossing her arms and closing her eyes. I peeked at her a little and saw her cold expression. It made me feel faint.

"How can you not carry her? You throw people around all the time. Fah is small-you can take her there."

"If I could carry her, I would carry her downstairs, not to the bedroom."

I almost pouted in frustration but then remembered I was supposed to be unconscious. Oh no! My plan was to collapse so NumNim would take me to the bedroom.

Then I would wake up and make up with her. Maybe we'd even have a nice moment together on the bed.

Ugh... Everything is going wrong! If I wake up now, I might get kicked out of the house.

But if I don't wake up, I'll have to lie here like this. Not okay at all!

"Are you two mad at each other? I thought you loved Fah so much."

"No."

"No, what?"

"I don't love her anymore."

*Cough, cough.*

I pretended to wake up slowly, just like in a drama.

"Where am I?"

"The hospital,"

NumNim said with a mocking smile, still crossing her arms.

"You act so well."

"What are you talking about? What acting? Ouch, it hurts!"

I raised my hand to rub my nose gently and looked around.

"You tricked me! This isn't a hospital at all."

"Well, I'm still not as good at tricking people as someone I know,"

The sweet-looking girl said.

"Now that you're awake, you should go back. Let others rest."

She reached out her hand, probably forgetting herself, trying to help me up. But when she saw me smiling at her, she quickly pulled her hand back, looking annoyed.

"Help yourself!"

"Huh, Nim? What's wrong with you? You're acting hot and cold,"

Her mother said, helping me up and supporting me down the stairs.

From the second floor, NumNim called out behind me,

"Fah, you just hurt her nose, Mom, not her legs. Stop acting weak."

Her sarcastic words made me turn around and pout at her. She hesitated for a second before looking away.

"Hurry up and go home."

"I can walk by myself, Auntie. I should go now."

"What's going on between you two? Why does Nim seem so angry? Fah, what did you do?"

Her mother asked, worried, as we reached the front of the house.

"Nim is never like this. That girl never gets mad... except when she's on her period."

Even Mom noticed this...

"It's just a little misunderstanding."

"Is it about work? She just quit her job. She seemed pretty upset."

"That's part of it," I admitted.

"I've been trying to make up with her, but it looks like she's not as heartless as I thought."

I smiled at her mother, trying to encourage myself.

"I'll come back and try again. Thank you, Auntie."

"You two aren't fighting over a lover, are you?"

"What? No, Auntie!"

I laughed and touched my nose.

"Ouch, it still hurts."

"Oh, poor thing. Go home and rest. I'll talk to Nim for you so she stops being mad. Then we can all have dinner together."

"Thank you!"

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Even though I tried to reassure myself that NumNim wasn't completely cold, I couldn't help feeling sad. The love in her eyes, once full of care and longing, had faded so much.

She used to look at me with such warmth, but now, her gaze was distant and empty.

Frustrated and ready to break at any moment, I felt fragile. As I drove home, I wiped away my tears and told myself to stay strong.

This will pass soon.

NumNim will stop being mad.

Right now, the only things that can comfort me are sweets and encouragement. Surprisingly, the encouragement didn't come from my close friends because they were all busy with their own lives.

Instead, it came from someone far away-someone I had never met, someone I only talked to through text, Mae Khun.

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**Mae Khun: I'm feeling lonely.**

**Hawm Noi: Same.**

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I looked at my phone and sighed. It was strange how we both felt the same way in some aspects, even though our situations were completely different. It was like we were exchanging feelings and thoughts in our own way.

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**Mae Khun: What are you doing?**

**Hawm Noi: Just got home from driving. Now I'm lying down, thinking about random things.**

**Mae Khun: Still not okay with your girlfriend?**

**Hawm Noi: Not yet. What about you? Are you okay with your girlfriend yet?**

**Mae Khun: Not yet.**

**Hawm Noi: Did she try to make up with you?**

**Mae Khun: She did. Then she left.**

**Hawm Noi: Why didn't you just forgive her if you still love her? Playing hard to get?**

**Mae Khun: What she did might seem small to others, but for me, it was a big deal.**

**Mae Khun: If I forgive her too easily, she'll just do it again. Hawm Noi: So, in the end, you will forgive her?**

**Mae Khun: I don't know... Seeing her just annoys me.**

**Hawm Noi: What about when you don't see her?**

**Mae Khun: Then come to talk with you instead.**

**Mae Khun: But before this, I was just scrolling through Instagram. I like watching this...**

**Mae Khun: Link**

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My online friend sent me an IG link to share. It was an IG account where people put their hands inside shark-head puppets and made funny videos. I smiled a little and replied fondly.

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**Hawm Noi: Do you like watching this kind of thing?**

**Mae Khun: It helps relieve stress. I like it.**

I watched the video and had a realization something.

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**Hawm Noi: Thank you!**

**Mae Khun: For what?**

**Hawm Noi: For this adorable video. I just got an idea on how to make up with her.**

**Mae Khun: Keep trying. If I had you as my girlfriend, that'd be nice.**

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I didn't know how the other person felt when they typed that, but suddenly, my heart pounded so hard that I grabbed my phone, afraid she'd notice my embarrassment-even though I knew we were only talking through text. She couldn't even see my face.

A message notification popped up again, making me give in and open itonly to frown slightly at what I read next.

**Mother You: Just kidding.**

**Hawm Noi: I already took it seriously.**

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The other person went silent. I couldn't tell what she was thinking. Maybe she just read it and moved on, or maybe she was actually flustered. She had read my message but didn't reply. I smiled a little and ended the conversation there.

Alright, I feel a bit more energized now after being down for so long. Even iron should be strong when it's red-hot. Tonight, I'll go and make up with NumNim again. Then I'll go find a shark-head puppet put on my hand!

Actually, I planned to come tomorrow morning, but I just remembered that I have to go to the office to clear things up with Auntie Whipa about my resignation. So, I might be busy all day and won't have time to come and make up with NumNim.

I should do something so that NumNim doesn't think I've completely backing down.

Once I quit my job, I'll be free to focus on this completely.

Right now, it's 10 PM. I chose this time because if NumNim's parents saw me, they might start questioning our relationship. That's why I came at night, sneaking into the house carefully.

The dogs in the neighborhood barked a bit, but that was just outside. Once inside, I looked for the tree closest to NumNim's window and climbed it without hesitation.

To be honest, I don't like trees because I don't know what kinds of creatures might be hiding in the branches, especially those sneaky lizards.

But for love, I can do this! Even Shakespeare would cry at my dedication.

Luckily, the tree wasn't as bad as I imagined. After climbing up, I peeked through the curtain covering the sliding window. The dim orange light inside flickered slightly.

NumNim walked back and forth wearing only a towel, fresh from a shower. I was about to knock when my hand froze, and my mouth hung open.

*So white...*

No! I didn't come here to be some creepy ghost! But for the plan to work, I had to wait for NumNim to finish getting dressed.

Watching her, I chuckled to myself, realizing she wasn't wearing any underwear under her pajamas. That meant she just changed straight into them.

Still, even when alone, NumNim was cautious. She pulled on a T-shirt over her head before unwrapping the towel halfway, then slipped on pajama pants from below. Everything was done in just a few seconds, and I didn't see anything at all.

Damn it, I can't even look at?

*Ugh!*

Something suddenly brushed against my arm, and I felt it. Shocked, I screamed, "Ohh!" and frantically shook my arm until it flew off, smacking against NumNim's house wall. Then I saw it-

A lizard.

The thing I hate and fear the most had touched me. My whole body shivered, my eyes teared up, and I wanted to jump around to a BLACKPINK song, but I couldn't. I could only scream-.

"Ouchhhh...."

"Who's there?"

NumNim quickly pulled the curtain aside and found herself face-to-face with me, flailing my hands wildly-both of which were adorned with a shark and a dolphin puppet.

"Hah? Fah? What are you doing here?"

"Lizard! Lizard!!"

I scrunched up my face and held out my arm, showing the goosebumps covering it. My skin was crawling just thinking about it.

"What are you even doing here? Fah!"

Her angry voice made me freeze for a moment. Even though I was terrified and panicking, I forced myself to swallow it down and gave her a weak smile.

"Heh... I came to make up with you."

"At this hour? It's the middle of the night! And you're clinging to my window like this? You look like a thief."

"What kind of thief is this cute? Anyway, since you've already opened the window, let me come inside."

"No way!" NumNim said firmly.

"Go home now, or do you want me to get my dad's gun?"

"So mean! I came with good intentions?

*Ngui~*

"

I pouted playfully and tapped my puppet-covered hands together.

"Before I go, can I tell you a bedtime story?"

"A story?"

"A shark story."

I cleared my throat and started an impromptu puppet show.

"They say that sharks must keep swimming even while they sleep. If they ever stop swimming... they die."

NumNim stared at my hands, intrigued, before suddenly grabbing one of them and asking in an oddly serious tone,

"Where did you get these?"

"From a Korean drama. That's what they said."

"I mean this idea."

"Oh, you mean the puppets? I bought them! Aren't they cute?"

I made the shark puppet open and close its mouth while wiggling my eyebrows.

"Since you won't talk to me, I figured I'd have you talk to the shark instead. Cute, right? If you like it, pucker up! Swoosh~"

"This was your idea?"

"Of course! Brilliant ideas always come from good-looking people. Want to hear more? If you do, let me into your room, and I'll tell you stories finish."

"No."

*Cruel...*

"Alright, it's fine. I can playing in the tree."

I cleared my throat a little and continued playing because I had already prepared for this.

"This shark is like Fah. If it doesn't receive love from Nim as its food, it will die-just like this shark that can't swim anymore."

The sweet-faced person pressed their lips together tightly, and I caught a glimpse of a smile she accidentally let slip. Sensing that my joke might be working, I pushed my luck by continuing without stopping.

"The shark didn't know what to do. It couldn't sleep, so it had to swim all the way from Fah's house to Nim's house. It braved all obstacles, climbed over walls-even though it was terrified of snakes and every kind of creepycrawly-just to secretly check if Nim had gone to bed yet. While it swam, it kept wondering, Where should I go once I arrive? If I enter through the front door, Nim's mom and dad will definitely wake up."

"....."

"If I shout to call Nim, she probably won't come down. So the shark decided to climb up a tree and peek through the window. And then-oops! Nim wasn't asleep yet and had just finished showering. The shark couldn't help but imagine how fragrant the sweet-faced person must be. The mix of soap and skin scent-it could still remember it vividly. And then, the dim orange light casting shadows as she changed clothes made the shark's imagination run wild..."

"What?!"

"....."

"Did you peeked at Nim changing clothes?"

"I wasn't peeking! The shark saw!"

"....."

"It was just a coincidence! But Fah didn't see anything! Not even a bit! Come on, Nim is super careful. You even get shy in pajamas in front of your furniture, scared that the wardrobe and bed might get styes in their eyes."

"You really did peek! Go back right now!"

The sweet-faced person, flustered, shoved me away from the window. But she miscalculated a little, making me lose my balance and nearly fall from the tree. Luckily, her quick reflexes allowed her to grab me just in time.

Instinctively, I grabbed onto whatever I could-without realizing that the toy shark I had brought with me had its mouth clamped tightly onto Nim's chest, holding on for dear life.

*Thump thump.*

Nim's racing heartbeat, a mix of shock and excitement, was so strong that I could feel it against my hand. We locked eyes, frozen in the moment, staring at each other intensely.

Not knowing how to fix the situation, I blurted out a song to break the tension.

**"Baby shark, suck**

**suck suck**

**..."**

"What the hell are you sucking?"

"Sucking milk."

"Go!!!"

*Swamp!*

The sliding aluminum glass window was shut in my face, so I couldn't say anything else. Even though I tried to show how sorry I was, NumNim could clearly see it. But still, the shark had to drink fresh milk to survive.

**Once again, I can't entry to the bedroom...**

*sob*

**.**

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# Chapter 22: The Only Scent in the World

I understand that it takes time to get over her angry, but she seems so stubborn. Someone like me is starting to feel exhausted.

Does NumNim even realize how hard it is to climb a tree just to see her, while also holding back my screams when a lizard lands on my arm? But never mind, I probably looked like a fool. I should have endured it.

But before I can apologize, I need to take care of something first, that is...

"I’m going to report your improper leave. Saying you attended a relative’s funeral is not a strong enough reason."

As soon as I arrived this morning, Auntie Wipha called me in to talk.

"And you still dare to come in late, even after taking so many days off? What do you think this place is?"

"I think it’s a company."

What else am I supposed to see it as? What a weird question. Honestly, today, I was ready to stand my ground. I had already told my dad that I was going to submit my resignation.

I just wasn’t suited for working with a big group of people. I couldn't wake up on time, I had no motivation, and since I started working here, I had no idea what I was supposed to be doing because my supervisor never assigned me anything.

Except for cutting and pasting an old brochure on my first day.

"Are you still being cheeky? Always talking back. I’m older than you, you know."

"Oh, come on," I sighed, exhausted.

"You asked what I see this place as, and I answered truthfully. Fine, whatever. Everything is my fault today. I’m completely in the wrong. Punish me however you want. Or if you want me to quit, I'm happy to do so. So, go ahead and submit it."

I placed my resignation letter, which I had typed up last night on impulse, neatly on her desk and gave her a polite farewell gesture.

"I'll be leaving now."

"You think this is a playground?"

"What exactly do you want from me, Ms. Whipa?"

I exhaled, making my bangs flutter slightly in frustration.

"I don’t want any trouble. I came here today just to resign, so I wouldn’t be an eyesore to you anymore. What more do you want? How long are you going to keep up this sarcastic act?"

"I want to teach you some respect for your elders."

"Well, are the elders even worthy of respect? You never gave me any tasks because you were afraid I’d find out some secret or something, isn’t that right?"

"What secret? I have none."

"You don't have the courage. Everyone here works for you. You’re afraid I’ll get close to the team and someone might spill things they shouldn’t— like those little procurement scams, skimming a few baht here and there. You think I don’t know about that?"

I bared my teeth slightly, stepping toward the older woman in frustration.

"A baht or two may seem small, but when you add up multiple transactions, it turns into tens or even hundreds of thousands. Do you realize that’s called embezzlement?"

"Don't accuse me without proof."

"You’ll only admit it if I have evidence, right? Well then—oh!"

Before I could finish my sentence, Khun Kiart entered the department with three or four employees. He knocked on the door, signaling someone inside to open it. Ms. Whipa raised an eyebrow in slight surprise but quickly opened the door with a welcoming smile.

"Good morning, Khun Kiart. What brings you down here today?"

"The chairman wants to conduct a review of past financial records, if that’s alright,"

Khun Kiart said, nodding for his team to take the Mac computer away. Ms. Whipa practically clung to the screen as if she could stop them.

"Why the sudden audit?"

"Curiosity. Awareness. Enlightenment. Is that a problem?"

Khun Kiart replied coldly before instructing his team to gather all the documents in the room. Ms. Whipa, still confused, began to protest at the intrusion.

"You can’t do this! This is my responsibility!"

"Can’t handle it?"

"No! You have no right!"

"Then resign. Like this young lady here—just hand in your resignation letter and leave."

"You knew she resigned?"

Aunt Whipa was visibly shocked. I was just a low-level employee who hadn’t even been here for a month. It made no sense that the secretary of the chairman would be aware of my resignation. As she scrambled to argue and stop the audit, she suddenly blurted out a rumor.

"Or maybe the gossip is true—that she’s Khun Methee’s mistress."

"No!"

I gasped, feigning the look of a frightened little bird abandoned by its mother.

"That’s not true, Ms. Whipa! What if someone overhears and misunderstands?"

"If you’re not his mistress, then what else could you be?"

"I told you—I’m not a mistress."

I took a dramatic pause, then shrugged coolly.

"I’m his daughter."

The confident declaration was a stark contrast to my earlier act of fear.

Aunt Wipha, however, burst into laughter.

"If you’re his daughter, then I must be Khun Methee’s wife!"

**"I wouldn’t take you even if you begged,"**

Came a deep voice from the department’s entrance.

Everyone in the office immediately stood up straight, instinctively showing respect, as the tall figure of my father stepped inside.

Dressed in a deep burgundy eight-button suit, my father stood tall and imposing. His graying hair contrasted sharply with his sharp, handsome features—the kind that made people nervous just by looking at him, except for his own wife and daughter.

"Do you know that my wife used to be a beauty queen? If you wanted to be my mistress, you'd have to work a lot harder."

"I'm sorry, Khun Methee!"

Realizing she had spoken too loudly about the mistress issue, Ms. Whipa quickly bowed her head in apology.

"I didn’t mean to be disrespectful. I just found it hard to believe that this girl claims to be your daughter. She’s acting like she’s on the same level as you… people who speak without thinking."

"And doesn’t she look like my daughter to you?"

"Of course not."

"Ridiculous! When she was born, everyone said she looked just like me! What, did my daughter grow up and stop resembling her father? How would she be beautiful then?"

Clearly here to make a statement, my father reached out, tilting my face from left to right in mock inspection.

"Or maybe you take after your mother?"

"If Mom used to be a beauty queen, then I must have inherited her good looks,"

I replied with a smirk.

"Did you really come down here yourself, Dad? I was just about to head up after quitting. I’m starving."

"I wanted to see for myself who was pressuring my daughter so much that she couldn’t keep working."

Our conversation flowed so naturally that there was no room left for doubt. Auntie Whipa and the rest of the department looked utterly stunned, unable to process what was happening. Judging by their faces, they had fully bought into the act—I wasn’t joking.

"Fah really is Khun Methee’s daughter…"

One of my colleagues, whom I had hinted to before, looked like he had just been hit by a ten-wheeler.

"It’s like something straight out of a drama."

"That’s exactly the point! Why is everyone acting so shocked? But when it comes to NumNim, she became extremely angry,"

I muttered, disappointed that I didn’t get this kind of reaction from her. I had wanted her to be just as surprised, not to explode in anger and break up with me, saying she didn’t love me anymore.

That was beyond depressing.

"So you really are Khun Methee’s daughter? Why didn’t you say anything?"

"Where’s the fun in that? If I had told you, we wouldn’t have had this dramatic moment."

I grinned, proud of myself for at least getting some enjoyment out of this.

"Dad, this is the one who said to me over the phone—"

My father was already prepared. We had rehearsed this moment at home.

**"Didn’t your parents teach you any manners?"** *Thud!*

And with that, Auntie Whipa fainted and collapse.

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The crucial scene I had planned played out just as I wanted, but unfortunately, NumNim wasn’t as impressed as I had hoped. While everyone else was left in shock, Aunt Whipa remained unmoved.

In the end, after Aunt Whipa learned the truth, she broke down crying, apologizing to me over and over. She begged me not to fire her, explaining that she was going through a tough time—her mother had just passed away, and she had spent a lot of money on the funeral. She desperately needed this job.

Since I was a kind and compassionate person, with a heart as delicate as paper—so fragile that the slightest breeze could tear or carry it away—I responded with:

**"Even if I don’t fire you, your mother isn’t coming back."**

Oh, the satisfaction of throwing her own words back at her with perfect timing.

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**Mae Khun: How’s it going? Have you made up with your girlfriend?**

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I was sitting snd drinking in the small joy of verbally sparring with Aunt Whipa when my phone buzzed. Seeing Mae Khun message deflated me a little. I sighed.

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**Hawm Noi: Didn’t work.**

**Mae Khun: She’s got a strong will, huh? But then again, you did lie a lot. If she forgave you this easily, could you even call that being mad?**

**Hawm Noi: How can someone stay mad for this long? I already feel bad about it.**

**Hawm Noi: And look—now that she’s not coming to work, I don’t even have the motivation to work anymore.**

**Hawm Noi: So I quit today.**

**Mae Khun: Why quit? Isn’t it your own company? I remember you mentioning that before.**

**Hawm Noi: Gotta do things the right way. Besides, I want to finally do something I actually love.**

**Mae Khun: And what’s that?**

**Hawm Noi: I told you already—I want to be a Personal Perfumer. I want to create custom scents just for a specific person.**

**Mae Khun: Wow, must be nice being rich. Don’t even have to think about income. Just do whatever you want.**

**Hawm Noi: Why does that feel like sarcasm?**

**Mae Khun: Here’s an idea… why not use your skills to make up with her?**

**Mae Khun: Make her a perfume—one that only she gets to wear.**

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I raised an eyebrow. Now that was a creative idea.

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**Hawm Noi: You’re right. Why didn’t I think of that?**

**Mae Khun: And you should wear the exact same scent. Make sure it’s the one in your travel bag.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: Why?**

**Mae Khun: Why not?**

**Mae Khun: It just smells nice. She might like it.**

**Mae Khun: It’s the only scent in the world, right? The one you use.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: That’s true. Alright, I’ll wear it today.**

**Mae Khun: Good! So she’ll recognize you.**

**Mae Khun: That you’re the same person.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: The same person? What do you mean?**

**Mae Khun: I wasn’t finished typing. I meant to say, “That you’re the only one who uses this scent.”**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Oh, got it. Today, I’ll charm everyone with my own signature perfume. Thanks for the suggestion!**

**Hawm Noi:**

**You’re such a sweet person!**

**Mae Khun: If I’m sweet, then love me.**

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I didn’t reply, just pursed my lips in embarrassment. I knew that message was just teasing. If I teased back, it would seem too playful and flirty, making it feel insincere to NumNim.

After our conversation, I quickly gathered my old perfume-making tools, turned on some music, and imagined what NumNim's scent should be. Then, carefully, I began blending the fragrance.

NumNim has a sweetness and soft, but it’s not overwhelming. When she speaks, it feels like talking to a young girl, yet she’s not that young anymore. So, I chose a rich vanilla scent with a hint of warm spice like nutmeg.

Hmm… I should add something synthetic to make it light and comforting— Fresh Air.

A touch of citrus—two drops of lemon-lime.

A base of lavender for a fresh, woody feel.

