# Chapitre : PROLOGUE

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“What are your thoughts on the current shipping trend between you two?”

“Who am I being shipped with now?”

I asked, pretending not to know, though I was already tired of these kinds of questions. They always came up.

“With the same person—**Ken Achira,** your co-star in the latest series.”

A small smile, avoiding eye contact, and shifting shyly for a few seconds should be enough to let people imagine things on their own.

“We’re just close friends,”

I answered, sticking to the usual line.

“What do you think about people wanting you and Ken to date for real?”

The noise of the surrounding crowd and the background music from the awards event was so loud I had to lean in to hear the question clearly.

“I’m glad people feel connected to the drama.”

“Is Ken your type?”

I stopped smiling for a moment.

“Ken already looks great, doesn’t he?”

“If he tried to date you, what would you say?”

“You’d have to ask him first—if that’s what he’s doing.”

All around, other actors were giving interviews, while others walked past.

“But someone saw you two having dinner together.”

“Do you have a picture? Let me see,” I said teasingly with a smile.

“I have dinner with friends all the time.”

“So you're saying you're just friends for now. But in the future, is there a chance that could change?”

I could say anything, but I needed to keep the fan buzz going. That was important for my career. My manager reminds me of this every morning and night. Even now, I can still hear her voice in my head.

“We’re just friends for now. As for the future… I can’t really say. Excuse me, I need to go.”

“**Jay**, wait! Just one more question—please!”

Cameras and phones were still pointed at me from all directions. Back when I first entered the industry, it used to make me feel nervous and uncomfortable.

“Yes,”

I replied, turning back to face the crowd of reporters who were eagerly pushing their microphones toward me.

“Can we have some light questions, please? I’m starting to get scared.” A wave of cheerful laughter followed.

“In your upcoming drama ***Leh Rai,*** we heard you're taking on a villain role?”

“Yes, in this series, I play the younger sister of the female lead. She and I fall in love with the same man. I really love my sister, but we end up clashing because I feel she betrayed me by taking him. So, I turn bad and go head-to-head with her,”

I said with a smile.

“It’s something I’ve never done before, so it should be an exciting challenge.”

“We heard the producer said they wanted two top actresses of this era— **Prang** and **Jay**—to go head-to-head. Is that true?”

“Yes, it’s something along those lines.”

“You’re working with Ken again—how do you feel about that?”

“I’m happy to be working with all the cast members,” I answered politely.

“And is it true,”

A plump, flamboyant man from Channel 19 shouted through the crowd, “that you’re not getting along with one of the female co-stars?” “Which one?” I asked.

“**Prang Pannapat**—the one who got the lead role instead of you,” He said, pressing on.

“Oh! What a coincidence—Prang just got here. Shall we do a joint interview?” I said.

The crowd of male and female reporters surrounding me parted to let a woman in a white evening gown walk through.

The dress had a deep V neckline that revealed her smooth, pale skin as she came to stand beside me. Seriously, who wears something this revealing?

Her shimmering jewelry and the luxurious patterns of her gown made her skin glow even more brightly... Beautiful. Sharp. Elegant.

*She looked every bit the picture-perfect star standing next to me.*

“Let’s do a joint interview,”

A female reporter suggested.

“Is it true that you two have been at odds ever since Prang was rumored to be dating Jay’s older brother a few years ago?”

“For me, I’ve always worked with her just fine,”

I answered politely—though deep down, I really wanted to say, If it were me, I wouldn’t ask something so rude. Ever heard of manners?

“And you, Prang? What do you think?”

The reporter followed up.

The woman beside me gave a slight, amused smile, as if the whole thing was a harmless joke.

“With Jay, there’s nothing I even need to think about.”

With Jay, there’s nothing to think about at all. Ha! I nearly had to pinch myself to stop from rolling my eyes.

“So you’re saying the rumors of a feud aren’t true?”

Asked the same flamboyant reporter from *Channel 19*—again.

“What’s true is that we’re about to work together. People who don’t get along wouldn’t be doing that, right?”

She replied, smooth and sharp, like a line straight from her own PR playbook. Graceful like a princess, with that soft, perfect smile.

“But there were rumors that Jay avoided taking on projects involving Prang. Aside from that magazine shoot together six years ago, you two haven’t crossed paths since. And when this series was first announced, there was even talk that Jay considered pulling out because Prang was cast. Is that true?”

Of course, it was the same thick-lipped, double-chinned flamboyant reporter from Channel 19 who just wouldn’t let up.

Prang Pannapat raised her perfectly arched brows and turned to me with a syrupy sweet smile.

“Is that true?”

“I think it’s more about timing than anything else,” I replied, calmly.

“As for this series—why would I drop out? I’m actually glad to work with someone as talented as Prang.”

My black, sequined sheer lace gown from a luxury brand caught the light, its shimmer radiating like a dark enchantress standing next to the glowing white princess.

Prang returned a soft smile.

“When it comes to acting, I could never compete with Jay.”