As I mixed, I took notes, adjusting little by little. I experimented, failed, and started over three or four times. By around 8 PM, I finally had the perfect scent.

Without wasting time, I blended it with alcohol and a stabilizer, then rushed out to find the sweet-faced girl—though today, I decided to go through the front entrance.

Strangely, today, when I called, NumNim picked up immediately. Usually, her stubbornness would make her hang up on me.

But tonight, she answered and even agreed to come down to meet me. Of course, she still refused to let me inside, but that was fine. Just seeing her was enough.

"Hello, it’s me."

"It's already 9 PM. Why do you keep coming over? It's annoying."

That cold tone made me shrink my shoulders slightly, feeling a bit disheartened.

"But today, Nim agreed to come see me."

"If I hadn't come, You would have climbed into my house again. Do we still have unfinished business?"

"It's not finished yet! I already told you—I’ll keep trying to win you back until you forgive me."

I wiggled my eyebrows playfully, grinning mischievously. That made the sweet-faced person look away, pretending not to see me.

*I know—you're affected by my cuteness.*

"Hurry up and say what you came to say."

"I brought you something."

I handed her a perfume bottle without even a label. Numnim turned to look at it but didn’t take it right away, instead asking calmly,

"What is it?"

"A perfume."

As soon as I said that, NumNim stared at me—long and hard. There was something in those beautiful eyes, but I couldn’t figure out what it was.

"Is this another one of your tricks?"

"What trick?"

I blinked innocently and smiled.

"What do you mean?"

"Another lie."

"I'm not lying about anything anymore. What else is there to lie about?"

"Fah, I know..."

"Know what? Oh, I get it."

I raised my brows again, leaning in to whisper,

"Your period is over, right?"

"What?! How do you know that?"

"Because you seem to be in a better mood. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have come out to see me like this. Ah, now that your period is over, you're back to your normal self—though you're still sulking."

Seeing that her expression had softened a bit, I quickly moved closer, playfully poking her shoulder.

"Are you still mad?"

"Yes."

"Aww, too bad. But that’s okay—I can handle it. I’ll keep trying! From now on, I won’t bother you at night anymore. I’ll come during the day instead. I quit my job, so I’m free now!"

"If you’re not working, what are you going to do? Oh, wait—I forgot. You’re a rich kid."

That sarcastic tone made me rush to defend myself—I needed Numnim to know that I was serious about everything.

"I already have work I want to do. You probably never knew, but I went to France to study perfume-making. I took proper courses."

"Really? I never knew that."

NumNim glanced between the perfume bottle in my hand and my face.

"It’s just like I said—we barely know each other. Why didn't you ever tell me?"

"From now on, I'll tell you everything about myself. So please, give me a chance. At least accept this perfume I made. Think of it as a way for us to continue our relationship."

"No."

That single word '

*No*

' crushed my heart. Would I ever get to see that warm smile again? As silence settled between us, NumNim handed the perfume back to me.

"Take it back. I don’t want it. I don’t use perfume."

She was about to close the door without even saying goodbye. I stared at the perfume in my hand, feeling dejected. She wouldn’t accept it—it was like she was telling me she still hadn't forgiven me.

"Don't you love me anymore?"

NumNim paused mid-step, then turned to look at me through the metal gate. The silence wrapped around us, thick with tension, until she finally spoke.

"What do you want now? We've already talked this through. Why do you keep asking that?"

At least she didn’t say, "I don’t love you," like before. That had to mean she was softening a little. Encouraged by that thought, I clung to the gate and blinked at her innocently.

"I love you, Nim. If you’re chase me away, can’t we at least say goodbye properly?"

"Goodbye."

"No, not like that. We usually kiss, don’t we?"

"This isn’t ‘usual’ anymore."

"Aww."

I pouted dramatically, looking as pitiful as possible. NumNim stared at me for a moment before offering an alternative.

"Then… how about a hug instead?"

"Yes....!!"

I jumped at the chance immediately. NumNim almost smiled but quickly masked it with a neutral expression before unlocking the door. She looked away, speaking as if the hug meant nothing.

"Just hurry up. I'm sleepy."

Before she could change her mind, I threw my arms around her, burying my face into the crook of her neck. I missed her so much.

At first, she stood still, but before long, her hands hesitantly wrapped around me. Then, she nuzzled her nose against my neck and whispered in a soft, barely audible voice… "It smells so nice."

"Really? I made it myself."

"You never wore perfume before."

"I wanted to finish my old one first. But someone told me this scent was nice and that I should wear it to win my girlfriend back. So I gave it a try. Looks like it really does smell good, since you noticed."

"It smells really good. But what perfume is this?"

"I haven’t named it yet, but I call it…"

"What..."

"The perfume that has a unique scent and only one in the world. From now on, I’ll wear only this. If you ever smell it, remember—this is my scent."

"Mmm… I’ll remember. This is Fah’s scent. A scent that belongs only to you in this world."

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# Chapter 23: I got dumped

[Fah, I got dumped.]

The sound of Preaw's voice over the phone made me sigh.

"Is it really that surprising?"

[Can you at least pretend to care? My heart just got trampled on.]

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Preaw, my dear friend who always dressed like Lord Shiva, had called me at six in the morning to announce her heartbreak. But judging from her tone, I couldn't hear a hint of sadness.

In fact, I imagined her lying there, legs crossed, waiting for her freshly painted nails to dry.

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"What do you want me to do? I can barely take care of myself right now."

[Two people who are both struggling should meet up and socialize.]

"Yeah, right. More like we'd end up so depressed that we'd jump off a mall escalator together. Don't drag me into your negativity. I'm busy hyping myself up to win my girlfriend back."

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Ever since I quit my job, my main job had become trying to make up with NumNim. I'd tried everything—giving her perfume, doing little puppet shows outside her window, calling to sing love songs while pretending to play the guitar (when really, I just had YouTube playing in the background).

But now, I was out of tricks.

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[I’m coming over. I don’t want to be alone. You’re not working a regular job anymore, right? Let’s waste time together—shopping, watching movies, listening to music.]p

"Nope. I’m going to win back my girlfriend."

[Oh, come on. If she was going to forgive you, she would have done it by now. Stop being so stubborn.]

Then, Preaw hung up the phone.

Maybe she had a point. If NumNim really wanted to be with me, wopuldn’t she have softened by now?

Instead, I kept deluding myself—convincing myself that just because she hadn't outright rejected me or kicked me out, it meant she still had feelings for me.

Now I understood—love makes people do the dumbest things.

I had practically begged on my knees, but the only thing she had given me was a hug—just enough to keep me breathing another day.

And yet, here I was, still trying.

How frustrating.

Her period was over already, wasn’t it?

Oh! And most of the tricks I used to try to win her back came from "Mae Khun."

Lately, we had been talking almost every day. Even if it was just through text, it felt like I had a friend who always there.

She listens to me and understands everything. I've shared so much about myself because I trust her. Do I want to meet her in person? Of course. But I'm afraid that if we meet, we might not talk like this anymore...

Mae Khun was like an imaginary friend to me. I pictured her in my mind— a strong, confident woman, probably taller than me, and definitely goodlooking.

People in our imagination always look better than in real life, don’t they? Just like in cartoons.

Maybe that’s why I didn’t want to meet her.

I was afraid she’d be disappointed when she saw what I looked like. And, honestly, I was afraid I'd be disappointed too—afraid she wouldn’t be as beautiful as I had imagined.

Hmm... We don't need to meet. It's fun to talk like this. And she seemed to enjoy it too.

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As I waited for Preaw to arrive, I kept myself busy by mixing perfumes. Whenever I had free time and nothing to do, I would create new scents.

Sometimes, I'd play soft music in the background to set the mood. I named some of my perfumes after songs, some after movies or dramas I loved. And for certain people, I crafted scents based on their personalities—how I saw them.

Every single bottle was made with care, and there would only ever be one of its kind in the world.

I glanced at the bottle of perfume I had intended for NumNim and felt a small pang of sadness.

Perfume was like a child to me. Wanting to give it to someone and if they don't want to accept it—it hurt me.

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**Hawm Noi: If I make you a perfume, would you accept it?**

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Maybe it was too early, and Mae Khun was still asleep. She took longer to reply than usual—over five minutes—but eventually, the message came.

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**Mae Khun: Of course! Who says no to free stuff?**

**Hawm Noi: At least you'd accept it.**

**Mae Khun: Even without hearing your voice, I can tell you're sad. What's wrong?**

**Hawm Noi: I just feel down. The person I love won’t forgive me. She won’t even take the perfume I made for her.**

**Mae Khun: Isn’t she still mad at you?**

**Mae Khun: You can't just assume that everyone will be happy with everything you give them.**

**Hawm Noi: Ouch... It's like being scolded.**

**Mae Khun: I was just being honest.**

**Hawm Noi: You're right. I just thought that the perfume I made had meaning. At the very least, the scent might make my girlfriend feel a little better.**

**Mae Khun: But can a scent really make someone feel better?**

**Hawm Noi: Studies show that scents are linked to memories. They can make us feel good, depending on when and where we first smelled them.**

**Hawm Noi: Perfume is like a child to me. When I put so much effort into making it, I want the person receiving it to feel happy too. Being rejected like that... it made me sad.**

**Mae Khun: Must have been really upsetting.**

**Hawm Noi: A lot.**

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"What are you doing, ghost?!"

Preaw's sharp voice snapped me out of my thoughts. She barged into my room without knocking, making me flinch and instinctively flip my phone screen down.

"Just reading stuff and mixing perfumes. Next time, can you knock first?"

"Nope. It’s part of my character."

She strutted over and plopped onto my bed, crossing her legs. Today, she really lived up to her name—dressed bold and stylish, with her hair tied up high and lips painted like she was about to walk a runway.

"Smells nice. Did you just mix this one?"

"Duh, obviously not. That scent isn’t yours."

"Then whose is it?"

I glanced at my phone for a second before smirking, realizing that I had been thinking of Mae Khun while creating the perfume.

"A friend’s. But not yours."

"Ugh, so secretive. Annoying."

Preaw flopped onto my bed, kicking her legs dramatically.

"Today is so boring. Let’s go out and be wild."

"I'm busy. Gotta go win my girlfriend back."

"No problem. I’ll come with."

"What?! Why would you tag along while I’m trying to make up with her?"

"Because I’m bored. Today, I’m gonna stick to you like glue, idiot. You, my dear Fa, need to bring some excitement into my tragic, boyfriend-less life. Besides, it’s not like she’s gonna forgive you today anyway. At least I’ll be there to comfort you when you fail."

"Being with you is just going to create even more negative energy."

"According to mathematics, two negatives make a positive. Let’s go! I’m coming with you today." "Ugh, you’re so annoying!"

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Even though I said that, there was no stopping Preaw. She stuck to me like glue, which meant my mission to win back NumNim today, I had to inevitably have her tag along.

As always, I parked my car near her house, dialed her number, and waited. NumNim's voice was as cold as ever, but she still came out to meet me— just like every other time.

"You’re really dedicated, huh? Mess up, then beg for forgiveness. Not like my piece-of-trash ex. He cheated on me, and when I dumped him, all he said was, ‘

*Good luck finding someone better'*

."

"You don’t even look sad. Aren’t people supposed to cry when they get their heart broken?"

"I’ve been through enough heartbreaks to last a lifetime. I am sad, but I’ve decided I’m not wasting tears on it. There are plenty of ways to vent frustration without crying—like..."

"Like what?"

"Like how I really need to pee. Where the hell can I go?"

"Are you serious?! Now is not the time!"

"Aaaaahhh! Plastic bag in the backseat!"

"No! Go outside! The sidewalk!"

"I’m a woman! That’s embarrassing!"

"And peeing in the car isn’t?!"

"Nobody can see me in here!"

"At the very least, the guardian spirit of the car can."

"

*Pfft*

. Guardian spirit versus Lord Shiva—who do you think wins?"

"No! Absolutely not! You are NOT peeing in my car!"

"If I had to poop, I’d do that too."

Preaw scrambled into the backseat, rummaging through plastic shopping bags I had left there. Just as I was about to yank her back, I caught sight of NumNim's house door opening.

Now I was stuck in a dilemma—stop my best friend from turning my car into a portable restroom, or go plead for my girlfriend’s forgiveness.

"Hey! Where are you going?!"

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I stepped out of the car, picking up the perfume I had planned to give to NumNim. I also rubbed my hands down my arms because I felt too embarrassed to stop my friends in the car from teasing me again.

Today, NumNim was wearing a navy blue shirt and white slacks, looking like someone ready to go out. Her sweet face looked so good that it made me lose my breath for a moment.

"Wow, you look so beautiful today!"

"So, I wasn’t beautiful before?"

"That’s not what I meant! Today,

**my love**

, you look even more stunning than usual!"

At the word "my love," NumNim frowned, looking displeased.

"Don’t call me that. What if my parents hear? Besides, we’re not dating anymore."

"But I’m still trying to win you back every day!"

I poked her shoulder playfully while admiring their outfit.

"Where are you going?"

"I have a school reunion with my old friends."

"Do you have to look this good for it?"

I squinted at her suspiciously.

"You look so amazing that I can’t help but think there will be guys at this event."

"Of course, there will be."

NumNim said, stuffing her hands into their pockets before looking at me with an impatient expression.

"So, what’s your excuse for coming here today? Don’t you ever get tired of showing up every day without making any progress? Maybe it’s time to give up and move on."

"But I love you. I won’t give up that easily!"

"Well, do you need something? I’m in a hurry."

"Not really. I just wanted to see you. But now that I have, I think you’d look even better if you wore the perfume I made for you!"

I dramatically presented the perfume bottle I had prepared. NumNim had seen it before, but I still held it up like it was the greatest treasure.

"This is the perfect scent for you, made by me! It’s a sweet, soft, and elegant fragrance with a hint of fresh citrus from nutmeg, combined with a light touch of lavender for a floral vibe."

I wiggled my eyebrows playfully, but NumNim just crossed hee arms and shook her head.

"No thanks. I don’t like perfume."

"Just try it! You even said my last perfume smelled nice."

"No."

"Just a little bit!"

I opened the cap, ready to spray a little on her. But she immediately waved her hand in refusal.

"I said no."

"Come on, I promise you'll like it. This scent will put you in a good mood."

**"Can you stop being annoying? I already told you I won't spray it!"**

NumNim waved her hands in refusal and then reached out to snatch the perfume bottle from my hand with such force that it slipped from my grip and crashed onto the ground.

*Shatter!*

The scent of the perfume evaporated as soon as it touched the ground, rising into the air. The shimmering fragments of glass reflected the light, piercing my heart like tiny shards.

Everything fell silent. Even NumNim looked startled, but she still spoke as if it was no big deal.

"I told you, I'm not spraying it. Stop forcing me."

I stared at the broken glass pieces, my eyes welling up with tears. I felt sorry for the fragrance, which could have been useful but instead just vanished into the air.

Just as I reached out to pick up the shards, NumNim interrupted me.

"Don't touch it! You'll cut yourself. Just leave it."

"You're right."

"Right about what?"

**"Seeing the broken glass made me realize... once something is shattered, no matter how much you try to piece it back together, it will never be the same."**

"Fah."

The soft-spoken person standing over me called my name in surprise.

"Are you crying?"

I tried to gather the broken glass, but the tiny fragments that had turned to dust could never be put back together.

"Maybe... maybe it's time for me to give up."

I lifted my gaze and met the light brown eyes staring at me in equal shock. Just as NumNim opened her mouth to say something, the distant sound of a car door closing echoed in the air.

Preaw, dressed in a sleek black silk shirt and skirt, walked toward us with steady, rhythmic footsteps.

"Fah,"

She called out, lowering herself to my level.

"Let's go home."

I looked at her, silently pleading for help with the shattered bottle. "Just leave it. Taking it back won't change anything. Wait, are you crying?"

She sighed.

"You fool."

"...Yeah."

The moment my friend spoke in a comforting yet teasing tone, I broke down completely. I cried uncontrollably, mourning the fact that even I had finally given up.

When NumNim reached out toward me, Preaw swiftly swatted her hand away without hesitation before gently wiping my tears.

"Tears don’t suit you."

Then, Preaw did something unexpected—she leaned in and pressed a kiss to my cheek, as if trying to chase my tears away.

**"From now on, don’t let me see you cry again. If you do... I’ll kiss you."**

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# Chapter 24: Give Up

Ever since I got kissed on the cheek, I've been sitting stiff, driving absentmindedly, unable to focus on anything.

As for the sadness that had me crying nonstop-it disappeared instantly, like magic. Right now, both Preaw and I are sitting in the car together, completely silent, which feels unusual.

And finally, the person who normally never stops talking, not even for a second, couldn't hold it in any longer.

"Damn it! Stop making that face. Do you think I'm happy? I feel like throwing up, but I can't because I already used the bag to pee in!"

As soon as she finished talking, my friend licked her hand as if trying to get rid of the taste in her mouth.

"Did you dip your face in urine or what? It stinks! It's full of tears too, ugh."

"You idiot, why did you do that?"

I gripped the steering wheel tightly, still in shock.

"You've never kissed me in your life. Of course, I'd be surprised!"

"I was annoyed at your girlfriend. She's so arrogant. I saw her while peeing in the car. She even brushed off your 'precious' perfume like she owned the world. I couldn't just sit and watch with my so-called sense of justice."

"But did you really have to do it to embarrass me?"

"A kiss was enough."

"Eeww..."

"Eeww..."

We both lifted our arms to show the goosebumps that had formed, unable to handle the situation. In the end, my friend's dramatic stunt nearly gave me a heart attack, making me forget all about my earlier pain.

"And what was that dramatic line you said?

*'Don't let me see you cry again, or I'll kiss you*

'-what are you, some demon or devil?"

"Honestly, I was going to say,

*'Don't let me see you cry again, or I'll chant the Pahung prayer for you.'*

But that wouldn't have been as dramatic, right?"

"Whether drama or comedy, you shouldn't have done anything at all."

"I couldn't help it. I just can't stand your girlfriend. She's so fake. Even from far away, without hearing the conversation, I could tell she was making you feel small, worthless. Even a stray dog looks happier than you. Why do you love someone who doesn't care about you? Look at me-I got dumped, and I'm not begging for anyone."

"Well, yeah, because he dumped you. What's there to beg for?"

"And she dumped you too, didn't she?"

"It's not the same. I was the one who lied."

"How long do you have to beg before that girl forgives you? Did she tell you?"

"Stop calling Nim 'that girl.' It's not polite."

"Well, at least I'm not calling her a bitch. Fine, Nim it is.

*Miss Nim!*

"

"I swear, I'm gonna scream at you. Just call her Nim."

"Nim it is."

"Annoying."

Preaw crossed her arms and sighed.

"You never back down like this. Why are you so defeated this time? You're making my own breakup look like nothing."

"I've never been in love before."

"So that's why it feels so huge, huh? There are tons of women in the world. Just pick someone else. If she doesn't love or care about you, why should you care? You're good-looking-though not as much as me, obviously-and you're rich. If you're lonely, just pay for company."

"How did I ever become friends with you?"

I side-eyed her, questioning my own judgment in choosing friends.

"You once told me I don't have body odor, so I was acceptable to hang out with."

"I really need to rethink my life choices. Picking friends based on their scent clearly doesn't filter out bad personalities."

I shook my head at myself and, for the first time, let out a laugh. Seeing me a little less miserable, Preaw shrugged, looking relieved.

"They say that like minded-people attracts each other. If you to date a 'good' person, those people wouldn't want to hang out with you anyway."

"Excuse me?"

I bared my teeth at her as I stopped at a red light.

"Didn't we go to a private school that only took in well-off students? I heard that good schools bring good social circles. Even a servant could end up with a princess. So how the hell did I end up with a lowlife like you?"

"Because you're a lowlife too. Maybe your precious Nim is too good for you."

At that, my mood sank again. Preaw noticed and reached over to pat my shoulder gently, as if to comfort me.

"Alright, how about this? Let's go on a blind date. Swipe around on Tinder for fun and meet some random guys. That way, you can finally move on."

"No."

"What the hell? You got dumped like trash, and you're still being boring? No fun at all."

"At least when I'm with you, I don't cry anymore."

I raised an eyebrow, accepting the truth. Preaw shrugged a little before speaking in a cool, confident tone.

"I told you-when I'm around, you won't cry. Because if you cry..."

"You'll chant

*Pahung Sutra*

?"

"I'll have to chant

*Om Namah Shivaya*

instead."

Preaw frowned slightly, then reached down to scratch under her skirt.

"Ugh, I'm itchy."

"You idiot! Just because I'm your friend doesn't mean you can throw all sense of decency out the window. First, you peed in the car, and now you're scratching *there*

? Disgusting."

"Well, what do you want me to do? I'm itchy! And wow, calling it

*'a delicate spot'* makes it sound so soft and innocent."

"What else am I supposed to call it?"

"...."

"Stop!"

I waved my hand to cut her off.

"Show some respect for the teachers who educated us. Our school has a great reputation. If people find out we graduated from there, I'll die of embarrassment."

"Oh, please! I'm talking to you, not the Prime Minister. Why does it have to be so formal? And I

*am*

itchy. Ughhh."

"Just scratch it."

"I didn't have tissues paper. Hey, how about this? Let's just date each other. I'm willing to have a girlfriend just for you."

"What the hell!! That's disgusting. What do you even want from me?"

"Lick it for me. I feel dirty and damp."

"You're evil!"

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"Hee-halle, halle-wanga! Genie, come out!"

I grabbed the mic and started singing loudly, pouring all my emotions into the song. As I said before, everyone in our group was a business owner, so we could take time off whenever we wanted.

And since Preaw and I both got dumped at the same time-completely unplanned-our friends had all gathered to console us.

"Hey, I got dumped too! Don't steal my spotlight! I wanna sing!"

"Are you Shiva or something? If you can't sing, just chant your prayers."

"Fine! I'll chant to the *Genie in a Bottle* tune.

*Om, om, om Namah Shivaya! Om, om, om Namah Shivaya! Genie, come out! Release the serpent!*

"

"You're seriously cursed. You're gonna get divine punishment for this."

"I'm already going to hell, so I don't care. And guess what? I'll see all of you there! Cheers!"

. .

Alcohol and snacks were scattered across the table. Our friends, who had gathered to cheer us up, were now up and dancing, keeping us company in our misery.

Preaw, who had had come looking beautiful, had now tied her hair up high and was wearing a prayer bead necklace-one she had taken straight from the statue of Budai in Penguin's house-without a single shred of fear for divine punishment.

She was beautiful, sure, but other than that? There was nothing admirable about her.

As we were all caught up in the fun of singing, Aoy peeked over, took my phone without hesitation, and casually checked my messages, not caring at all whether it was rude. And honestly? Everyone here was like that. No manners.

"Fah, your *'Mae Khun'* texted you... Is this that imaginary friend of yours?"

"You're snooping again, aren't you?"

I put down the mic and snatched my phone back. The alcohol was hitting me hard-I was already tipsy after just a little wine. I was a lightweight. But honestly? The buzz made everything more fun, made me bolder.

"Keep singing. I need to reply to a message real quick."

I flopped onto the nearest sofa, licked my lips, and typed back to

*M*

*ae Khun*

, feeling energized.

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**Mae Khun: What are you doing?**

**Hawm Noi: Dancing.**

**Mae Khun**

**: Dancing?**

**Hawm Noi: My friends dragged me out. We're having a party to celebrate being single.**

**Hawm Noi: (Sticker)**

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She went silent for a moment. I almost put my phone down to get back to singing, but then, after about three minutes, she finally replied.

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**Mae Khun: So you've given up? What happened?**

**Hawm Noi**

**: Nothing much. She made it clear she doesn't care about me. I can't buy love.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: The more I try, the more she'll hate me. So I gave up.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: Maybe someday we can be friends.**

**Mae Khun: You already want to be friends? That's fast.**

**Hawm Noi**

**: It's not that I gave up easily. It just hurts more knowing she doesn't love me anymore.**

**Hawm Noi:**

**Better to step back before she hates me. At least if we run into each other, we can still smile.**

**Mae Khun: And you? Don't you love her anymore?**

**Hawm Noi: From now on, I've decided not to love her anymore.**

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Just as I was waiting a reply, my phone suddenly rang, interrupting the moment. I had to close the chat screen to answer the call-it was Aunt Wipha. The least important person in my life. Someone whose words held absolutely no value to me.

Honestly, I wasn't in the mood to answer. But curiosity got the better of me. So, I picked up.

"What is it, Miss Whipa?"

My voice had a slight lilt of drunken cheer. But the person on the other end of the line, filled with sorrow, loneliness, and-if I wasn't mistaken-the sound of stifled sobs.

[I... I need to speak with you, Fah. Just for a little bit. Would it be alright if we met?]

"No. My time is too precious for that. I'm busy."

[Please... You're my only hope now.]

I frowned, confused. How was I her "only hope"? This was the same woman who had spent every waking moment trying to get rid of me at work. She never assigned me anything important, and now suddenly, she wanted to meet?

"You can just say whatever it is over the phone. I don't have time for this."

Her lifeless tone reminded me of myself earlier today, crying my heart out, feeling like I was about to collapse from grief.

Maybe it was my own soft-hearted nature, or maybe it was seeing my reflection in her voice-but against my better judgment, I sighed and relented.

"Fine. Let's meet at the office. It's near my friend's house. What time? How about after work?"

[Anything is fine... Thank you.]

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We both hung up. I rolled my eyes at myself, already regretting my decision, then switched back to my chat with Mae Khun. She had replied.

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**Mae Khun: Can people really stop loving each other that easily?**

**Hawm Noi: It's not easy. But it has to be done.**

**Hawm Noi: Sorry, I was on a call, so I took a while to reply. It's been a long day.**

**Mae Khun: What happened?**

**Hawm Noi: I have to stop by the office later. A senior colleague called me-said she wanted to talk. I heard her crying... and I felt bad for her.**

**Hawm Noi: Her voice reminded me of myself when I was crying, begging for love from that woman. But she didn't care at all.**

**Hawm Noi: You're different, though. We've never even met, but we talk about everything. Thank you for that.**

**Mae Khun: What time are you going?**

**Hawm Noi: Right after work.**

**Mae Khun: Alright. Go have fun with your friends.**

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That was the end of our conversation. I put my phone down and jumped back into dancing. Even though my heart was still crying, I believed that if my body had fun, my emotions would follow.

Having friends during times like these was a blessing.

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I booked a taxi through an app to pick me up from my friend's house and drop me off at the office because I couldn't drive. Relying on Lord Shiva to teleport me there wasn't an option either; she seemed to have already ascended to Mount Kailash, abandoning me in my miserable state.

Honestly, I should've just stayed back and slept off my drunkenness at my friend's place. But since Aunt Wipha insisted on meeting, I had no choice but to go.

Why should I wasting my time on people who doesn't appreciate me?

This wasn't just about an old boss. Even in love, I had always been this way-pouring my time and effort into people who didn't love me back. What a pointless waste of energy.

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By the time I arrived, most employees had already left for the day. A few lingered in the lobby, waiting for traffic to ease up before heading home.

Ever since the whole ordeal where my true identity had been revealed, it seemed like everyone had permanently memorized my face.

The moment they spotted me, they greeted me with warm smiles-some even gave respectful bows. It almost felt like I was walking on a red carpet.

*Ah yes, the daughter of the owner company.*

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"Miss Fah!"

A familiar voice called out just as I reached the elevator. I turned to see Khun Kiart, one of the more dedicated employees who always left work later than everyone else.

I flashed a small, sleepy-eyed smile and responded with a teasing lilt in my voice.

"Good evening, Khun Kiart. You always seem to be the last one out, huh?"

"Yes, I like to stay back and make sure everything's in order. But what about you? What brings you here? You already quit, didn't you?"

I feigned offense, pouting playfully.

"So cruel. Am I not allowed to visit old colleagues?"

"We can talk, I was just saying hi. And your dad has already taken revenge now. You can push that boss out."

I widened my eyes like that striped spider before giving a thumbs-up.

"That's awesome! No wonder that old lady called me crying, wanting to talk. She probably wants another chance."

"If she asks, will you give her, Fah?"

"This is also an important time for revenge, Hehe."

I let out a tiny hiccup and quickly covered my mouth.

Khun Kiart, who must have smelled the alcohol, frowned a little and asked with concern,

"Have you been drinking? How did you get here?"

"I took a taxi."

"And how will you get back?"

"Probably by taxi again."

"No way, that's too dangerous. I'll wait and go back with you."

"Are you sure? You're my dad's secretary, and now you have to take care of his daughter too? That's way beyond your job description."

"It's fine. I'm good at waiting. When you're done, just call me. I'm on standby."

"Got it."

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I walked into the elevator and pressed the button for the 25th floor, where the purchasing department was. When I arrived, I saw Aunt Wipha packing up her desk into a big box, getting ready to leave the office with help from her colleagues.

As soon as everyone saw me, they looked excited and happy. But then they quickly remembered who I was and became overly polite.

"Relax, no need to be so formal. I'm just the boss's daughter, not some princess from the palace."

Even though I said that, everyone still acted politely, so I just sighed a little.

"Fine, whatever. Are you all helping Ms. Wipha pack? You're all so nice. If you're that nice, why not pack your own stuff too?" I teased.

But as soon as they heard that, everyone quickly dropped what they were holding, grabbed their own belongings, bowed quickly, and rushed off like the wind-right as the elevator arrived.

Uh... I was just joking. Why did they take it so seriously?

"Now it's just the two of us, huh? So, Ms. Wipha, I came all the way here to see you. But I might not be able to speak clearly... I'm drunk."

As soon as I finished speaking, Aunt Wipha burst into tears and collapsed onto the floor, hugging her knees, completely forgetting her dignity. My drunkenness faded in an instant, and I quickly helped her up.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm sorry for how I treated you before. I didn't know who you were. If I had known, I never would have done those things."

"So, if I weren't the boss's daughter, you would've just kept bullying me?"

I said, biting my lip in irritation. But hearing her sob like that made me sigh and roll my eyes.

"It's not like you died. You just lost your job. Why are you crying so much?"

"I'm a single mother with three kids to support. This was my only job, and the severance pay will only last a few months. I'm getting older... What am I supposed to do now?"

"You can cook. People need to eat, don't they?"

"Are you serious?"

"You're crying over a joke?"

The sight of her tears softened my irritation, and I pulled up a chair to sit in the department.

"Sit properly, Ms. Wipha. Let's talk."

"I want to beg you."

Then my troublesome ex-boss dropped to her knees and clung to my legs. I tried to stand, but she held me down.

"Please, just listen to me."

"Ms. Wipha, don't make this difficult for me. What do you want me to do?"

"Can you ask your father to cancel the termination? I promise I'll be good." I let out a long sigh.

"From what I heard, my father fired you because he caught you committing fraud. You ordered supplies at a low price and then resold them to the company at a higher price. You've been doing it for years."

"I know, I know... I was wrong. But I needed the money."

"Earning money is fine, but not by stealing from others-especially from my father."

"Then what do I have to do to be forgiven? Do I have to die?"

"If you die, who will take care of your kids?"

"But if I don't have a job, my kids will die anyway! Can't I be forgiven? I've dedicated so many years to this company."

Then she started pouring out her struggles-how hard she worked to get where she was, how one mistake ruined everything, how she had only done it because she picked the wrong person to mess with: me.

Her voice, her desperation-it reminded me of myself, begging NumNim at her doorstep.

And I couldn't help but wonder... If someone is truly remorseful and begging for mercy, why is it so hard to forgive them?

Right now, I am NumNim, and Aunt Wipha is me. The only difference is that our situations are different. But we have one thing in common-we both deceived others.

"I understand you."

I pursed my lips and leaned back against the chair.

"I don't know what my father will say, but I'll try. I'm not making any promises."

"That's enough. That's more than enough...."

Aunt Wipha's tears streamed down her face, so I looked around for some tissues on a nearby desk and handed her one.

"Go home and rest. The sooner you leave, the sooner I can talk to my father."

"Yes, yes, I'll leave right now."

She stood up, bowed deeply, and finally left. Now, the department was empty except for me.

I was hungover. I was emotionally drained. So much had happened in just one day-I had my heart broken, I gave up on love, I came to work, and I gave a second chance to someone I used to hate.

*Why does 24 hours feel so long?*

I leaned back and spun my chair slowly, lost in thought. With my eyes closed, I let myself drift.

Then, out of nowhere, the chair stopped moving.

I tried to push it with my foot, but it wouldn't budge. I opened my eyes to see what was going on.

NumNim was standing behind the chair, holding onto it. She leaned over, looking down at me. The light from above made it hard to see her face clearly.

I must be really drunk if I'm seeing her everywhere.

"I'm so drunk, I see you in everything."

"See who?"

"Wow, even my imagination can talk now."

The moment I said that, my chair was spun around to face the person standing over me. Now there was no glare from the light.

*And I saw her clearly.*

She was wearing the same clothes as this morning-the same person who had broken my heart today.

"No! I won't love you anymore! Get out of my head!"

"....."

"I won't chase you anymore."

"Do you really not love me anymore?"

Tears welled up in my eyes. Maybe it was the alcohol. Maybe it made me weaker than usual.

When my imagination asked me that, I answered like a fool.

"I'm trying... I have to. So many people in the world get their hearts broken, and they survive. I have to survive too. Get out of my head!"

"That's too easy."

NumNim leaned down and kissed me. Her lips were warm and damp.

Then she pulled away slowly.

"You smell like alcohol. How much did you drink?"

I reached out and grabbed the collar of her navy-blue shirt. My eyes widened in shock.

I pulled her closer, sniffing her collar.

Because my nose never lies.

"Is this really Nim?"

"Does it look so fake?"

"How is it possible for Nim to show up here? This is a company."

"I told Khun Kiart that I made an appointment with Fah, so he allowed me to come up."

The sweet-faced person knelt down to make our eye level the same before leaning in again. But I quickly pushed my office chair back and spun around in the opposite direction to escape.

"So, do you need something that made you come here, Nim?"

"I just wanted to talk. This is the first time Fah has ever turned her back on me."

The slightly bitter tone made my heart drop, but I forced myself to stay strong and not look back. I was still hurt and upset about the shattered perfume bottle.

"Fah just doesn't want to see Nim's face."

Everything fell silent. Did my words hurt her? I didn't mean that I didn't want to see her. I just didn't turn around because I was afraid that the more I looked, the harder it would be to let go.

Should I explain? So Nim wouldn't misunderstand?

"I mean..."

I turned my chair toward her, only to see tears streaming down her face. The sight of her crying made my heart melt like wax under heat.

"Does Fah hate Nim now?"

"N-No, that's not what I meant. The reason I don't want to see you again is because I'm afraid I won't be able to move on... and then I'll just keep being a burden to-"

"Then don't move on."

Nim stepped closer, gripping the armrest of my chair tightly.

"I was mad so you would make up with me, not so you would try to move on."

I pursed my lips tightly, torn between feelings. I felt relieved that she didn't hate me, but I was also frustrated that she kept playing with my emotions. For days, I had been restless, unable to eat or sleep properly.

But now, just when I had made up my mind to leave, she was holding me back. It made me feel miserable, like a fool. I had never given in to anyone before, and I wouldn't start now.

"You don't get everything you want, Nim."

I replied firmly and stood up. Nim, who had been hovering over me, had to step back, making way as I walked toward the door.

"I'll give it a try."

"It's just a simple yes or no-"

I turned back in frustration, only to freeze at the sight before me. Her small hands were unbuttoning the navy blue shirt that contrasted against her skin, revealing white lingerie underneath.

"What are you doing?"

"Just curious to see if this will get me what I want."

"What kind of person do you think I am?"

"The person who's staring at me unbuttoning the last button right now." And with that, the final button came undone, revealing everything from the top down to her perfectly shaped navel.

"If you still won't be nice to me, then next, I'll unbutton my pants..."

*Click!*

The button of her white slacks was undone with just one hand, leaving me completely speechless.

**"Fah, you can walk away if you want. I'll give up too... because I've already done my best."**

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# Chapter 25: We're Close Now

"Fah can leave if you want. I will give up too because I have done my best."

I’m not sure if that was a threat or a challenge. I stayed silent and turned my back on her. Honestly, I was very confused at that moment. The effect of alcohol made me feel brave and want to do whatever I wanted.

But my pride and sadness, when I thought about the perfume bottle that fell to the ground today, made me not want to turn around and look at her.

When she was angry, I tried to make up with her, but she didn’t seem to care. But now, when I have decided to leave, she is using her last trick. Don’t think I will give in so easily.

However, I decided to turn around and face NumNim again. Her sweet face looked at me with hope, as if she was sure she would get what she wanted. But I chose to do something else. I grabbed her shirt and slowly buttoned it back up with my trembling hands, full of regret.

"Don’t do this."

"If I don’t do this, Fah will walk away… Fah has given up on Nim."

"I had hurt Fah’s feelings too much."

I sighed and wiped my own tears with my thumb, trying to act cool.

"Using tricks and expecting that I will going back to you, pretending like nothing happened… Once everything is over and a new day starts, you’ll become cold again, and I’ll end up at a disadvantage. I can’t do this anymore, Nim."

"...."

"I love you, Nim. But I also love myself enough not to keep hurting my own heart. When you’re truly ready, when you’re not just hesitating or playing games with me, then we can continue this. That would be better."

After I finished buttoning the last button , I gestured toward the door, inviting NumNim out of the room. The sweet-faced person pursed her lips tightly before slowly walked toward the elevator without saying a word.

I had no idea what was going through her mind, but seeing her so defeated didn’t make me feel any better either.

As soon as the elevator doors closed, she raised a hand to touch the top button of her shirt and whispered in a shaky voice,

"This is so embarrassing."

"....."

"Even after I gave so many hints, yet Fah still rejected me. Knowing that Fah doesn’t want me anymore, but I still tried to hold on… it makes me feel so small. I guess this is how Fah has felt all along, being ignored by me like this."

I glanced at her without making eye contact.

"There’s nothing to be embarrassed about. It’s just me. Why would you need to be ashamed?"

"You say that like we’re really close… even though you just rejected me."

"That’s true. We’re not that close, are we? We barely know each other."

The elevator doors opened as we reached the ground floor. At this hour, only the security guards remained in the building since everyone else had already gone home.

I walked out of the building with NumNim quietly following behind. Trying to lighten the atmosphere, I turned to her and spoke.

"Didn’t someone say she would drive me home?"

"Hmm. But like I said, we barely know each other. I don’t even know where your house is."

I let out a small, awkward smile, feeling a bit guilty.

"I’ll take you there someday."

"Will that day ever come?"

"....."

**"Are we… breaking up?"**

Her hesitant question made me freeze. I didn’t even know what to call our relationship at this point. I was happy she was trying to hold on, but I was also angry that she had hurt me so much.

I loved NumNim too much to ever intentionally hurt her or see her sad, but I also didn’t want to keep hurting myself.

"I don’t wa—"

"I won’t break up with you."

NumNim spoke first, saying exactly what I was about to say. Her words made my heart race, I almost smiled, but I forced myself to keep a straight face as if I felt nothing at all.

*Damn it. I still love her. So much.*

*Showing up like this… I’ve already lost.*

*No… I lost the moment she undid the first button.*

"I'm feeling dizzy… I want to lie down,"

I changed the subject, pretending to be drunk and unsteady. NumNim who was right beside me, reached out to hold me, as if trying to support me.

"Can you walk? If not, just tell me the way home, and I’ll take you there."

"I'm too drunk to give directions."

"How much did you drink?"

"As much as the anger I have toward you."

Silence fell between us. NumNim didn't say anything, waiting for me to decide what to do next.

"My dad's office has a sofa. We can go upstairs and rest for a bit."

"Are you sure that’s okay?"

"It’s fine. There are no security cameras."

"Hmm? And what does that have to do with anything?"

I didn't answer, just kept acting dazed and walked back into the building. By now, the guards already recognized me, so they let me in without any trouble. I took the elevator up to the 50th floor and called my dad to ask for permission to use the office.

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"Dad, I'm really drunk. Can I rest here for a bit?"

[Don't drive if you're drunk. Do you want me to send a driver to pick you up?]

"No need, I just need a short nap. Your sofa is the most comfortable one ever."

[Of course! I picked it out myself, Italian leather, 200,000 baht each, custom-made just for napping.]

"Do executives even do any real work?"

[My job is just to sign contracts and chase after the female lead, just like in a soap opera. Ta-la-la~]

"That sounds amazing. I want to do that too—"

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I giggled while chatting with my dad before hanging up. NumNim, who had been listening to the entire conversation, gave a small smile, finally understanding why I always came here to sleep.

"You come to this room just to sleep, don’t you? Do you know how many thoughts ran through my head every time you disappeared into Mr. Methee's office?"

"What did you think?"

NumNim, who had walked over to grab a bottle of water, clearly familiar with my dad’s office, handed it to me before sitting down beside me.

"Well… a lot of things."

NumNim absentmindedly ran her hand over the Italian leather sofa, her gaze distant.

"I overthought so much that I ended up feeling like a pervert."

"They say people with that still virgin have the wildest imagination. It’s not being a pervert at all. I’m the same."

"So, are you saying you’re a virgin?"

"Something like that."

I raised an eyebrow before lying down, but NumNim, who had been unexpectedly gentle tonight, pulled me toward her lap instead.

"It’s more comfortable here."

"It really is,"

I murmured, turning to face her and resting my head against her stomach. The warmth and familiar scent reminded me of something sweet and nostalgic. I inhaled deeply.

"I missed this. I missed your scent. I missed being with you like this. How long has it been?"

"It hasn’t even been two weeks since I got mad at you."

"It feels like a hundred years. Maybe I’m just dreaming. A good dream where we’ve made up. But once I wake up, everything will go back to how it was, you’ll be distant again, and I’ll have to tell myself to just let go."

"....."

"But before I wake up, let me enjoy this dream a little longer."

I slipped my hand under the fabric of her shirt, resting my palm against her chest to feel the steady rhythm of her heartbeat. NumNim didn’t push me away, instead, she took a slow, deep breath.

"This feels so real… I can feel your heartbeat in my hand."

"I thought you didn’t want to do things like this."

I sat up and moved over her, leaning in to press soft kisses along her face.

**"There was never a time I didn’t want to, except when there were security cameras."**

"What? Oh…"

Her expression changed as she seemed to finally understand why I had rejected her before. She pinched my waist lightly, making me flinch.

"You're so mean. You seem to acting all cool. And I thought you weren’t thinking about anything like this at all."

"Like I said, I’m still a virgin. That just means my imagination is even stronger than someone with experience. You have no idea what I’ve imagined doing with you every single day."

I guided her hand under my shirt, and she followed my lead without hesitation, her lips grazing against my neck as if encouraging me to react.

"But… I never imagined doing something like this on my dad’s 200,000baht sofa."

"That’s perfect, then."

NumNim suddenly flipped me onto my back, pressing me against the couch. She started unbuttoning her own shirt, revealing smooth, fair skin beneath the dark blue fabric.

"Because Nim has imagined plenty of things we could do up here."

"That sounds interesting… I’d love to learn more about your imagination—

mmh…"

Our clothes came off piece by piece until we were bare. The warm orange light from the desk lamp spread over both of us. The natural scent of our bodies filled the air, and I could feel it making the atmosphere grow warmer. It was not a sweet fragrance, but it was not unpleasant either.

It was a unique scent, and I liked it more than any perfume in the world.

The two of us exchanged tastes with each other in secret places that no one could see except for close friends who we had to trust quite a bit.

These kinds of strange sounds coming out of our throats, people who were not close to each other would never hear, even if they were friends.

"I know Nim more now, since today,"

I said while pressing the head of the person who got to know my body curiously.

"We are closer now... but I want to know Fah even more."

The tongue of the sweet-faced person had rhythm, and that almost made me choke on my own moans before I tightened my body and quickly moved her into a position where I needed to explore and get to know her better.

"Today we will know each other more than anyone else in the world."

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I pulled the sweet-faced person up to my level and then rolled her down under me. We both laughed softly, like people who were a little shy. Then we started kissing each other. We had done this before, but never this deeply. So it was a little awkward, and we moved a bit clumsily.

Our bodies touched, our skin rubbed together until we were one. The sounds of our moans blended together, like we were singing a duet. When her body was ready, I moved her legs apart and joined with her, and she gasped because she was ready.

Our movements started slow, then changed to faster rhythm as her emotions grew. Everything ended quickly because the emotions came and went fast. After she finished the love song, she pushed me down and copied what I had just done.

My head was empty, everything was blurry. I could only moan loudly in response to the love she gave me.

Everything squeezed and showed that our bodies had reached the peak. The sweet-faced person who knew this pulled her hands away and hugged me. We held each other tightly, our bodies covered in sweat.

The first love scene passed. It went well, even though it was fast, it felt like we spoke through body language. She pulled back and touched our foreheads together. Our noses touched, and we spoke to each other with love.

"We are good now."

"We can't be bad anymore. We've come this far."

I pulled her into a tight hug, holding her with my legs, and I smelled her neck and the lovely scent on her body, lost in the smell.

I can’t escape…

*How did I come to love her this much?*

I’ve never felt this way before, and it seems like I will never love anyone this much again.

"I love you, Fah."

And it seems like she feels the same way…

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This was our first making love. Even though it was a bit awkward, nature, instinct and a little knowledge from watching some clips helped us get through it.

We lay on the sofa, facing opposite directions, our legs casually tangled together, staring at the ceiling in silence. I didn’t know what NumNim was thinking, but I was wondering if maybe I forgave the sweet-faced girl too easily.

But it was a good reconciliation, really good. I just didn’t know if she felt the same.

"What are you thinking about?"

NumNim nudged my hip lightly with her bare foot before propping herself up on her arm. Some of her clothes, which had fallen off earlier, were now placed over her chest, as if she still felt shy, even though I had already seen everything.

"I'm thinking… it's so nice to have this room. It's so nice that I am holding your back,"

I said, propping myself up and looking at the sweet-faced girl.

"Did I forgive Nim too quickly?"

"I used an ultimate move. If Fah still wasn’t okay with Nim, Nim wouldn’t know what else to do."

"True, it’s not fair at all. But thinking about it… if I unbuttoned my own shirt to tease Nim, would you forgive Fah just easily?"

"If you did that while sitting in a tree, it wouldn’t work. You’d just look like a monkey showing off."

"Come on, what kind of monkey could be this cute?"

"No, I just feels like this time Fah was serious. I probably would have turned your back on me for real… and I hurt your feelings so badly, even breaking the perfume you loved like a child. Your eyes looked completely heartbroken."

Nim looked genuinely guilty, which made me smile a little. I couldn’t help but nudge her with my foot.

"Don't make that sad face. It makes me feel bad. I don’t like seeing Nim sad,"

I said, flashing a big smile to cheer her up before suddenly furrowing my brows at a thought.

"By the way, how did Nim know that I loved that perfume like a child?"

"Hmm? Well… You mentioned it once, if Nim remembers correctly."

"When?"

"I don’t remember… Are you sober now? Can you go home yet?"

"You changed the subject so fast."

NumNim got up and gathered the scattered clothes in her arms, looking around for a place to change. I chuckled at her hesitation. She could have just changed right there, but she was too shy to do it in front of me.

"Can't change it here?"

"I am shy."

"Oh, my love, just now we did more than taking off clothes."

"What happened just now was just now. It was too much. If I show everything, there will be nothing left to discover. You will get bored."

"I will never get bored of my cute and soft one."

But the soft one, NumNim, still walked away to change behind my dad's desk. I sat up, gathered my clothes, and put them on.

I suddenly wanted to know what was going on in the world, so I picked up my phone and started scrolling like someone addicted to social media.

Then I remembered I was still in the middle of a conversation with my friend and hadn’t replied yet.

To avoid seeming cold or distant, I sent a sticker of a little bear throwing hearts. At that exact moment, NumNim phone vibrated on the table.

Hmmm.

I tried sending the sticker again. Buzz!

Could there really be such a coincidence in this world? I tried sending it once more.

*Buzz!*

Out of curiosity, I reached out to grab NumNim's phone, but she was faster and took it before I could.

"What’s this? Why did you snatch it so quickly? Is it a guy texting you?"

"Just a little. Nim has a lot of charm, you know,"

She answered while unlocking her phone to read the message. Something about it didn’t sit right with me, and with everything feeling like too much of a coincidence, I couldn’t hold back my question.

"I was going to ask this since I saw you, how did you know I was at the office?"

She hesitated slightly before responding with a calm expression.

"I just guessed."

"Guessed? How could you guess I’d be here when I already resigned? The chances of that happening are, like, 1 in 50."

"Then I must have really calculated it correctly, so hit the jackpot, 1 in 50."

That answer wasn’t convincing at all. NumNim avoided the topic and squinted at me.

"Why are you still not dressed? I’ve already finished getting ready… Come here, I’ll help you."

NumNim picked up my shirt, put it on me, and buttoned it up carefully, as if she were taking care of me. I watched her, feeling uneasy, everything felt too coincidental.

"Will you make perfume for Nim again?"

"Hmm? But Nim doesn’t even like perfume."

"If you makes it, I will wear it. Or at least, I will use the scent Fah sprayed on me."

She lowered her head, inhaling the scent from my shirt while fastening the buttons.

"That way, when I smell it, I’ll think of Fah. Hmm… it really does smell nice."

The buttons she had just fastened slowly came undone again. My head was filled with too many thoughts, but as soon as she nuzzled into my neck, I lost myself in the moment, forgetting entirely what I had been questioning.

"Just now, you were telling me to go home."

"Home isn’t going anywhere. Do you want to leave already?"

"If there’s something else to do here, then I won’t."

"Good. It looks like there’s something for you to do now."

"But we’re already dressed."

"If we can put them on, we can take them off."

And yes… the scent of my perfume kept us in that room until morning… without a single reply from Mae Khun, as if she was too busy to talk, occupied with something else.

Something that, by pure coincidence, involved me.

Coincidentally, she was the owner of the suitcase.

The one who knew I loved perfume like it was a part of me.

The one who knew I was about to give up.

The one who knew I would come here.

**Coincidentally, it was her… NumNim.**

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# Chapter 26: Meet Up

I arranged another meeting with my friends after the fun time we had. Now, everyone gathered at Preaw's house because she was too lazy to shower and leave the house.

"Maybe, I think I know why your boyfriend broke up with you,"

Penguin said while looking at our friend who hadn't showered since yesterday until this evening. She had a disgusted expression on her face.

"You're so dirty. Does being heartbroken mean you have to act like a mess? I'm insulting you. Can't you hear me? You're just sitting there, playing with your phone!"

"I don't understand human language,"

Preaw replied, showing her phone screen that showing she was shopping online.

"Yeah, you don't understand human language, but you can shop just fine.

And what's with the dog collar?"

"I bought it for myself. I'm practicing being a dog,"

Preaw mocked me, showing her teeth.

"Yesterday, you were crying your eyes out. Today, you suddenly say everything's okay. You didn't even care about my dramatic moment when I was doing a scene from a Korean drama."

"Shut up. You're crazy. Who said you're a dog? Only people pee in cars. Damn, the smell is still there."

"Then we're okay now, right? But I still feel weird. Yesterday, I pushed

NumNim's hand away, and she almost slapped me, she looked like she hated me. Next time, just tell me if we're gonna fight, so we don't make things bigger."

"That's why people say don't get involved in couple fights,"

Penguin reminded, and Preaw shrugged.

"Don't you remember when Fah stormed to Phantom's table in the cafeteria in 10th grade? Two days later, they made up. It was the same thing."

"Yeah, she was small and weak," Preaw smiled awkwardly at me.

"So, we're even now, baby. Muah."

I gave a grateful wink at Penguin, who helped make peace between the heartbroken Preaw and me. Penguin then got back to the previous topic.

"So, what's going on now? Are you sure NumNim and the woman who swapped bags are the same person? Do you have proof?"

"It's all about timing and intuition. I'm 90% sure, but I still have 10% doubt. But my gut says it's definitely her."

"Then why don't you just ask directly if she's the owner of the bag? Why make it complicated?"

"If love were easy, it wouldn't be fun,"

Preaw, the love expert, answered, understanding the rules of the universe.

"It's like sex. If it were too simple, it wouldn't be exciting, nothing new, but if we switch things up, on the dining table, on the balcony, our brains will be excited by the novelty and keep wanting more."

"You're talking about sex again,"

I shook my head, but Preaw lifted her leg and lightly kicked my waist. "What was that for?"

"Just getting you used to it. You just had a great night, didn't you? If you need advice, I'm here. I've been through this whole dating-girls thing. Whatever you want, just ask. If you need lessons, I'm ready to pass on my wisdom. Now come on, sing it...

*Pajera Jariya Honti*

."

"Somebody, please take this heartbroken idiot away."

"This is my house!"

"I also have a feeling that NumNim knows I'm the one who swapped the bag. The reason I haven't told her is that I want to see what she's thinking, why didn't she just admit who she is? What kind of game is she playing?"

I sighed and leaned back against the couch, which was slightly less comfortable than my dad's office chair.

"Maybe she wants revenge,"

Aoy chimed in, scratching her chin in thought.

"At first, you tricked her. When she figured it out, she started playing you back, making you do things for her, liking your shark hands one minute, making you bring her perfume the next. She's leading you around, pulling at your heartstrings. But this time, she might have gone a bit too far. She realized how much she hurt you when you told Mae Khun that. She loves you, but she also holds a grudge."

"So what should I do?"

"Nothing. Just go along with it. I don't think NumNim is that mad at you anymore. Maybe she even wants to tell you the truth but doesn't know how."

"Then what do I do next?"

"You have to arrange to swap the bags back. Then, you'll step out of a fancy car, rolling your suitcase dramatically to the meeting point while *Academy Fantasia* plays in the background."

Preaw snapped her fingers excitedly at her ridiculous, over-the-top idea. I gave her a tired look and spit at her nonsense that would never end.

"You can't turn everything into a joke, Preaw."

"I don't see the problem. Just ask to exchange the bags, and that's it. She sees you, you see her, she confesses that she's the Mae Khun, and you tell her,

*'I'm Fah, the one you called Hawm Noi.'*

Then, you two fall in love and live happily ever after. The end."

"It's really that easy, huh?"

"Of course. Love is supposed to be easy. Trust me. Just like me."

"Like you how?"

"Easy to date, quick to break up. The law of the universe."

I'm completely sure that the owner of the bag is definitely NumNim. If I'm not mistaken, the voice I heard when I first found out about the swapped bags is hers. No doubt about it. But just to be sure, and so I don't look stupid, I need to have a backup plan.

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**Hawm Noi: What are you doing?**

**Mae Khun: I'm rolling around in bed. How about you?**

**Hawm Noi: I'm with some friends. Mae Khun: You've got a lot of friends**

**.**

**Hawm Noi: Only a few are actually friends, including you.**

**Hawm Noi: Now that I think about it, I kind of want to meet you in person.**

**Mae Khun: Suddenly want to meet? What's going on?**

**Hawm Noi: One, I want to swap the bags. Two, I really want to see your face seriously. If that's okay, should we meet tomorrow?**

**Hawm Noi: Is that too soon?**

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There was a brief silence. My friends who were hovering around reading my messages stopped breathing, eagerly waiting for a response.

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**Mae Khun: Tomorrow sounds fine. Actually, I've got a lot I want to talk to you about.**

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Nim agreed to meet tomorrow, but for some reason, I needed to ask my friends if anyone could accompany me and help play the role of Hawm Noi and meet her first.

"Ugh, why do you have to send someone else to swap the bags for you? Are you worried it's a drug deal or something? So complicated."

Preaw crossed her arms, not getting it.

"I would've sent you, but with your big mouth, if it were really NumNim, she'd probably slap you in the face,"

I said, licking my lips a little before going quiet. My friends, noticing my odd behavior, started staring at me more seriously than before.

"So what's the deal, Fah? Why do you need a stand-in?"

"Just in case it's not NumNim," I replied.

"And?"

"I'm too scared to meet Mae Khun in person if she's not NumNim like I thought,"

I crossed my arms, trying to shield myself from the potential danger, and bit my finger nervously.

"I'm scared."

"Scared of what? If it's not NumNim, then why be scared?"

"I'm afraid she will be disappointed that I'm not what she expected, and I'm also afraid that I will be disappointed if Mae Khun isn't who I thought she was."

"Ugh, I'm so confused. Fah, just explain it clearly! I've already showered, stripped naked, even peed in a car, there's nothing left to hide! Just say it!

What are you doing, and why?"

"....."

"I'm not going to insult you or judge you. Just tell me, what are you so scared of?"

*"Fah secretly has feelings for Mae Khun too."*

Penguin's words made everyone go silent, except Preaw.

"You traitor! Evil bastard! Is this what love turns into when it's in play?!"

"Didn't you say you wouldn't judge?"

I snapped at Preaw, who pouted and turned away in a sullen manner.

"I hate people who can't stay loyal.

*Hmph*

!"

Because I felt exactly like what they were saying, I got nervous. I wanted it to be NumNim, but I was also preparing myself in case it wasn't. People are supposed to love just one person, that's whats considered right.

"Does online love even exist?"

Aoy, who never believed in relationships through text, frowned and shook her head.

"You've only ever talked through messages. You've never even seen her face. And you already have feelings? Are you serious?"

"It's not like that... but I really believe that NumNim and Mae Khun are the same person. I'm 100% sure!"

"If you're so sure, then why don't you just go and meet her yourself?"

"Enough talking! That's the plan!"

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After finalizing our strategy, I had Aoy go in first the next day. I explained everything, how we met, what to say, just like briefing someone on a role.

Aoy understood the story, she got out of the car, took Mae Khun's suitcase, and walked into the restaurant where NumNim and I had our first meal together. While I secretly stayed outside, watching from a distance.

We scheduled the meeting for around 1:30 PM since it wouldn't be too crowded on a weekday. Aoy was already inside, and now all that was left was waiting for Mae Khun to arrive.

Aoy and I agreed to hide the suitcase at first while keeping an eye on the entrance. If anyone walked in with a matching suitcase, that had to be Mae Khun. Or if it was NumNim, that would confirm my suspicions.

As I waited, my phone suddenly rang. The screen showed NumNim's name, and that made me smile a little before picking up the call.

"Hey, babe."

My greeting instead of a normal "hello" made the voice on the other end hesitate shyly.

[Crazy.]

"We're back to how we used to be, right?"

[We've been fine since yesterday, why do you keep bringing it up?]

"Making up after a fight is such a good feeling."

[What are you doing?]

"What about you, Nim? What are you up to?"

I kept my eyes on the restaurant, curious about how NumNim would respond. I figured she was asking because she expected me to say I was outside somewhere, just to be sure. So, I did exactly that.

[I'm outside. What about you, Fah?]

"I'm outside too."

[Where?]

"At a restaurant."

[Which one?]

"Guess."

[Hmm... it has to be our usual spot.]

I smiled, glancing at the restaurant with anticipation.

"Well... hang on, I have another call coming in. Let me take this first."

I switched the call to Aoy, who had just called me. Looking across the street, I saw my friend standing up, holding her phone as she spoke to me.

"What's up?"

[I just saw someone walk in with a suitcase just like yours. Is this NumNim? She's cute... Hello there, are you Mae Khun?]

I stood up from where I was watching and lifted the binoculars I had bought specifically for this moment, zooming in on the person entering the restaurant.

Aoy was still on the call, keeping the line open so I could hear the conversation, just as we had planned.

"Yes, that's me. And you must be Hawm Noi? We've been chatting for a while. It's nice to finally meet."

"What should I call you?"

Aoy asked politely, but I was no longer interested in the answer. My hand dropped the binoculars to my side, frozen in shock. Even though I still held my phone to my ear, my mind went blank.

*Because the person who showed up... wasn't who I had expected.*

I wasn't exactly disappointed with who she was, but it would have been much easier if it had been NumNim. At least then, I wouldn't be feeling this way.

**"Just call me Paint... Hawm Noi."**

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# Chapter 27: Identity

After regaining my composure, I sat there listening to Aoy talking with my new friend, Mae Khun, whose name was "

*Paint*

". From my perspective, she looked good. Not strikingly beautiful, probably because she wasn't wearing any makeup, so she didn't stand out like some people.

From my observations, she gave off the vibe of a slightly tomboyish woman, someone independent and simple. A loose white button-up shirt paired with blue jeans made her look effortlessly casual.

Her light brown hair was tied up high, secured with what seemed to be a pencil or maybe a pen instead of a hairpin. Her voice as she spoke to Aoy was pleasant to listen to, but...

*Unfamiliar.*

I didn't recognize this voice at all, which made me a little suspicious. A small part of me still held onto the hope that maybe she wasn't the real one, just like how I had sent someone in my place.

"It's nice to finally meet after talking for so long,"

Aoy lifted her cup of hot coffee and took a polite sip, maintaining the refined manners of a well-bred lady.

"Why did it take us this long to meet?"

"Meeting a stranger can be a little nerve-wracking, don't you think?"

"True,"

Aoy tilted her head slightly before gently placing her coffee cup back down.

"By the way, how old are you?"

"I'm 31 now. And you?"

"28, turning 29 next month... hmm, should I call you P' then?"

"We're only a year or two apart. Calling me P' feels too distant. Let's just talk like friends, like how we've been chatting."

"That makes sense."

Then they both laughed at each other.

Listening in, I scrunched my face slightly. Normally, Aoy didn't act like this, so polite and graceful, like a main character in a drama.

This is completely fake.

I had to give her credit, though, she was playing the role well, despite us knowing each other's true personalities inside and out.

"I heard you went to France for a perfume course?"

"Are you saying that just to remind me about the perfume? Well, here it is."

Aoy handed over the perfume I had attached with her, presenting it as if she had personally crafted it with great effort.

"From our conversations, I figured this scent would suit you, warm, with a hint of hidden mischief. Someone who understands others well and enjoys a little mystery."

"Me? Liking mystery? What made you think that?"

Paint reached for the perfume and uncapped it to take a whiff.

"It smells wonderful. Not too sweet, a little fresh, slightly citrusy."

"And the final note is what we call

*'mysterious'.*

You have to use it. Otherwise, the person who made it will be heartbroken."

"Of course, I'll use it. Something this unique, it must be one of a kind."

"No one else has a scent like this."

Aoy hyped up my perfume completely, resting her chin on the back of her hand as she shifted into information-gathering mode, checking the details we had planned beforehand.

"By the way, do you read Pluto?"

"Pluto? Oh... the novel? It's my younger sister's. I grabbed it from Bangkok before my trip so I could read it on the plane."

"Oh? I thought you might like women or something."

"You don't have to like women to read it. Novels are just for entertainment. But... if you're asking whether I like women, honestly, I don't really mind either way. What about you?"

Paint mirrored Aoy's posture, leaning in with curiosity.

"Do you like women?"

Aoy paused for a moment, then smiled and glanced outside the restaurant, as if checking whether I was watching.

Hearing the entire conversation, my heart skipped a beat at how casually Paint had thrown out that question. I wanted to signal my friend, but I couldn't.

Everything depended on how Aoy chose to answer.

She didn't disappoint me. If Paint was going to flirt, Aoy wasn't about to lose.

**"If it's you, I wouldn't mind."**

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. .

On the way back, Aoy sat in the car with me, completely silent. I glanced at her, unable to hold back my curiosity.

"What's up with you?"

"I'm still shocked."

"Shocked about what?"

"My heart actually raced for a woman,"

She muttered, rubbing her chest.

"I think I finally understand why you date girls. There's something about them that guys just don't have."

"Wait, are you into Paint now?"

"No!"

"Why are you yelling? I was just asking."

"Because that's a ridiculous question!"

Aoy crossed her arms defensively.

"Besides, she's yours. I wouldn't steal her."

At that, I bit my lip. Like I had said before, the Mae Khun I had been talking to online for so long was charming, warm, and sometimes even seductive. Looking at Paint now... she was exactly like the person I had imagined Mae Khun to be.

*Maybe Mae Khun isn't really Nim?*

That would mean I had feelings for two women at the same time.

"I already have a girlfriend. I was actually planning to introduce her to you all soon."

"Good. I've been waiting to meet the person who made my friend cry her heart out."

Aoy shook off her strange thoughts and pressed her hands together in prayer.

"Om Na Ma Shiva."

"What the hell are you chanting?"

"Thinking about something sacred might help me feel better. Meeting Paint today really opened my eyes, I admit it."

I laughed at Aoy's reaction before sighing again. My frustration was obvious enough that she noticed and couldn't help but ask,

"So, are you happy or disappointed that the person you met wasn't

NumNim?"

"Disappointed, of course. I wanted it to be NumNim. Maybe she did the same thing as me, sent someone else to meet instead because she wasn't ready to face me herself. Maybe she wanted to be sure, too."

"Well, just like we planned, if Mae Khun is really NumNim, she'll definitely use the perfume you gave her. It's one of the few, isn't it?"

"And what if NumNim doesn't use it?"

"Do you really need another reason?"

I didn't say anything else, just focused on driving while dropping Aoy off at her house. But my head was filled with disappointment, mixed with fear of my own feelings.

But so what? Feelings alone didn't mean anything if I wasn't going to act on them. As long as it stayed in my head, it wasn't wrong, right?

Besides... Mae Khun only saw me as a friend. Everything would be fine. I already had a girlfriend. This couldn't go any further.

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**Mae Khun: Exciting, huh? Finally getting to meet today.**

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After returning home, Mae Khun, who had probably just arrived at her place as well, texted me right away.

The person I was talking to now was Paint, but in my mind, I still pictured NumNim's face. Probably because her profile picture was Mew Nittha, making it impossible for me to picture Paint instead.

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**Hawm Noi: Yeah, it was really exciting. We've been talking for so long, it's nice to finally see each other in person.**

**Mae Khun: So? Now that you've met me, what do you think?**

**Hawm Noi: What do you mean? In what way?**

**Mae Khun: Are you disappointed?**

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I smiled at that question. She must have been thinking the same thing as me, not confident in herself.

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**Hawm Noi: Not at all. You're really cute.**

**Hawm Noi: You're confident, simple, easy to talk to. You never make a conversation feel boring. But enough about you, what about me? Are you disappointed after meeting me?**

**Mae Khun: Not at all. You're really impressive.**

**Mae Khun: You carry yourself well, you're articulate, and you know how to keep a conversation going. You never make things awkward.**

**Hawm Noi: If you compliment me like that...if you were a man, I would think we are here to meet for marriage.**

**Mae Khun: If we were meeting for marriage, would I pass?**

**Hawm Noi: What about you? Did I pass?**

**Mae Khun: Not telling.**

**Hawm Noi: I won't tell either.**

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We both went silent. I waited for the other person to reply, but there was nothing, so I stopped talking too. While we were talking, I felt my heart racing in a way I couldn't explain.

There was nothing rude or wrong in our words, but it still made my heart flutter. When I thought I was feeling too much, I quickly shook my head and thought about NumNim, whose face in my mind looked just like Mae Khun's.

*This one is the real one. This one is the best!*

I quickly grabbed my phone and called the sweet-faced girl. She picked up the phone fast, almost as if she had been holding it.

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"Do you miss me?"

[I miss you.]

Her quick answer made me feel a little strange.

"What's this? I thought you would play hard to get."

[Why make things complicated? If I miss you, I'll say it. I want to see you. Can you come to my house? We can eat together.]

"Sure."

[Not going to play hard to get?] "I want to see you now. In 20 minutes."

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I hung up the phone and quickly grabbed my keys to start the car. Even though I had just come home, I felt guilty, so I rushed to make up for it.

What made me upset was that the person in my mind looked exactly like NumNim, even though in real life, they looked nothing alike.

When I arrived, NumNim stepped out of the house and smiled at me from a distance.

"You came fast!"

"I had to. I missed you..."

Before I could finish, Nim pulled me into a tight hug and sniffed my neck.

"This isn't the same perfume as before."

I smiled.

"I changed it."

"This one... it smells like I've smelled it somewhere before."

"It's a brand from the mall. Maybe you've walked past someone wearing it."

"Why didn't you wear the one that is the only scent in the world?"

"I broke it."

"..."

"But I can use any scent."

"But I'm the one who has to smell it."

"So, you don't like this one?"

"I like the old one better, but it's okay. No matter what scent you use, I'll still love you."

We hugged each other even tighter after Nim said that. I gently rubbed her back and rested my chin on her shoulder, staring blankly ahead.

"I love you so much, Nim."

"You are good at saying I love you."

The sweet-faced girl pulled away and raised an eyebrow.

"What are we doing today?"

"Why are you asking? What do you want to do?"

"Pervert! You always think about that."

"You don't?"

"...I do."

"See?"

"But that should be last on the list. We have so many other things to do." "I'm just messing with you. Today, I want to introduce you to my real life." I said, swinging her hand back and forth.

"You always say you don't know much about me, and I've always felt guilty about that. So this time, I'm bringing you into my world."

"Your world? Now I'm excited. What are we going to do?"

"There's someone I want you to meet."

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Our little gathering took place once again at Preaw's house, where my friends had come together for this special occasion. The only one missing was Aoy, I had asked her not to come.

I was still uncertain about Mae Khun. If NumNim really was Mae Khun and had sent someone in her place, Aoy would instantly recognize as I sent her as well. That's why, at this moment, it was just me, Penguin, and Preaw, with NumNim as the newcomer to our group.

But I had forgotten one small detail... NumNim and Preaw had already met before. And it was not a good first impression.

As soon as they saw each other, they stood face to face, locking eyes in silent battle. Neither was willing to back down. I quickly stepped between them, forcing a proper introduction.

"Nim, this is Preaw... she's my friend. And Preaw, this is Nim-"

"We've met before,"

Preaw cut in, crossing her arms and shifting her weight like she was getting ready to throw hands.

That was when Penguin leaned over and whispered,loud enough for all of us to hear.

"She's a martial arts instructor."

Preaw immediately changed her posture, twirling her hair instead, realizing she probably wouldn't stand a chance in a fight.

"I remember you... You're the one who said you'd kiss Fah if she cried. Do friends kiss each other?"

"Kissing isn't a big deal. Fah is adorable."

Preaw threw an arm around my neck and pulled me close, something she had never done before, clearly irritated.

"She's this cute, and yet you still managed to hurt her. You smashed her perfume on the ground, even though you knew she treasured it like her own child."

NumNim, already feeling guilty, straightened her back and responded with a soft smile.

"I didn't do it on purpose."

"Good. Because if you did, that would make you an awful person."

"Let's all go inside,"

Penguin quickly stepped in, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere while inviting everyone in. But Preaw, still annoyed, didn't let it slide so easily.

"You're acting like this is your house. This is my house!"

"Weren't you the one who told us to make ourselves at home? This bitch is so fickle. Come on in, NumNim. Just ignore her nonsense."

"I don't mind...this is Fah's world,"

NumNim replied, linking her arm through mine before walking inside.

Preaw followed with heavy steps and dropped down beside me, while NumNim sat on my other side. Suddenly, I felt like the middle of a tug-ofwar.

"These two have been my closest friends since middle school. We've been through everything together."

"That's true," Preaw jumped in.

"We've known each other since before we even got our periods. Before our breasts even started growing."

She wiggled her eyebrows, but NumNim only frowned slightly before brushing it off.

"You must be really close," NumNim nodded.

"No wonder Preaw gets so defensive over Fah. I understand now."

"Of course," Penguin added.

"Whenever Fah is hurting, we're always the ones by her side."

"That's wonderful," NumNim smiled.

"Since she has people to comfort her when she's sad, I want to be the one who always makes her happy."

"Oh..."

Penguin took a sip of water while Preaw shot NumNim a side glance, then muttered under her breath"You won, you damn bastard."

Preaw turned away for a moment, likely thinking of her next move, before facing NumNim again with a smug grin.

"That's great! People who bring happiness... usually end up being the cause of someone else's pain as well. But I see our dear friend here looks very happy today. No more crying, right?"

"Preaw, drop it,"

I mouthed at her before forcing an awkward smile at NumNim.

"No more tears anymore. Fah and I have cleared everything up. From now on, she won't be crying."

"....."

"Because there are plenty of other things we'll be losing instead."

"What are you talking about?!"

Preaw's curiosity made her momentarily drop her cool demeanor before she quickly recovered.

"Well, whatever it is, it's nothing compared to mine."

"And what exactly is yours?"

"I... peed in Fah's car."

"What?! How is that something to brag about?"

"Well, that's the only kind of ' *liquid*

' I have,"

Preaw said with a deadpan expression. The intense exchange suddenly shifted as NumNim, who had been arguing, turned to laugh and took a sip of water to calm herself. Seeing NumNim smile like that, Preaw felt like she was being mocked.

"Why are you laughing? This isn't a joke!"

"You're funny without even realizing it,"

Penguin said, laughing along with NumNim. But Preaw wasn't having it.

"I'm not a clown! I'm the main character, Fah!"

Preaw suddenly pulled me close, cupping my face with both hands.

"I never lose!"

"What are you-mmph!"

Before I could finish, Preaw suddenly pressed her lips against mine without warning.

"What are you doing?!"

NumNim, who had been laughing, immediately froze in shock at what was happening.

In an instant, she reached out with lightning speed, pulling my head away from Preaw's grip, squeezing herself between us, and pushing Preaw's face back.

However, Preaw, unwilling to back down, struggled to break free. Amidst the chaos, NumNim's hand slipped, causing Preaw to lean forward abruptly, and in an instant, their lips accidentally met.

*For about half a second, they unintentionally kissed.*

Then, as if a sudden cold wind had swept through, they instantly pulled away from each other.

"Preaw..."

"..."

**"Oh my god!!!"**

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# Chapter 28: Turn off the light

"Shit."

My loud voice made both Preaw and NumNim move away from each other. They quickly went to opposite corners like they were scared, as if they were haunted.

Everyone in the room looked at each other, not knowing what kind of face to make. Should it be a funny face? Should it be serious? Or should they act like nothing happened?

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**Thump thump...**

**Thump thump...**

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I am not sure if this is the sound of my own heart, or if I am imagining it as the sound of both their hearts. Both NumNim and Preaw stared at each other, shocked. The aura of their battle faded into erotic jazz song.

"Shit, my hand accidentally pressed my phone, what song is playing at this moment?!"

Penguin, who accidentally pressed a romantic song on iTunes, quickly turned it off. The song made the situation even more awkward, and both of them turned bright red.

"I win,"

Preaw said first. That made Nim frown, unable to accept the loss.

"How can you win? What are you judging it by?"

"Whoever vomits first loses."

"How?"

"I haven't brushed my teeth yet."

NumNim and I stared at each other for a moment, then quickly turned away, and...

*"Euekkkk!"*

This evil friend, she really won!!! Why does my life have to be so messed up? *Sigh*

.

It looks like bringing NumNim to meet my friends in my social circle was a bit scary, and now I'm really afraid that my sweet-faced girl will get scared of being with me in so many ways.

The first time, I lied to her that I was poor, and when I had the chance to explain, I ended up bringing her to meet friends who seemed like they'd just come from hell, doing all sorts of crazy stuff.

"Nim... I'm sorry."

As we were driving away from my friend's house, I spoke first.

"Huh? What are you apologizing for?"

"About my friend, Preaw,"

I made a face like I was about to cry, wanting my girlfriend, who is my heart, to know how guilty I felt. "Why apologize? It was fun."

"Fun? How could that be fun?"

"Fah, you should understand that when Preaw said she hadn't brushed her teeth, it was to ease the awkwardness. Honestly, if you hadn't brought me out before, me and Preaw might not have become close."

The sweet-faced one shrugged slightly.

"We even kissed."

"Eww, hurry up and wash your mouth out. Don't catch any weird infection from her."

"You'll catch it too. You kissed your friend too,"

NumNim turned to look at me with sharp eyes.

"By the way, are you close enough with your friend that you take showers and kiss each other?"

"Preaw is overacting. She just wanted to win. Even after messing up by kissing, she still tried to find a way to win. You saw it, Nim."

"That's true,"

The sweet-faced one nodded in agreement.

"You and Preaw are very different, though."

"How?"

"You have funny, wild friends. Even though you're rich, you act like regular people. You speak casually and aren't trying to control anyone. Preaw is like that too. I even thought when I came here, I'd be judged by Preaw for dating you because you have money."

"They won't judge, because I already told them that I tricked you from the beginning."

"That's true... Or maybe your friends think Fah isn't serious about me, so they didn't really care much about your status."

"Why do you think that? If I weren't serious, why would I bring you to meet my friends? I've never brought anyone to meet them before."

"That means Nim is really important."

"It means I have never had a girlfriend before."

NumNim looked at me and smiled slightly before making a face like she didn't quite believe it.

"Should I believe it? But... it makes sense."

"Why?"

"When we were teasing each other, you looked scared of everything. You asked if you could do this, you hesitated before doing that."

She nudged me with her elbow on my arm and made a teasing face.

"You're hopeless."

"You're acting all nice, huh? Just wait until it's time for dinner, then you'll see how much I've improved my skills."

"But will it get better that much just in a few days?"

"Imagination is more important than knowledge."

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I dropped NumNim off at her house around nearly 8 p.m. The sky had turned completely black, and the scent of the ton tian tree drifted from far away-an oddly romantic smell.

"Smells nice. NumNim's house is so peaceful at this time of night. The scent of the earth, the ton tian trees... it fills the air."

"You have a nose like a dog,"

The sweet-faced one reached over, grabbed my nose, and gently squeezed it, teasing me.

"I got to know Fah's world today. Tomorrow, I'll show you mine. We'll take turns getting to know each other, slowly learning along the way."

"Yeah, sounds good."

"Okay, see you tomorrow."

NumNim walked back into her house, and I watched until her small figure disappeared. Then, I stuck out my tongue and licked my lips a bit before getting back into the car. I opened the glove compartment and grabbed the shark's head I had bought earlier, smiling with satisfaction.

This little fish would definitely come in handy one day... and that day is today!

With that thought, I climbed up the wall of NumNim's house, just like I did when I came to apologize before, and took the same path up the tree to her window. I knocked on the glass loudly, knock knock, as a signal for the sweet-faced one to notice me.

"How did you show up here?"

NumNim, who had opened the window, looked at me like she already knew what I was thinking.

"Didn't we say goodbye? What do you want?"

"Do you know that a shark will die if it stops swimming? It's like my heart... if it doesn't receive..."

"That's an old joke."

"I want to sleep with you."

"No,"

NumNim declined and made a bored face while looking at her nails, as if what I asked wasn't interesting enough.

"Sleeping with you won't be that impressive."

"Oh... you're not even good enough to bully anyone."

"How dare you say that? Do you not remember how loud you were?"

"I was just pretending to scream. I didn't want to make you lose your confidence. Haven't you ever read articles about how women pretend to be excited with their boyfriends? It's another form of giving encouragement."

"You're talking too much."

"Want to try again?"

"No. I'm tired today. I just want to sleep."

"Then just sleep."

I got tired of arguing, so I climbed down from the tree and jumped into the room without waiting for permission.

"I'll handle it."

Once I was inside the room, I inhaled NumNim's scent deeply. Every place has its own unique smell, and when we enter someone's room, it becomes clear whose it is.

Male friends have a certain musty smell that makes it clear they are guys, but when you enter a woman's room, it's the scent of cleansing products, body lotion, mixed with her unique body scent, like perfume on skin. "Turn your face away!"

"Huh?"

NumNim pushed my face to turn back toward the window.

"Don't look back until I tell you."

"Why?"

"I need to pack my things first."

"Pack what...?"

I was about to turn, but she shouted at me, and I quickly turned back to the window.

"I said, turn around!"

"Alright, alright. You're so serious."

NumNim was doing something behind me in a hurry. I heard the sound of something being dragged, and then the door slammed shut. Less than a minute later, the sweet-faced one called for me to turn around and smiled at me.

"All done."

"What were you doing? Why does it seem so secretive?"

"To make it more interesting. By the way, why did you break into my room?"

"Isn't it a little late to ask that? I'm already here."

"Well, you just broke in. Do you want me to push you out? So what exactly are you doing here?"

NumNim had a smug smile, even though she knew exactly what was happening. But she still asked, like she wanted to tease me and make me hurry up rather than stop.

"I came to do an exercise."

I reached out and unbuttoned the top button of NumNim's shirt.

"What are you saying? I don't understand."

NumNim stretched lazily and moved aside to grab a towel.

"Thanks for unbuttoning it for me. It saved me the trouble. Oh!"

I hugged her from behind and, with one hand, grabbed her chest. My other hand slid down to her belly button, trying to feel her smooth skin.

"After taking a shower, you'll sweating. Then you'll need to shower again. It's better to just do it all at once."

"Do you think you can stop me from taking a shower?"

NumNim twisted my wrist out of her grasp, like someone who knew how to defend herself. But I, having learned these moves, knew she would be thrown off by my momentum. So, to defend myself early, I bit her ear and used my knee to push against the bend of her leg until her body fell down.

"Cheater."

"Please, honey. Don't make it so difficult."

"It seems like we can't do it anymore. You're already dizzy from a distance."

NumNim teased in a mocking tone, but it was full of seduction. I pushed NumNim's shoulder to face me, then pressed her body down to the floor, even though the bed was right beside us.

"The smell of Nim makes me feel at home."

"Then make a soft-scented perfume."

"How could it be better than the smell of the real person, especially the specific scent that Fah likes."

I unbuttoned the skilled seducer's pants, pulling them down to the tips of her toes, leaving only a tiny thin panty. One hand caught the triangularshaped panty that covered the most sought-after part, slowly uncovering it.

When the soft fabric became too annoying, I decided to take it off myself, unable to resist the feeling that followed.

"Whatever you're going to do, do it quickly."

"Are you not sleepy anymore?"

"If you don't do it, I'll kick you out."

"That's so brutal, but I'll make you beg for it,"

I said, kissing from the neck to the chest, all the way down to the navel. Then I spread the small person's legs apart and licked my lips for her to see, signaling,

"What should I do next?"

"Fah!"

"Speak nicely"

"Then no need."

NumNim tried to close her legs, but I still kept them apart and raised an eyebrow.

"Your body doesn't say that at all. Come on my love."

"....."

"I'm hungry now."

"Just eat it... please,"

NumNim raised her hand to cover her face, feeling shy. Seeing that, I felt guilty for teasing her too much, so I easily complied.

"Mmm..."

Her taste is so sweet and alluring, inviting me to savor it endlessly. Combined with her unique body scent, it makes me dizzy and crave her to the point of trembling. Our bodies touch each other to share happiness.

Her moans mixed with sobs come so frequently that she has to cover her mouth with her hand. Once she reaches her peak, it's her turn to make me indulge in pleasure.

*Love is like this.*

We communicate through body language without saying a word, but we both know each other's likes and dislikes. I plead and beg her to push and shake harder so that I can reach my dreams.

Our voices harmonize like we're singing a song, and in the end, it all concludes with exhaustion, lying on top of each other, drenched in sweat.

"This time, how many points did I get?"

I asked with a smile, my eyes half-closed like someone who was exhausted. Softly, she opened her mouth and nibbled my nose playfully.

"Take seven, that's enough."

"Why is my score so low? I thought I did my best."

I looked sad. I learned from videos and kept asking her if she liked it or not. She kept saying she liked this and that. After everything was finished, why did I get such a low score?

"Why do you care so much about your score? The result is good already. It's just that you don't believe in yourself."

"I just wanted to impress you."

"Impress Nim? I could give a 10. Fah has gotten much better. Are you happy now?"

"I'm happy now."

Our activity ended. I didn't know when I fell asleep, but I woke up when the sweet-faced person got up and quietly went to get a towel to get ready for a shower.

While I was lying on the floor, I grabbed her ankle as she was about to walk. NumNim got scared. It worked. She jumped and almost dropped the towel, then knelt down to hit me.

"You scared me."

"Where are you going?"

"Where can I go in my own house? I'm going to take a shower. I feel sticky."

"No, don't shower. I like this smell... it feels right."

I was holding her ankle, and I touched her calf for a second, so she lightly hit me on the shoulder.

"Are you crazy? This smell... it doesn't smell good at all."

"But it's not a bad smell, right? Let's cuddle up and sleep together."

"No. I like to take a shower first, then sleep. It feels better. Fah, go sleep first... get up and sleep on the bed properly."

"Fine."

I pretended to be a little upset, but then I easily climbed onto the bed with my body naked, covered by NumNim's white blanket. Just as NumNim was about to leave, we heard a knock on the door. It was the sound of her father's voice.

"Nim... are you asleep? I heard a sound. Is something wrong?"

"Nim was sleep talking. Sorry about that."

"Can you open the door for dad?"

"Huh!"

Nim accidentally said that, then quickly replied,

"Huh? Wait a second, Dad... Fah, get up. Go hide."

NumNim pulled the blanket off me like someone who didn't know what to do, looking left and right.

"Go wait by the tree."

"Huh... but I am naked. The ants might bite me if they crawl in strange places. What will I do?"

"Go to the closet... get inside there!"

"Why do I have to hide? I've slept here before, and your dad never says anything."

"But Nim didn't tell my family. Dad will definitely get suspicious. Please hide for now!"

I walked to the closet and opened it in the darkness.

"Oh, I can't get in. There's a suitcase blocking the way."

"Then take the suitcase out first, and you can go inside instead."

"Oh, right."

I pulled the suitcase out, feeling familiar with its size, but I couldn't see what it looked like. Then, I squeezed myself into the closet and closed it properly.

Meanwhile, NumNim quickly put on some clothes and opened the door for her father.

"What were you talking about in your sleep? I heard some noises, so I came to check."

"I don't remember what I was dreaming about."

"Have you taken a shower yet? That's not your sleepwear."

"I was so tired when I got back that I fell asleep in these clothes. I was just about to take a shower. I feel sticky, and it's hard to sleep like this."

"Hmm."

"Dad, you should go to bed. After I take a shower, I'll sleep too."

The two of them talked a little more, then the room slowly became quiet. I, who was hiding, slowly opened the closet and peeked out, ready to come out.

But then I froze, completely shocked. The person standing right in front of the closet was NumNim's father, the one I thought had already left.

I panicked and quickly grabbed the closest shirt to cover myself, afraid I would look inappropriate. NumNim's father, seeing that it was me, looked awkward and quickly turned away.

Even though the light from outside the room was dim, I was sure he could see that I was naked, even if not very clearly.

"If a friend is staying over, you should at least tell us. There's no need to sleep in the closet."

He sounded like he was joking, but his serious face and voice sent chills down my spine. This wasn't a joke. He had clearly seen someone in his daughter's room in this situation, but he probably didn't know what to say or how to react.

"We need to talk in the morning. Go to sleep tonight... You too."

His voice wasn't as kind as usual when speaking to me. Then, he turned around and shut the door loudly with a bang.

NumNim bit her lip, her eyes filled with tears, not knowing what to do. She sat down on the bed, covering her face with her hands, and started crying.

"Nim..."

"....."

Seeing my girlfriend so sad, I quickly picked up my scattered clothes from the floor and put them on. I was about to turn on the light, but Nim stopped me.

"Don't turn it on."

"Why not?"

She got up, took the suitcase that had been pushed out, put it back inside, and closed the closet, leaning against the door.

"Okay, you can turn it on now."

When NumNim allowed me, I turned on the light. The room immediately brightened with white fluorescent light, making everything clearly visible. There were small marks on NumNim's neck. Maybe that's why her father walked in to check.

"It's okay. Tomorrow, I will talk to your dad too."

"You should go home first. Nim will talk to Dad alone."

"But..."

"Please... I'll call you and tell you everything later."

NumNim had already gone through enough tonight. I didn't want to pressure her more. In the end, I agreed to leave and climbed out the window. But before I left, I couldn't help but glance at the closet where NumNim was leaning against.

*That closet and that suitcase...*

**It might be the same suitcase that was switched with mine!**

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# Chapter 29: What else ? I can't sleep

I keep thinking and imagining what NumNim will have to face tomorrow. I heard that her dad is very strict. From what I've seen, his personality and how much his daughter respects him, I can guess that it's true.

But since she's already grown up, she probably won't be punished like a little kid. At least I don't have to worry about her getting hurt physically. But emotionally... I don't know how badly she'll be scolded.

Honestly, I should have stayed with her. I should have been stubborn and stayed by her side. That way, we could face it together. If she gets scolded, I'd get scolded too. At least she wouldn't have to go through it alone.

*Until the sky turned bright...*

I was awake at 6 AM, as if I had to catch a bus for work, just like in the past when I used to disguise myself. No, don't say I woke up. It's more accurate to say I never slept at all. My stress was too high. My heart and mind refused to let me close my eyes and rest.

"Are you up exercising? Did a ghost enter your body?"

"They say exercising makes you happy. I'm trying to find happiness in what I have."

I was running on the treadmill, trying to make myself tired. I wanted to trick my heart into thinking that it was beating fast because of exercise, not because of stress.

"But... it's not helping at all."

"So, what are you stressed about? Lately, things seem to be going well. I thought you and that tough girlfriend of yours were doing fine now."

"I wish her parents were as kind as mine."

In the end, I switched from running to walking, then slowly stopped to let my heart adjust. I was too stressed. Exercising didn't help. It would be better if I knew what was happening right now.

"You can tell me what's going on."

"Just common problems... It seems like her family doesn't really accept me."

"Doesn't accept you?!"

Mom raised her voice, straightening her back and radiating a queen-like aura.

"Who do they think they are, saying they can't accept my daughter? Fah is cute, born into a good family, well-educated, just a little late woke up... but today she woke up early!"

Mom quickly corrected herself and smiled at me.

"And who are her parents anyway? They're just high school principals. What's the big deal?"

"How do you know what NumNim's parents do?"

"I looked it up a little,"

Mom shrugged casually.

"I just wanted to know who my daughter is dating. It's my duty to look out for you. If you were about to pick up dirt and gravel, at least I could stop you in time."

"And what do you think about NumNim's family?"

"I don't know. I only looked into it a little. But if they don't like Fah, then I won't like Nim either."

"It's NumNim."

"Whatever. I just return whatever they give. It's the mirror rule. If that family hates Fah, then I'll hate their daughter too."

"They don't hate me,"

I said softly, not so sure myself after remembering the closet scene from last night.

"But they don't like you, right?"

"Let me talk to NumNim first. Maybe it's nothing after all."

I couldn't wait any longer. At 7 AM, even though it was a bit early, I called NumNim. She picked up with a normal voice, which made it obvious she hadn't slept either.

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[Calling this early? Did you even sleep?]

Her voice sounded normal, too calm, which surprised me.

"What about you? Did you sleep at all?"

[Not yet.]

"I feel the same. I was worried about how Nim was doing, so I called."

[It's nothing serious. Dad didn't really say anything.]

"You talked to him already?"

[Yes. Dad acted like nothing happened. He just said that next time a friend stays over, I should tell him first. No need to hide.]

"Does that mean Dad doesn't know about us?"

[He acted like he didn't know.]

"Do you think he knows?"

[Yes, but he didn't mention it. Dad is always like this with things he... doesn't really accept. He just sweeps the problem under the rug and lets it be.]

We both fell silent, unsure of what to say. In the end, Nim was the one to bring up today's plans.

[Don't think too much about Dad. We're grown-ups now. Let's just move on. Now, let's talk about us. Today, Fah has to step into Nim's world.]

"Sure! I wonder what Nim's world is like."

[Today, you'll finally find out.]

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NumNim's world reflected her personality, simple and straightforward. The sweet-faced girl took me to watch an action movie at the cinema, paying for everything herself. Even when I tried to offer, she gave me a serious look and stopped me, as if saying,

"Do you think I have no money?"

Actually it wasn't a big deal, but the way NumNim talked about money made me realize something, she didn't want me to feel less than her. If she wanted to treat me, she could. Our relationship was equal. No one was taking advantage of the other, even if one of us was wealthier.

After the movie, NumNim took me to a martial arts school, where she seemed to have returned to work as usual. Then, we went to eat ice cream. As we sat across from each other, staring into each other's eyes, NumNim finally asked a question.

"After spending the day with me, what did you learn about Nim?"

"Simplicity,"

I answered while scooping some shaved ice from my cup, smiling.

"You have a structured daily routine. You don't go off track. You're honest with what you want."

"If we're talking about honesty, Nim wins against Fah."

"Ouch."

I pouted at the reminder of my past when I pretended to be an employee.

"I thought you weren't mad about that anymore."

"I'm not mad, but I can't help mentioning it whenever there's a chance. Now, keep going."

"Maybe I should ask Nim too, take turns... For Nim, after stepping into my world, what did you learn?"

"I learned that Fah is an ordinary person, not fancy like in the newspapers or TV dramas... a bit rude."

NumNim laughed when she saw my surprised expression.

"Not that rude, but rude like any normal person. Easy to approach and a little mischievous, judging by the type of friends you hang out with."

"A little mischievous?"

"You must have been the one sitting at the back of the class back in school." "How did you know?"

"Because you must be the type who doesn't like to follow rules. If you sat at the front, you wouldn't have secretly eaten snacks under the table or watched pornographic cartoons, right?"

What's going on? I never mentioned anything about my school days, yet she knows all of this. It's a bit creepy!

"Did I ever mention watching pornographic cartoons?"

NumNim leaned forward, winked at me cutely from across the table.

"Just a guess, but I'm right."

"Crazy. How could something like that be guessed so easily? Why are you so good at guessing?"

"Because you're such a pervert. Even though you were shy, you were still curious and wanted to try it out. Your curiosity seemed like it was learned from cartoons or adult websites. Back when we were in school, mobile phones weren't advanced enough to browse the internet. So, you must have read books or pornographic cartoons, right?"

"So bad! You're right. That girl, Preaw, brought the pornographic comics to school. I still remember the scene where the girl went to photocopy her lower half and told the guy...

*'Look at this athe jungle'...*

Hehe.'"

We both laughed together, feeling more comfortable around each other.

NumNim, despite being a bit embarrassed, gave off a mischievous vibe.

"Now, it's your turn to guess about me. Actually, I'm quite a repressed person."

"Huh?"

NumNim took a sip of her drink, then asked,

"How so?"

"Actually, I'm very curious, like a little child who wants to know everything but can't show it because my family is quite strict and old-fashioned. For example... I'd be too shy to watch adult movies, but if I didn't watch them, I wouldn't learn. Once I watched one video, I just kept going. And then I probably made a face like...

*'Oh, they can do that pose? I would like to try'*

."

"Shut up..."

The sweet-faced girl lifted her leg and kicked under the table.

"Don't act like you know everything."

"When we get intimate, you always want to know if it really feels like in the videos. Even though I am shy, the curiosity is stronger. Sometimes, you even force me to do things or try to get me to do what you want. You have a high bossy attitude."

"When did I ever force you? You're making things up!"

"Haha, did I hit a nerve?"

I smiled wryly.

"But I don't mind because I actually want to do all of it. Even if Nim didn't push my head down, I would still-"

"Enough! You talk too much!"

"We've really gotten to know each other a lot more, haven't we?"

"That's right."

Numnim pressed her tongue against her cheek before asking,

"Is there anything else that I don't know about you?"

"What about you?"

"...."

"Is there anything I don't know about you yet?"

NumNim tapped the table with her finger while I licked my lips, waiting for an answer. It felt like we were testing each other all the time, as if we were playing a game.

But I had to admit, I couldn't reveal everything just yet. Deep down, I still suspected that NumNim was the one who owned the mysterious suitcase. And if she really was, then she was just teasing me now.

*We liked each other very much.*

*We loved each other very much.*

But neither of us was willing to completely give in.

"Everyone has secrets, right?"

NumNim said first. I nodded in agreement.

"That's true. But secrets can be shared with someone close to you."

"So, does that mean I should tell you?"

"It depends on whether you think we're close enough yet."

"Then are we close enough for you to tell me yours?"

"....."

"If I'm not ready to tell you, then I won't expect you to tell me either."

We looked at each other and smiled. Our legs brushed under the table, sending an instant spark between us, like two people who had a lot in common.

*We both loved sweet things.*

*We both loved savory things.*

Sweet and savory... even in moments like this.

"You're so sexy."

I slipped off my shoe and ran my foot along NumNim's leg, from her shin up to her hip. She lowered her hand to touch my foot lightly, then rubbed her thumb over it in a way that sent a clear signal.

"That's right? Even though the other person is hiding something, it still makes them feel mysterious and incredibly sexy."

"How far do you think we'll go?"

"As far as we want to go."

"Then how about we explore the jungle first?"

"You mean... the jungle?"

"Yes..."

"I was thinking of taking you there too. It's raining heavily right now."

"Then what are we waiting for? I can't wait to taste the wild fruits."

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As we got to know each other more, I became bolder in showing what I wanted. NumNim, who used to get embarrassed, didn't seem to mind anymore. But deep down, I still felt like we were both hiding something from each other.

It had been a month since our relationship started, and we had been through it all-crushing, flirting, loving, breaking up, getting back together, and sometimes feeling uncertain.

I wasn't sure if other couples experienced all of this too, but for us, it kept things interesting. It was never boring at all.

*But sometimes, too much excitement could be overwhelming.*

Like right now, when I'm holding my phone, talking to "Aoy," who called me around 7 PM to tell me she saw NumNim having dinner with a guy.

At first, I thought she was joking or that it was just a friend, because I completely trusted my girlfriend.

But then, when I called NumNim, she answered,

"What are you doing?"

"I'm at home, of course. What else would I be doing?"

And I wouldn't have been worried... if my friend hadn't sent me a photo proving that NumNim was actually at a restaurant.

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"I'm thinking of taking you out for dinner. I miss you."

[You're being so dramatic. I'm eating now, I'll call you later. My dad's being strict.]

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Then she hung up quickly.

At that moment, I asked my friend to send me the location and drove straight there.

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It was past 8 PM now. The restaurant was an Italian place with dim, warm lights that created a romantic atmosphere, making my thoughts spiral even more.

"Fah!"

Aoy, who had been watching, walked up to me after I texted that I had arrived.

"How is it? Those two?"

"Nothing much. They're just talking normally, laughing a little."

"If there's nothing going on, then why did NumNim lie about being at home? What's the reason?"

"Look at me."

Aoy pointed to herself and smiled.

"My name is Oi, not NumNim."

"Smartass."

"Why are you snapping at me? If you're mad, take it out on the right person!"

"You're right. I need to take it out on the right person!" As soon as I said that, I marched straight toward NumNim.

At first, they didn't notice me.

Then the guy caught my stare and turned to look at me, making NumNim turn around too. Her face immediately showed shock.

"Wow, Nim, your house has been renovated quite quickly. From a house to a restaurant."

"Fah..!"

"Why did you lie?"

"Fah, how did you get here?"

"Does that even matter? The real question is-what are you doing here, and who is this guy?"

"Let's talk outside."

I was usually the type to explode, but causing a scene in public wasn't my style. So, I followed her outside and got straight to the point.

"Explain. I want to hear a good reason."

I crossed my arms.

NumNim looked at me for a moment, sighed, and then admitted the truth.

*Honestly... a lie might have been better.*

**"I'm on a date."**

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# Chapter 30: Voices

Her straightforward answer showed that she was trying to be as honest and sincere with me as possible. However, that honesty was enough to make me feel like collapsing on the spot.

At first, I wanted to yell and argue with that sweet-faced girl, to make it clear to everyone that I was the real one here, and she was out on a date with someone else. But the sadness overwhelmed me, leaving me with no choice but to turn and walk away without saying a single word.

"Fah, let's talk first."

NumNim followed me with a calm demeanor, her voice steady. There wasn’t a trace of guilt on her face, which only made me even angrier.

"I'm angry, Nim. If we talk now, it'll just get worse. Let me cool down first."

"I don't want to overthink things. I want to clear this up now. You need to know why I'm here, Fah."

She grabbed my wrist, making me turn to face her.

"At the very least, I didn’t lie. So let's talk about this face-to-face."

"Oh, so you think you deserve credit for that? You told me you were at home, but you were actually out on a date! And you still claim you didn’t lie? If my friend hadn’t seen you, I wouldn’t have even known!"

"Fine, I admit it,"

NumNim sighed, raising her hands in surrender.

"When you called, I didn’t have a good excuse. But since we’re already here, I’ll tell you everything. Just listen, Fah."

"...."

"My father arranged all of this. I had no choice."

Hearing that it was because of her father, my heart started to settle, though there was still a lingering ache in my chest.

"Your father arranged it?"

"Let’s go find a quiet place to talk. I still have to go back and deal with him later."

NumNim remained composed, much more than I was. She led me to a quiet corner of the mall, away from the crowd, and calmly explained everything.

"Even though my dad acted like nothing happened, you were there that day. You remember, right?"

She reminded me of the moment her father found me naked in her closet.

"My dad isn't stupid. He’s been married long enough to know what it meant to see clothes scattered all over his daughter's bedroom."

"I thought it was over already," I muttered.

"I knew it wasn’t. He never talked about it, but suddenly, he set me up with his friend’s son. He works for the government, just like my dad. He wants me to get to know him."

"And you didn’t think to tell me?"

"You would’ve just thrown a fit and refused."

"And why should you have to go along with it if you don’t want to?"

"Fah, we grew up in different worlds,"

NumNim sighed.

"My father is stubborn. He’ll never change his mind. If I want peace, I have to go along with it."

"And how far are you willing to go along with it? If one day he wants you to marry someone, will you do it?"

"It hasn't come to that yet."

"You’re avoiding the question. If it does come to that, will you agree?"

"Will we even last that long?"

Her words hit me like a punch to the gut.

"So if we don’t last, you’ll just marry whoever he chooses for you?"

"....."

"I thought you were more independent than this, Nim."

Frustrated, I ran a hand through my hair and turned to leave. But she called after me, her voice steady.

"Like I said, we don’t know each other that well yet."

I froze and turned back, my chest tightening.

"That’s true."

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. .

When I got home, I couldn’t do anything but pace around my room. I had walked away in anger, leaving my girlfriend alone with another man. What were they doing now? Why didn’t I stay and see it through instead of torturing myself with endless thoughts?

The clock read past ten. I wanted to call her, but I was scared she wouldn’t pick up. I just needed to know if she was home yet. The anxiety got to me, so I grabbed my car keys and drove to her house, parking nearby to watch if she had returned. But the lights in her room were still off.

*She hasn't come back yet.*

*Where did she go next?*

She finished dinner hours ago. She should be back by now.

Since I couldn’t call, I could at least text.

My eyes widened in excitement before I checked the list on my phone with the name "Mae Khun". Even though we had met before and the person who appeared was not NumNim, deep down I still thought it was her. If not, at least for now I could find a friend to talk to to relieve the stress from my head, even temporarily.

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**Hawm Noi: Feeling bored. Hug me.**

.

Five minutes later, she read it and responded.

.

**Mae Khun: What’s wrong?**

**Hawm Noi: Just feeling down. What are you doing?**

**Mae Khun: Thinking about stuff. Lots on my mind. What about you?**

**What happened?**

.

.

Why did it feel like we were both avoiding the truth? I hesitated, unsure if I was really talking to NumNim. But if it wasn’t her, at least I had someone to distract me.

I took a deep breath and decided to be direct.

. .

**Hawm Noi: Just feeling disappointed. A bit heartbroken.**

**Hawm Noi: Someone I love went on a date with someone else.**

. .

I waited for her reaction. Would she be suspicious? Would she figure out it was me?

If she didn’t react at all, then she wasn’t NumNim.

Why was this so difficult?

.

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**Mae Khun: Did you talk to them?**

**Hawm Noi: Yeah.**

**Mae Khun: What was their reason?**

**Hawm Noi: They had a reasonable explanation, but I don’t know… I feel exhausted by this relationship.**

**Mae Khun: If it’s that hard, then just break up.**

. .

If this was NumNim, she was really pushing me. But if it wasn’t, then this was just an outsider’s advice.

.

**Hawm Noi: Then I guess we should break up.**

. .

Just as I sent the message, a car pulled up in front of NumNim's house. I watched as she got out and went inside. My hands gripped the steering wheel tightly. I wanted to climb out the window to ask for the truth, but I was afraid she would shut in my face without any care of my feelings.

At least she was home. At least she wasn’t staying out all night.

My phone rang after I started the car. NumNim's name was on the screen. I jumped a little and quickly looked around, thinking that I might have been caught waiting in front of the house.

But there was no one there except for darkness and an electric pole with a termite extermination sign.

"...."

I answered the call without making any sound. NumNim, who had been quiet for a while, couldn't stand it anymore and spoke instead.

[Fah, are you there?]

"Yeah. What’s up?"

[Come pick me up at my house.]

"Why?"

[If you don't want to come, then don’t bother.]

Then the line went quiet. But before she hung up, I heard voices—she was talking to someone.

"Dad, this isn’t going to work. I already have someone I love."

"Do you really think any guy you pick will be better than the one I’ve already chosen for you?"

"I don’t care how perfect he is. If I don’t like him, then I don’t like him."

.

. .

That was all I needed to hear. I jumped out of the car and ran to her gate. NumNim, who had turned to walk out, looked surprised when she saw me standing in front of the door.

"Why are you here so fast? It feels like I just talked to you ten minutes ago."

The sweet-faced girl looked at me with slight suspicion before smirking.

"Or were you already waiting here?"

"Something like that."

I didn't know how to react, feeling a little embarrassed.

"I wanted to see if you made it home safely."

"So how was it? Did I?"

"You did, even though it was a bit late. And why did you call me?"

"Weren't you listening?"

NumNim picked up her phone, which was still on the call.

"I never hung up, and you're still asking?" "I just wanted to have something to talk about,"

I said, kicking at the dust a little.

"To cover up my awkwardness."

"Then there's no need for more explanations. Let's go."

"Go where?"

"Wherever you want to take me."

NumNim walked past me and got into the passenger seat like nothing had happened. I followed, started the car, and drove off in silence. As I drove, I slowly wiped my tears with the back of my hand, which made NumNim turn to look at me.

"Why are you crying?"

"That was close."

"Close to what?"

"I almost told you, Nim."

Hearing that, NumNim's eyes widened in shock before she looked out the window. "Why?"

"I don't know… I just feel like this relationship is so complicated. I'm really bad at love. I'm too selfish."

I tightened my grip on the steering wheel.

"Even though you explained everything to me, I still get possessive. I act like a child. And then, I remember what you said… that we don’t even know each other that well. It hurt even more. I kept questioning myself all the way home—how well do we have to know each other to be considered "close"? Do we have to know each other deeply to be able to love each other?"

"Fah, you give up so easily."

This time, it was NumNim's voice that wavered. I turned to look at her—the sweet-faced girl wiping away her own tears while sniffing softly.

"It's just… when things get hard, you're ready to leave," she said.

"I thought you were ready to be with someone else. I thought you'd rather learn about love from someone new. You even agreed to meet the guy your dad arranged for you."

"I just wanted to get it over with—to give my dad peace of mind. But now that I think about it, if I only care about my parents' happiness while being miserable myself… then what's the point?"

"Why didn't you say this when we were fighting?"

"I hadn't thought that far back then."

"So when did you realize all this?"

"Fah, you really don’t know?"

NumNim turned to me, eyes searching, as if trying to catch me in a lie.

"You really don’t know when I figured it out?"

We both fell silent for more than ten-minute as I drive from NumNim’s house to my house. As I pulled up, I honked lightly to signal someone inside to open the main gate with the remote. NumNim stretched her neck slightly, looking around my house before nodding to herself.

"We really did grow up in different worlds."

"So… when exactly did you realize?"

I refused to let the conversation drop. NumNim was still looking around curiously.

"Was it when I decided to break up with you?"

"Yes, when I thought about losing you, I knew I couldn't let that happen. That’s when I finally talked to my dad."

"I see."

I nodded like I understood, then turned my full attention to her.

"What?"

She met my gaze, smiling a little before suddenly remembering something —giving me the perfect chance to ask.

"How did you even know I was thinking about breaking up?"

"....."

"Because there's only one person knew that I was thinking that way."

**Thump...Thump...**

The sound of my heartbeat loudly in my chest. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say if NumNim could probably hear it too. Okay, maybe it would. No one can hear a heartbeat unless they press their ear against it.

But still, it’s really loud. I feel like I’m facing something important.

As for the sweet-faced person in front of me, after hearing what I just said, she immediately asked back, staring into my eyes without backing down.

**"And who is that one person you're talking about?"**

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# Chapter 31: Opening the Suitcase

I think this is an important moment-it's time to open up and talk things out. Honestly, I don't want to play this hiding game. As you knows, I desperately want NumNim to be "Mae Khun".

But the reason I've been hesitant is that I've been preparing myself for the possibility that she's not. If I confess my feelings completely and she turns out not to be Mae Khun, she'll probably get even angrier, and our relationship might get worse.

Well, since we've come this far, whatever happens, happens. I'll just ask. "I wants to ask seriously... Nim, are you..."

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*Knock, knock, knock!*

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The sound of knocking on the car window interrupted our conversation. My mom, who had come down from the house, peeked inside with curiosity, wondering why I hadn't gotten out of the car yet.

"Mom, aren't you sleeping yet?"

I opened the car door and stepped out to talk to my mother. She was already in her pajamas. As for NumNim, she glanced at my mom for a second before quickly looking away, pressing her hands together in a respectful wai like someone feeling guilty.

"Hello."

"So, you brought your girlfriend home? Moving fast."

Mom said, not seeming to care that this same person had once broken her arm before.

"What were you two doing in the car for so long? I got curious, so I came to check. Or... are you doing something bad?"

"Mom! I didn't do anything! What are you saying?"

I whispered quickly, but of course, NumNim heard. She immediately turned away, looking even more flustered.

"Just teasing you. But really, why did you bring her here? Just dropping by, or is this an official introduction? You're not fighting anymore, right? Are you sure you'll stay together for the long time and not break up?"

"Mom, that's a lot of questions at once. How am I supposed to answer? Today, Nim just wants to stay over for a night... No, but for a while. Mom won't mind, right?"

"I don't mind."

Mom narrowed her eyes at my girlfriend before stepping closer, radiating an aura of power.

"She is my daughter's girlfriend, after all. Even though she did throw me to the ground once."

"I'm sorry!"

NumNim immediately knelt down and raised her hands over her head in surrender. My mother looked a little surprised before quickly reached out to help NumNim stand up. But the person in front of her still didn't move and just sat there feeling guilty.

"I'm sorry for making your mother-oh, I mean, for making Madam get hurt."

"Madam? Well, I admit that I'm rich, but being called 'Madam' like in a drama feels a little awkward."

Mom placed a hand on her chest and smiled at me with embarrassment.

"Nim, you're actually pretty cute when you're not being aggressive."

"At that time, I really didn't know... My duty was to protect Khun Methee."

"No need to explain. I understand everything. Now, get up."

"....."

"If you don't get up, I'll really get mad."

Hearing that, NumNim reluctantly stood up and clasped her hands neatly in front of her, looking humble.

"You're as small as a puppy but strong as a racehorse. Doesn't match at all, but your face is well-proportioned.

*Thongkham*

is suitable for you, you'd suitable with a taller wife. If she were shorter, it would look a bit odd."

"Mom, what are you even saying? Let's just go inside."

"Did I say something wrong? Or is he her husband?"

"...."

"Gosh! I love it when my daughter gets flustered. Come on, let's go inside. Time for bed! Everyone should sleep early to grow taller. Oh, but I guess it's too late for you."

My mother was completely warm and friendly toward NumNim, as if she had forgotten that she had once been hurt by this sweet-looking girl.

As soon as we stepped into the house, my father, who had come down for a drink, saw NumNim and immediately looked surprised. Then, as if on instinct, he shrank back in fear-his body still remembered the pain all too well.

"Oh, little Nim! I never thought we'd meet again."

"I'm so sorry!"

NumNim knelt down again, raising her hands above her head. And just like before, everything played out the same way it had with my mother. It took a long, drawn-out moment of repentance until it was already ten at night before I could finally bring her up to my room.

Once inside, NumNim looked around, taking in the bedroom where I had grown up, quietly assessing the environment.

"You're such a rich kid."

"Mock me all you want, but I admit it-I really am."

"So, how was it? Playing the role of a poor person and working as a staff member?"

"There you go again, being sarcastic."

"I really just want to know. You look too comfortable to be working as someone else's employee. I wonder how people can let themselves be commanded by others like that. If you ask me, when I worked, it was so exhausting, mentally draining too, because the boss was so demanding."

"Well, I see it as another unforgettable experience,"

I said, sitting down and stretching lazily.

"I just want Nim to know that I have work to do, so I asked my dad for a job. Do you know that I never wake up before 10 AM? Except when I had to go to school, of course, because I had to be at assembly by 8 AM."

"Oh, that's cute. You worked just because you were afraid that I would say something like you're not a good girl."

"Just think about how much I love and dedicate myself to Nim, and still, I get scolded for acting on my feelings."

"Well, try looking at it from my perspective and you'll understand how it feels."

"If I told you straight up that I'm rich and don't work, you probably wouldn't like it."

"I've liked you since before I even knew who you were or where you came from. Work and all that doesn't matter."

"Oh my, I'm embarrassed!"

I covered my face with my hands and kicked my legs in the air, making NumNim laugh. I just wanted to see that smile after such a long, stressful day. I couldn't help but comment,

"Look, someone is smiling!"

"So annoying! How can someone make you so mad and still make you laugh?"

"Someone like me,"

I said, patting the spot next to me, inviting NumNim to sit beside me. The sweet-faced girl glanced at me for a moment.

"Can I sit?"

"Just try si down and see what happens next."

"Just sit. Don't do anything. I'm tired today. I fought with my parents and even had to kneel to my girlfriend's parents. It drained a lot of energy."

NumNim sat beside me and flopped back into the soft mattress, looking the mattress.

"It's so nice here. Must be so comfortable to sleep."

"Expensive things are like that. It's about the same price as my dad's leather sofa at his office."

"...."

"No matter how expensive it is, it won't change anything for me today. I'm just sitting still."

I said, running my hand down the sweet-faced girl's neck before gently pushing her back to lie down on my mattress.

"I told you I'm not..."

My hand slid under her shirt, gently brushing her chest. I whispered softly in her ear:

"You don't have to do anything, just sleep. The more comfortable you are, the better."

"How can anyone fall asleep like this?"

"Trust me, you will. Besides, I need to find the answer."

"What answer?"

I licked my lips lightly in a seductive way and smiled mischievously before saying,

"Answer correctly-whether Nim is soft like fabric or tough like a tree."

In the end, NumNim blends into my soft mattress, becoming one with it, and we couldn't really figure out the answer of whether NumNim was the husband or the wife.

Because our roles when making love we're equally.

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NumNim had already fallen asleep.

I looked at the clock in my room, which showed it was just after two in the morning. I sneaked out of the room and called for a meeting with my friends, asking them to meet up together. Of course, since we were close friends, there was no need for formalities.

*Otherwise, why would we call each other close friends?*

.

[What the hell, it's two in the morning, check the clock!]

.

Aoy, who was the first to speak up, reluctantly woke up in the middle of the night to answer the call. And yes, the other friends weren't much different.

.

"I finally have time for a meeting, but I don't have much time. Everyone, meet up tomorrow at the pinned location at 9 AM, okay?"

[I'm not okay with this!]

Preaw responded nonchalantly.

*(No matter how close we were, if I had to wake up, I wasn't okay with it. If they didn't want to, they could stop being friends with me!)*

"Preaw, you kissed my girlfriend, you owe me, remember."

[Ugh, but it's 9 AM, you idiot!]

"I'm going to sneak into NumNim's house to find out the truth about something. I want you to distract her parents for me, Preaw, I know you're the best at causing distractions. You wouldn't want to miss sneaking into someone else's house, right?"

[Yeah, as expected from a close friend. I wouldn't want to miss something like this. But why do we have to sneak in? Your girlfriend's house is easy to get into, isn't it? Why make it hard?]

"I'm going to check her suitcase. Tomorrow's the day."

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. .

Although my friends complained about it, they all showed up at the time I had set, fully ready to snoop. I pretended to tell NumNim that I was going out buy things with my mother. I pleaded with my mom not to leave just yet because I had something to take care of. Then, I caught a taxi and brought myself here.

"So, what's the plan next?"

Preaw asked, rubbing her hands together excitedly.

"I'm going to climb over and sneak into the house. You three ring the doorbell and keep the people inside busy for as long as possible. I'll need about ten minutes to sneak in."

"Alright, whatever you say... Wait, climb?! For real?"

Everyone stared at me in slight shock as I climbed over the house's fence. Since I often dropped by to mess around with NumNim, I found this kind of thing easy. The only hard part was actually getting inside the house.

As soon as I signaled them, my friends rang the doorbell like crazy, as if there was a fire. NumNim's parents rushed outside to check. Meanwhile, I hid behind a tree nearby, blending into the shadows as much as possible. "Who are you looking for? Why are you ringing the doorbell like idiots?"

NumNim's father deep voice carried from afar. My friends played their roles perfectly. The moment no one was looking, I sneaked toward the house entrance and started my five-minute countdown to complete my mission...

*NumNim's Room.*

I dashed up to the second floor and carefully shut the door as quietly as possible. Peeking down, I tried to see what my friends were up to.

Then, I heard NumNim's father shouting loudly.

"Hey! You're a young lady! You can't just pee in front of someone's house like that!"

*...Oh..Preaw.*

Whatever. I didn't have time to feel embarrassed right now. The most important thing was finding NumNim's hidden suitcase.

The moment I had the chance, I opened the closet and searched for the suitcase, but-it was empty.

She kept it here. Where else could it be?

Glancing up, I spotted a suitcase identical to mine sitting on top of the wardrobe. Being short, I had to climb up to grab it and drag it down onto the floor.

The size, shape, and scratches were all exactly as I remembered. This was definitely hers.

But to confirm, I had to enter the lock code.

**9-1-1**

**Click!**

The suitcase popped open as I let myself fall onto the bed with a disbelief.

Even though I had already suspected it, seeing the truth laid out so clearly made me feel both satisfied and a little annoyed at that sweet-faced girl.

**But I have a secret... and so do you!**

.

*Ring!!*

My phone rang, and the screen lit up with my girlfriend's name in letters as big as a house. I glanced at my phone and bared my teeth before picking up and answering with a huff.

[Where are you?]

Her voice on the other end was just as sharp as mine, which only made me want to win this little game even more.

"I'm somewhere where only one truth exists."

*"Why is the door open? Oh, isn't that Fa? When did you get here?"*

My mother's voice suddenly rang out as she quietly returned home, opening the door and calling for me. And, of course, her voice carried through the phone, making NumNim speak up.

[Wait, Fah, are you at my house? What are you doing there?]

"I'm looking for the truth. And just as I thought-

**you're Mae Khun**

."

The other end of the line was silent before she sent a picture popped up in into Line with Mae Khun as the sender, with nothing left to hide.

As soon as I opened it, I saw a photo of my own suitcase along with a message. NumNim could have said it over the phone, but instead, she chose to type it out, emphasizing the truth even more.

. .

**Mae Khun: No doubt about it. Hawm Noi is really you.**

**Mae Khun: You're insincere until the very last moment. Hawm Noi: Oh, acting all righteous now? You weren't insincere either! How dare you accuse me?**

.

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# Chapter 32: Confession

"The two of us are full of lies."

These were the first words after I returned home. NumNim, who had opened my suitcase, stood in the room, arms crossed, prepared for an argument and ready to fight until someone died.

"Yes, we only have lies between us, even until the last second. You sent someone I didn't know to meet at the restaurant."

"Don't act like I was the only one lying. Nim sent friend too."

"Fah, Nim, what's wrong, dear? I can hear you arguing from outside. Please, talk calmly,"

My mother said, knocking on the door, concerned but she couldn't come in. We were both too upset to make peace, so I responded sharply.

"Talk calmly? With a liar like her?"

NumNim shouted back, forgetting herself. As for me I hearing that, I shouted angrily.

"Who’s the liar? You lie too."

"You had never been sincere with me, not from the very first time we met. You lied about being a receptionist."

"But that's in the past. Nim, you already know why I did that. So why bring it up again?"

"I bring it up to show that you are a liar. A deceiver, a trickster!"

"You’re a liar too!"

The harsh words that came out left both of us speechless. NumNim's eyes welled with tears, and she sat down on the bed, burying her face in her hands. Meanwhile, I stepped back and leaned against the wall of the room, needing a moment to rest too.

"Is this what lovers do to each other?"

"That's right, I want to know too,"

I said, my voice cracking, unsure about our relationship.

"We loved each other so much, didn't we? How did it end up like this?"

"Love alone isn’t enough, is it? It has to be sincere too. And we have no sincerity between us,"

NumNim stood up and prepared to leave the room, but I grabbed her arm.

"Where are you going?"

"I don’t know if I should stay or not. You're the one I liked most in my life."

"....."

"And the one I dislike the most, too."

"I liked you the most too, Nim, and you're also the one who hurt me the most."

I took a deep breath and let go of her arm. The sweet-faced girl looked at me, surprised that I had let her go so easily, not holding her back or pleading. A tear fell from her gentle eyes before she walked out to meet my parents standing at the door.

"Nim, where are you going, dear? You need to talk things out. Fah, are you really going to let her leave like this? If she's angry and walk away, won’t you regret it?"

"Well, she chose to leave."

"Then, are you choosing to let her go, Fah? Think it over carefully. Can you live without her?"

"....."

"Hey, you don’t listen to me at all!"

.

I ran past my mother without hearing her finish speaking, rushing to talk to NumNim and sort things out.

NumNim, about to walk out through the front door, heard me shout her name and turned around as I confessed my feelings, saying things I never thought I would say. It felt like the last chance to stop her, and I begged her to come back, not to let me be the only one chasing after her.

"Nim, I don’t love you alone."

"What?"

NumNim turned to look at me, her face filled with shock.

"In my heart, there’s someone else, and that person is also part of you."

"....."

"I liked Mae Khun before I even saw her face, and even now, I still like her. This is the whole truth I wanted to tell you."

I choked on my tears, wiping them away with my sleeve.

"I didn’t leave on my own because I was afraid that if you saw me, you might not like me. I wanted it to be you, Nim. I hoped so much that you would be the one there, but you weren’t."

"....."

"Honestly, I regret not going myself, because it means you talked to someone else, while I was still your lover. But in reality, even though Mae Khun doesn’t look like you, Nim, I still like her."

"...."

"And today, when I was angry, it was because the truth is, she is you.

Everything came rushing into my head. Why didn’t you tell me about this, Nim? Don’t we love each other enough?"

"Why do you love Mae Khun?"

After a long silence, NumNim asked a question I had never thought about before: Why? If this were a Pluto novel, the heroine would probably say:

*"Love has no reason."*

**"Because if love had a reason, it wouldn’t be love,"**

NumNim replied with a faint smile, before bursting into tears again.

"Damn. Why are we fighting like this? There’s no reason."

"But I have a small reason for loving Mae Khun."

"What?"

"Mae Khun is the person I’m most sincere with. I’ve shared more about myself with her than anyone else. She’s my friend, my advisor, my devil,"

I smiled at NumNim and wiped my tears away.

**"Mae Khun is another part of you, Nim."**

"....."

"After all of this, are you still going? Can’t we stop fighting? I don’t want to lose both of you, Nim and Mae Khun."

"I wasn’t planning to go since the moment you ran after me, Fah. Waaah!"

"....."

We threw ourselves into each other’s arms, hugging tightly and crying like little kids. My parents, who had been watching everything, muttered something under their breath, but I still caught what they said:

"Are you done?"

But right now, it felt like the sky had cleared after the storm. Good things were finally coming back to us after all the bad feelings had been swept away. NumNìm gently pulled away from me, cupped my face with both hands, and began to confess.

"The reason I sent someone else instead was… because I was afraid Hawm Noi wouldn’t like me either."

"Are you crazy? How could Hawm Noi not like someone as cute as you?"

"Who knows what kind of person she actually likes? Maybe she never even thought of me that way. So, I just wanted to protect myself and asked my best friend to go instead. But deep down, I still hoped the person who’d show up… wouldn’t be her."

"When did you realize it was me?"

"When you started playing that ridiculous Baby Shark game in the tree. Then I teased you a little during our conversation, and you did the exact same thing with Hawm Noi. But more importantly… that perfume—the one that only you have in the whole world—was the same scent I smelled on the suitcase. I love that scent. I remember it well… I knew it had to be you."

"....."

"But I was still not sure. I wanted to smell that scent again, but the next day, you had already changed the perfume.

"At that time, I started to realize that it was you as Mae Khun, so I changed my perfume."

"That's why I got confusing. The scent of Hawn Noi's parfume was not the same, so I wasn’t sure if it was the same person or not. But many times, when I talked to Hawn Noi, I became more and more certain it was you. Still, I kept reminding myself that it might be you or it might not. In the end, it's good that I didn’t go."

"How is that good?"

"Because if I went to see Hawn Noi who wasn’t Fah, that would be cheating."

"...."

**"I also like Hawn Noi."**

I hugged NumNim tightly, squeezing as much as I could, as if I wanted this small person to sink into my body and disappear inside me.

"This is crazy. How can we fall in love with each other over and over like this?"

"Exactly! If we ever break up, that would be such a waste."

"Are you two done yet?"

My father and my mother, who had been standing there for a while, finally spoke up. My father crossed his arms and sighed in annoyance.

"So, you're not fighting anymore, right? Or do you plan to keep hugging until it's midnight?"

My father's voice made NumNim quickly jump away from me like lightning. She suddenly became shy, and my mother, standing beside my father, nudged his side with her elbow and scolded him.

"See? You're scaring the kids. But it's good that they're not fighting anymore. So now, there’s no problem, right?"

"....."

"....."

At that moment, both NumNim and I seemed to think of something at the same time. When my mother said the word " **problem**

," a certain face suddenly appeared in our minds. My mother noticed and couldn't hold back her curiosity.

"What is it? You’re leaving me hanging! I'm waiting. Is there still another problem?"

"We don’t have a problem with each other, but there are still other factors as well."

"What factors? Your Mom and I don’t have any issues. We even opened our home for you two to stay together. What kind of parents in a novel are as generous as us? Even when my daughter's girlfriend threw me, I didn’t get mad!"

Dad spoke proudly, which made NumNim feel guilty and hide behind me.

"Yeah ....my parents don’t have a problem...."

I said, looking at my mom.

"So who has a problem?"

**"Nim's parents."**

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.

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"I think we’re overthinking this."

My parents, who had offered to meet at NumNim’s house to help us feel comfortable about our relationship, spoke as the car began to drive toward another pair of parents who didn’t like me much.

"In these days, if your child loves someone, we love them too. When parents stop supporting it, they just talk. Look at other families, their daughters can be pregnant, and their parents still don’t abandon them. In the end, they support them. So, dating a woman isn’t a big deal. Relax, Nim, don’t think too much."

"My dad is quite conservative. He sees love between the same sex as sinful."

"If he’s that religious, then he should be broad-minded and easy going. Besides, our family isn’t perfect either. I believe that if Nim’s parents meet us, they’ll understand. I’ll be the ambassador for you."

"What does that mean, Mom?"

"Ambassador."

"Oh, but Mom, it’s not that simple. You don’t know much about Nim's Dad."

"Oh, believe me. If they meet me, they’ll accept it."

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*Splash!*

The sound of water splashing from the bucket used to wash the car hit my mom directly, splashing onto me as I stood outside.

When NumNim’s father, hearing my mother talk about us being a couple, immediately grabbed the bucket and threw water at us without listening to any protest.

"Dad!"

"Are you crazy? How can you see this normal? They’re both women! Why else would the world create men? Get out of my sight, all of you!"

NumNim’s father didn’t even want to talk or listen to anything, pointing his hand and pushing my parents away, ignoring us completely. I was furious and wanted to argue, but the sweet-faced NumNim stepped between us, talking seriously with her father.

"Why do you have to do this? They came in peace."

"Are you leaving after just one night at their house? I raised you. I tried to find you a good man, but you refused. Now you love a woman. What will she give you? Can she give you a wedding or a family?"

"It doesn’t matter what she can or can’t give. I just love her."

"Shut up. I don’t want to hear it. Get inside now! I want you to break up with this girl! Don’t ever have female friends again. I’ll arrange a marriage for you!"

"Enough! That’s too much!"

My mother, who had been quiet until now, shoved NumNim's dad, not afraid to confront him. She swung her handbag and hit him on the face, which didn’t make her feel guilty at all.

"You’re a fool with a heart the size of an ant. Living in a hole, thinking everything is still old-fashioned. If you’re going to raise your kid this way, then you should’ve raised a dog instead."

"Hey! This is too much! It’s my choice how to raise my child! If you want your children to be messed up, to be a freak? That’s your business, but don’t bring that weirdness into my daughter’s life and my family. Our honorable family can’t accept that."

"Honorable? Based on what? Who do you think you are, looking down on us like that? Fine! My daughter doesn’t have to love your daughter.

Someone like Fah can have any top actress in the entertainment industry. There's no need to care about some martial arts teacher!"

"Mom, weren't we here to negotiate?"

"No more fucking negotiations. He threw water at us like we were stray dogs! No point wasting words. Take your daughter back, and tell her to stay away from mine. From now on, just wait and see—if my daughter’s new partner isn’t Aum, Aff, Matt, or Mew, then she'll be marrying Prince Harry or some duke. Just watch!"

My mother turned to me, grabbed my collar, and dragged me into the car.

"We're leaving. Don't be sad. There are billions of women in the world. I'll find you a hundred girlfriends if I have to—the rich ones!"

I was shoved into the car, and the driver immediately stepped on the gas. I struggled to break free, but my parents held me down tightly.

Meanwhile, NumNim, who had managed to escape her own family, ran after me, frantically dialing my number. But before I could answer, my mother snatched my phone and threw it out the window. That was it— NumNim and I were completely no longer contact.

"Why did you have to do this, Mom?"

"Because we're rich!"

"I mean, why separate us? You're no different from NumNim's parents!"

"I can’t stand seeing you be beneath someone else. It doesn’t matter— women’s love fades over time. In the end, you'll go back to how you’re supposed to be, loving men, just like I did."

"That was you, not me!"

"If you keep making this difficult, I’ll send you to study abroad. And I am not allowed you to contact that girl again. This is an ultimatum."

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# Chapter 33: Solution

Right now, things are getting out of hand. I never thought it would turn out like this.

It's already hard enough dealing with of NumNim's parents. But after encountering my mom's barrier, it felt like trying to drive a nail through a coffin. There's no room to move at all.

As I said, my mom is kind-hearted, but the one thing she cannot tolerate is anything that brings me shame or makes me feel unsafe. She'll protect me like a lioness, and no one dares to harm me.

But since this is about my love life, her strong stance ended up ruining my relationship with NumNim. It's completely fallen apart, and there's no way forward now.

**NumNim's parents hate me.**

**My parents hate NumNim.**

So what's going to happen to us?

"Fah... come talk to Mom. Don't stay silent like this. It's making me feel uneasy."

My mother had been knocking on my door for over two hours and wouldn't give up. Meanwhile, I just stayed in my room, crying, because everything felt so dark and hopeless. I didn't want to argue with my mother because I know everything she's doing is out of love for me.

But right now, I wasn't ready to talk to anyone. The subject she kept pushing,

**"Forget about that girl,"**

only hurt me more, so I chose not to talk.

"Fah, if you don't come out, I'm going to break down the door."

"Don't make things worse than they already are. You're the one who started everything. You're the one who yelled at Nim, telling her not to see Fah again. You ruined everything."

"Oh, so now it's all my fault? Don't you see what her parents did to us?"

"Did you really have to react this way? There are so many other ways to handle it."

"I was mad at that time! You just stood there silently, not protecting me. If you had any good suggestions, why didn't you offer them before the whole thing was over?"

The argument between my mother and my father at the door made me even more upset, and in the end, I decided to open the door and face everyone with my swollen eyes.

"No one is to blame. We don't need to argue. I'm the one at fault for trusting Mom....

*Sniff*

."

"My child is upset,"

My mother who had never been able to stand my tears, placed her hand on her chest, tears welling up in her eyes.

"Fah, you're sarcastic to me."

"I'm not sarcastic to you. I'm just stating the truth. Right now, I'm still trying to come to terms with the fact that my love with NumNim can't happen. I need time to adjust. Right now, I want to be alone, is that okay?"

"No," My mother refused to give up.

"Being alone won't solve anything. Come and dance with me instead."

"No,"

My father gave her a cold look, disapproving of my mother inappropriate attitude.

"You can't act like this when you're the one who made everything hard. You have to fix it."

"I already gave a solution. Let our child go abroad."

"And then our child runs away to cry abroad? Is that your solution?"

"Oh, you're right. You're very smart....just tell me what to do."

"I don't know."

"Then don't talk nonsense."

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*Bam!*

I slammed the door and locked it, unwilling to listen to their argument any longer. I just sat there, crying, thinking of the other person, wondering how she was doing.

Normally, NumNim and I would see each other almost every day, even if we fought. I'd always find a way to make up and see her. But this time, it's different. It's harder.

I couldn't face NumNim because my mom's words hurt me. She said we shouldn't meet again. By now, NumNim must hate me, hate my family, and not want to see me anymore.

The only way to contact her was through my phone, but my mother even threw that away.

*Wait... my phone? I have two!*

As soon as I remembered that, I jumped up and grabbed my other phone. I quickly searched for the number of the martial arts school. Luckily, I had saved NumNim's number in this phone because the other one was for talking to Mae Khun. I didn't want anyone to see that I used a Lisa picture as my profile.

And as soon as I dialed the number...

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[Hello?] "Nim...

*Sniff*

,"

I sobbed, and the person on the other end seemed a bit stunned, realizing it was me.

[Fah? I thought I wouldn't be talk to you anymore.]

Right then, both of us were crying like three-year-olds, alternating between sobs. Before, we loved each other but never felt this desperate. We used to play around and argue every time. But today, we cried and longed to see each other, not wanting to fight anymore.

"I miss you so much, Nim. How did things end up like this? Are you okay? Did your parents scold you?"

"No, Dad didn't say anything. I've just been hiding in my room. I don't want to talk to anyone."

"Same here. I've been hiding in my room too. I'm so angry at my mom. She said everything would be easier, but it only made it harder."

[What should we do? Should we keep hiding like this?]

"What should we do? Should we run away together? Go somewhere no one can find us?"

When I suggested this, the other person stayed silent for a bit. I almost said, "Oh, maybe not," but then...

[Let's run away together. Do you have any idea where we should go?]

"Are you serious, Nim? I'm serious."

[I'm serious too.]

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Now NumNim and I were both so eager. We both wanted to get away from our parents, and the only way out was to run away together, hand in hand.

"You won't regret this decision later, will you?"

"Fah, you won't regret making your mom sad, right?"

When I thought of the people we would leave behind, we both became quiet. Love is such a beautiful thing. When you find the right person, you want to be happy with them, but the right person shouldn't make the people who've always loved us sad.

My mom is someone I care about deeply. Even though I'm so angry at her right now, I can't just abandon her.

"Aren't you worried that your dad will be sad?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll give you time to think. Let's decide tomorrow. If we decide to run, we'll face whatever happens."

"What if we decide not to run? What will happen to us?"

"Tomorrow, we'll have the answer."

This is an important decision. If I choose my lover, I'll have to leave the person who loves me the most. So, all night, I couldn't decide. By the time I realized it, it was morning. As I was standing in front of my closet, about to grab my suitcase, there was a knock on the door. The familiar voice that I've known since I was little.

"Fah, are you awake? You need to eat breakfast. I had the cook make your favorite dishes today."

"....."

"If you don't like it, I'll ask the cook to make something else. Please come talk to me."

Hearing my mother's voice, I pulled my gaze from the closet and walked to open the door. My mom, who had been about to leave, paused and looked at me with wide eyes.

"Good, you're coming out for breakfast. Your eyes are swollen."

"Mom,"

I walked up to her and hugged her tightly.

"

*Sniff*

."

And as I cried, my mom hugged me just like she always did, no matter how old I was.

"Don't cry, sweetie. It makes me feel bad."

"I love you, Mom."

"I love you too, Fah. I'm sorry for making you so upset."

"I won't go anywhere. I'm sorry."

"So don't go anywhere."

"I've chosen Nim, but I can't leave you."

I pulled away from my mom and decided to close the door, then called NumNim at 9 AM. The person on the other end picked up with a hoarse voice and immediately spoke.

[You've decided, haven't you?]

"Nim, have you decided?"

[I've decided too, but I want to wait for you to speak first.]

We both fell silent, not knowing how our words might hurt the other. But in the end, if the result was the same, it meant we couldn't hold on to the pain any longer.

And yes, I decided to speak.

"I'm sorry, Nim. I can't leave my mom."

[I understand.]

"What about you? What have you decided?"

[I'm glad you thought this way. If you had chosen to leave your mom and come with me, I would have wondered in the future, you would stop loving me and find someone else. I feel the same way as you. I love my parents,

even if my dad is strict. But he's been a really good father.]

"What about us, Nim?"

[If it's not meant to be, then it really isn't.]

"Because the right person doesn't need to try."

[Yes, if we really belong together, we shouldn't have to try this hard.]

We didn't even say goodbye when we hung up. I guess NumNim was probably crying just like me. We broke up because we couldn't make it work. Love isn't just about the two people involved, as some people say.

There are always family matters involved.

And this was just us being in a relationship. Think about it from the perspective of married couples - it must be even harder for them.

It's okay, Fah. It will pass soon.

I'm not the first person in the world to experience a broken heart.

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# Chapter 34: A New Suitcase

Since that day, NumNim and I haven't contacted or talked to each other again. It was as if the decision we made that day was final. We didn't hate. each other, but continuing to talk would only make things more painful. So, it was better not to talk to each other.

It's been two months now. My dream of creating perfumes is still ongoing, but I've also been working at my dad's company. But this time, everyone knows who I am.

My dad assigned Khun Kiart to mentor me and introduce me to important people in different departments so I could learn what each department does.

Honestly, this isn't the kind of work I'm good at, but I wanted something to keep me busy-better than doing nothing.

"What do you want for your birthday this year, Fah?"

My mother asked cheerfully as we ate together.

There was something I really wanted, but since I knew I could never have it, I chose something else instead.

"I'd like a new suitcase. I'm planning to travel to Europe."

"Is your old suitcase broken?"

"I just want a bigger one."

"That's such an easy request! I thought you'd ask for something special.

Alright then, I'll get you a new suitcase along with plenty of pocket money so you can have fun on your trip. Let's have a birthday party at home this year. We haven't thrown one for you in a long time."

"No need, Mom. That's unnecessary. Just getting a suitcase and going on a trip is enough. Are you coming with me?"

"Yes! I want to travel too. I'm itching to go somewhere,"

My mother said dreamily, already imagining the trip.

"I wonder if Europe has seafood dipping sauce. I heard they have huge oysters-I want to try those."

"Then let's eat whatever we want!"

I said enthusiastically.

My father, who had been quiet, suddenly spoke up.

"Have you been in touch with Nim?""

"Hey, why bring that up?"

Mom protested.

"Our daughter was trying to forget."

"That's right. I already forgot about that."

I said with a bright voice, pretending I didn't care.

"We haven't talked at all. I mean, we broke up already, so cutting ties quickly is for the best. Look at me I'm fine! I'm even planning a trip."

"That's good," My father said.

"Stop making things worse,"

Mom scolded him.

"Don't listen to your Dad, Fah. Let's focus on planning our trip."

I laughed with my mother and changed the subject. But once dinner was over, I returned to my true self, no longer pretending to be strong. Alone in my room, I cried again.

Honestly, I'd been like this for a while now. Before I ever fell in love. I used to say,

"To avoid being abandoned, we should be the ones to leave first."

But once I experienced it myself, I realized it wasn't that simple. Forget leaving-just trying to forget someone was already impossible. My cheerful attitude was just an act.

I asked for a suitcase as a birthday gift because I wanted to escape for a while, to stay abroad for a long time before coming back. But when my mother said she'd go with me, my plan to travel alone was ruined. Still, it wasn't so bad she was the one person who could always cheer me up.

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**Knock, knock, knock.**

"Fah, open the door for me, sweetheart."

My father's voice made me quickly wipe my tears, clear my throat, and swallow my sobs before opening the door.

"What is it, Dad?"

"You don't have to pretend to be strong in front of me. Do you think I can't tell?"

"I'm fine."

"The more you act like this, the sadder I feel.”

Hearing him say that, I threw myself into his arms and sobbed. He had. always known, but he never said anything.

"Why do you have to be strong in front of us? Mom and I don't want to see you like this."

"I don't want Dad and Mom to worry anymore."

"That makes me even more worried. I'd rather you act like the little girl who used to cry whenever she was upset. Now, tell me honestly are you planning this trip to escape from everything?"

"I think it might help."

"Running away won't solve anything. You'll still think about her, even if you're far away. That's not a real solution."

"Then what should I do? If I die, will this pain go away?"

"Don't say that, Fah,"

My father said, pulling me into a tight hug, his voice trembling with fear.

"I was just saying it. I wouldn't do it."

"But the fact that you even thought about it means it crossed your mind. You can't think like that, Fah."

Dad cupped my face in his hands, making me look into his eyes.

"We don't always get what we want in life. Even if we don't part ways now, one day, we will-whether by choice or by fate. Our job is to learn to accept it."

"I know... but I miss her. She's not even dead. Why can't I be with her?"

My father didn't answer. He just held me and gently rocked me, trying to comfort me. In the silence of my room, the only sounds were my sobs and the heavy heartbeat of the man who was holding me. I felt guilty for making him worry, but I couldn't stop myself.

"Cry it out, sweetheart. It'll help."

At least today, I had someone to comfort me. But what about you, NumNim? When you cry, what do you do?

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Time helps us heal. At the very least, I don't throw tantrums or break down anymore. It's more like a numbness now, so I cry less. But that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.

Right now, my new suitcase, the one my mother bought for my birthday. was finally unboxed. I admired its elegant design, appreciating my mother's great taste. It looked expensive-hopefully, it wouldn't catch a thief's eye at the airport. But whatever, looking good was more important. If it got stolen, I'd deal with it then.

"Fah, you've planned everything, right? Don't get there and start panicking about money or not knowing where to go,"

My father reminded me for the hundredth time when he dropped me at the airport, where were getting ready to fly to celebrate my birthday tomorrow.

"Of course, Dad. I've got everything sorted. And come on, it's Europe, not the end of the world. No need to worry."

"I can't help it. Your mom is forgetful enough as it is. And your suitcase-did you lock it properly?"

"Yes, everything's secure."

"You used 911 as the code again, didn't you?”

"How did you know?"

"It's your birthday."

It was an easy guess for someone who cared so much about his daughter. I never changed my suitcase code because I was proud of having such a cool birthdate. But I never imagined someone else would one day unlock my suitcase with the same code. Come to think of it. I never asked NumNim why she chose that number.

She slipped into my thoughts again. I had managed to forget her for a whole hour on the drive here.

"And do you have enough money? Do you want more?"

"Hey,"

The person who shouted was my mother. She held out her hand without saying much. Dad pursed his lips slightly and placed the exchanged money -a big bill-into my mother's hand.

"This is for our daughter. Don't take it all for yourself."

"Do you really think I'd be stingy with our daughter? Hmph! I'm not talking to you anymore. Hurry up and go into the gate. I still have more shopping to do."

We both waved goodbye to my father and dragged our suitcases toward the check-in counter. Just as we spotted it, my mother suddenly needed to use the restroom, so she told me to wait.

"Sit and wait here. We'll check in together. I can't hold it anymore!"

"No need to rush, Mom. The people on the plane can wait."

"VIP treatment at its finest!"

I pulled my suitcase to find a seat and waited while scrolling through my phone, reading this and that to kill time. Honestly, there was nothing worth reading in the local news-it was all too depressing.

I wondered if the rise in depression these days had anything to do with the news people consumed. It felt like, in this era, those without smartphones had better mental health, while those who followed the news ended up worse off. At this rate, I was probably heading down that path too.

"I'm back!"

My mother came out of the restroom cheerfully.

"Let's go check in. Oh! Since when did your suitcase have a keychain? It totally ruins its elegance!"

"What keychain?"

I looked down where my mother was pointing and saw an acrylic keychain with the word "Bonjour" in big letters, clashing with the sleek, glossy suitcase my mother had bought me. And I was sure I hadn't put it there.

"It's not mine. I've never had a keychain like this."

"Huh? Then where did it come from? Did you swap suitcases with someone?"

My mother sounded surprised.

"Let's try unlocking it. See if it opens."

Following my mother instructions, I laid the suitcase flat and entered the code 9-1-1. It unlocked easily, but when I looked inside, none of the items were mine. Not a single thing looked familiar.

"Mom, this isn't my suitcase."

"Wait, but didn't you handle everything yourself? If it's not yours, then whose is it?”

My mother looked puzzled. I scratched my head, confused, because the suitcase had been with me the entire time since we left home.

"What do we do now, Mom? Nothing in here belongs to me."

"Think carefully. Did you swap it with someone while I was in the restroom?"

"No! I was sitting right next to it the whole time!"

"Should we try announcing it at the information desk to see if anyone accidentally switched bags? Do they have announcements like in shopping malls here?"

"I don't know, but we can go check.".

Since we had to check in soon, my mother and I hurried to find the nearest information desk. But just as I was about to reach it, I noticed a small figure standing there, looking just as anxious as me, pulling a suitcase identical to mine too similar to be a coincidence.

"Nim..."

My call made the sweet-faced person, who was about to ask the staff something, turn around in surprise.

We stared at each other before glancing down at our suitcases. Then, our mouths fell open because the bag with NumNim was actually mine.

"That's Fah's suitcase!"

"And that's Nim's suitcase!”

## **Chapter 35: 911**

The two of us dragged our suitcases and walked toward each other. But instead of exchanging suitcases, NumNim threw herself into my arms in a tight hug, as if she had missed me dearly without needing any signal at all.

I inhaled her familiar sweet scent, mixed with a faint milky aroma from her candy. But since too many eyes were on us, she was the one who pulled away first.

"Fah, why are you here? Where are you going?"

"I'm going to France with my mom."

I turned to look for my mother, only to realize she had vanished into thin air. Then, I got a text from my mother along with a sticker full of tears of regret.

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**Mom: I want to go to France with you so badly I could cry, but I can't bear to see you sad.**

**Mom: Have fun, and we'll talk when you get back.**

**Mom: I was the one who switched your suitcase.**

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Just like that, my mom revealed everything before I could even type a single question. I showed the messages to NumNim, and her sweet face froze in shock.

"So this was your mom's plan? But how did our suitcases even get switched? My dad was the one who bought mine."

At the mention of "dad," everything clicked into place, like a missing puzzle piece finally found. NumNim and I exchanged stunned looks, barely able to believe it.

"Wait... did your father plan this too?"

"I don't know. But out of nowhere, my dad bought me a suitcase and told me to take a trip abroad to clear my mind before coming back. At first, I thought he just wanted me to get a new suitcase since ours got switched, but now it feels too intentional to be a coincidence. My dad isn't the type for random coincidences."

"Then this means both our parents were behind this. Maybe you should call your dad and ask? That way, we can understand what's really going on."

Even though I was happy to see her, we were both more eager to uncover the truth. NumNim dialed her father and put him on speaker, getting straight to the point.

"Dad, it's me."

[You still haven't boarded yet?]

"My suitcase got swapped."

[Then just switch it back.]

Her father's voice remained completely unfazed, as if he had already expected this to happen.

"We already switched. I met Fah.”

NumNim took a deep breath, nervously waiting for his response.

[That's good. Now hurry up and board. When's your flight?]

"Dad... did you know about this suitcase thing?"

[What are you talking about?]

"Our suitcases are identical. It's too much of a coincidence. And suddenly, you bought me this expensive, branded suitcase? That's not like you."

[Exactly. I would never spend that much on a suitcase. It's way too extravagant, like some Bollywood drama.]

"Then why?"

[Because I didn't buy it. Her mom arranged everything and just told me to give it to you, so you'd have a reason to go on a trip. She said it was better for you to heal your heart somewhere nice instead of sulking at home, making us all depressed.]

"So this was your plan, Dad?"

[I didn't come up with this crazy idea, but I just went along with it. Your mom almost broke the house down arguing with me about it. She kept saying, "Why are you trying to stop our kid from being happy?" It's like if she took my beloved car and turned it into a flower pot just because she likes plants. That's insane! My car is a masterpiece! It's been with me for over thirty years, and she wants to repurpose it as garden decor? She has no taste!]

"So... does this mean you understand me, Dad?"

[I don't understand. And I don't want to. But love is love. If I could just easily change what I love, I'd have a new car by now. And if you could change who you love, you wouldn't still be into Fah. I can't force you to marry anyone, it wouldn't be right.]

"I could still like P'Tik, though.”

I shot a glare at NumNim. Things were going so well, and now she had to bring that up? She burst into laughter, her eyes glistening with emotion. The line went silent for a second before her father spoke again, this time in a gentler tone.

[That laugh... I haven't heard you laugh like that in ages.]

"Thank you, Dad. For understanding."

[But if it were Tik, you'd be okay, right? I'll go tell him to divorce his wife for you.]

"You're cruel!"

I yelled into the phone, making him chuckle in amusement.

[I'm going to be even crueler. Love each other as much as you can because there's still a long fight ahead. This is just a break. Now, I'm off to wash my car. Hurry up and board. And bring back some French pastries they say they're delicious.]

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NumNim ended the call, and we stood in silence, unsure what to do next. It was just the two of us now, with our suitcases still in each other's hands. That made me finally start a real conversation.

"So... we're really going on this trip together?"

"Looks like it."

"Isn't it kind of awkward? Flying together without talking things through first?"

"What's there to talk about?”

"Like... how have you been? Are you okay? It's been three months. Has anything changed?"

"We have plenty of time to talk on the plane. If your mom could swap our suitcases, she probably made sure we're sitting together too."

"Good point. You're pretty smart, Nim. But still, I just want to keep talking to you.

"Okay. Let's ask each other one question before we check in. Just one topic cach."

"Who asks first?"

"You."

"No, you first."

"You go."

"Let's ask at the same time, then."

"Fine. One, two, three"

We both fired our questions at each other simultaneously.

"Why 911? What does it mean?"

The questions weren't exactly the same, but they held the same meaning. We burst into laughter, and I decided to answer first so we wouldn't waste more check-in time.

"Tomorrow is my birthday-November 9th."

NumNim's face shifted slightly before she broke into a smile.

"I used to believe there were no coincidences in this world. But I guess there are. Because tomorrow is my birthday too-November 9th.”

"Wait... and our suitcases are the same? And got switched?"

"Yup. Coincidence?"

"We weren't born in the same hospital, were we?"

"Which hospital were you born in, Fah?"

"Bangkok Christian.”

“....”

"Is this the same quiet place?"

"Nim was born at Bangkok Christian too.”

.

The announcement calling passengers to check in for our flight rang out. NumNim and I were startled for a moment before grabbing each other's hands and pulling each other's suitcases toward the same counter.

"Do we need to swap our bags?"

NumNim asked as we half-walked, half-ran.

"No need. We're going to be together the whole trip anyway. We might even end up staying at the same hotel by coincidence."

"Or in the same room by coincidence."

"Or maybe even become a couple by coincidence."

"That one doesn't need coincidence. We planned for it.”

We both laughed, delighted, and rushed to check in. Then, once inside the gate, we talked about the past three months-how we lived without each other. But honestly, there was no need to rush. This trip was going to be long.

No-our love this time would last not just for the trip but for as long as we lived, until one of us was taken by death.

That's what I believed. Our love story might be a little rough at times, but I believe that everyone has their own story. And one thing that NumNim and I have always thought the same about.

The right person doesn't need effort. Save your efforts for those around us who think we don't belong together instead.

The right person won't bring us pain.

The right person will make us better.

And the right person is you the one born on the same day as me, in the same hospital, boarding the same plane, heading to the same country.

**My right person is you.**

**9-1-1.**

———**THE END**———