But the look in her eyes was sharp—aimed straight at me, like a silent challenge.

“After all, look—Jay’s won the *Diamond Golden Doll Award for Best Actress* three years in a row.”

I smiled back, gripping the diamond-studded trophy in my hand just a little tighter.

“Let’s get a picture of the two of you together,”

The same reporter from Channel 19 chimed in again, still unwilling to give it a rest.

Flashes from dozens of cameras burst in my eyes, one after another. The constant *click, click, click* echoed from all directions—vultures hungry for scandal and hot gossip, calling out for their piece.

"*Look over here, please."*

*"This way, Jay."*

*"Can you two put your arms around each other?"*

Being a celebrity is a bit like being in sales. You have to keep smiling for the guests, even when your heart is sick. If your image is good, you market yourself well, and you’ve got real talent—people will love you, no matter what.

Because actors need the media, and the media need actors, nearly every part of our lives becomes public property.

Some parts of who we really are get hidden away. So here we were—two women called “*public figures*”—raising our arms, putting them around each other’s waists, striking poses, and flashing smiles, letting the so-called journalists take what they wanted.

But if someone here happened to possess a seventh sense, they might just catch a glimpse of the unseen clash—waves of white and blue energy surging violently from the two leading ladies of the era, colliding in a silent, fierce battle.

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# Chapitre 01: Do You Have Money to Pay the Fine?

"Fitting?"

"Yes, fitting. It's next week."

"I'm not going. Please withdraw me from this project. I’m not doing it. I already have too much work lined up — barely any time to rest." "There it is,"

Je-Ang dragged out the word.

"You complain about not having time to rest, but instead of sleeping, what are you doing?"

The tall, flamboyant *gay man* tapped my phone with his perfectly manicured finger, clearly annoyed.

"Why are you lying here playing on your phone?"

"This *is* a kind of rest for me,"

I said, pulling my smartphone away from his reach.

"Jay,"

His tone suddenly dropped and turned serious.

"You can’t treat this like a joke. You’ve already signed the contract. The higher-ups and everyone on the production team are all ready."

She placed a thin A4 script on top of me while I was still lying on the sofa, phone in hand.

“This is the script for the first scene. Read it.”

I shifted slightly, letting the paper slide off me onto the floor without taking my eyes off the phone.

“My schedule is full every day. Where am I supposed to find time for this?”

“I already arranged your schedule,”

Said Je-Ang — or to use his full stage name, Angsumalin, the name he adopted when he entered the entertainment industry. His real name, the one her mother gave, he claims is a cosmic secret.

“Do you think I’m a robot? I’m a human being. I get tired. I get sick. I have feelings. Making me work seven days straight — don’t you feel the slightest bit guilty?”

"You were the one who picked up the pen and signed the contract, right, Jay?"

Je — the same Je who in a past life claimed to be Kobori’s wife but is now reincarnated as a chic and stylish gay man — was pulling me up off the sofa.

"You're 27 years old. Don’t act like a child. Don’t give people a reason to say you’re irresponsible."

And, just so you know, his Kobori was the Nadech Kugimiya version only.

“Ugh, Je…”

I struggled hard to pull my arm away from his grip, but it was no use.

“I’m not doing this drama,”

I said, rolling my eyes at him.

“You are doing it!”

*Period.*

Je stared at me with the same intense glare he always used when I got difficult.

"Didn’t you say you wanted to go international?”

"I already am international,”

I said, flopping back down on the sofa and ignoring my ever-dramatic manager.

“Jay! Jeerapat Wiboonthanakit!”

He shouted my full name.

"You told me yourself that the script was good. You begged to do this role. And now what? You’re going to throw a tantrum and back out just like that?”

The hem of his white shirt had come untucked from his light brown pants, cinched with a designer belt — Je tucked in his shirt neatly again, like always.

My eyebrows were knotted like tangled string.

"Why are you calling me by my full name?"

“If you do this series, you’ll be a huge hit. Show everyone how talented you are — that you can handle any role. Don’t let some silly personal issue get in the way of your success.”

Even a second grader could tell that proud smile on Je’s face was totally fake.

“But I don’t want to do it,” I said flatly.

“Then why did you agree to sign the contract back then?”

“Did you tell me back then that she was going to be in it?”

I shot back instantly, narrowing my eyes as I started to catch on to something.

“You never miss my deal-breakers, Je. So why didn’t you say anything this time? If I’d known she was the lead, I never would've signed up for this stupid drama.”

“I asked the producers back then. Prang — Prannapat’s name wasn’t on the

cast list at all.”

“Oh, reaaaally?” I pressed.

“Then how did she suddenly become the lead? Explain that, Je!”

“Maybe they switched the cast later. I just found out when you did. Come on, just go along with it. It’ll be over before you know it.”

“I don’t care.”

I turned over on the sofa and buried my face into the cushion, turning my back to the bossy dictator in a designer belt.

But then my stomach dropped — because Je Angsumalin, the iron-armed gay overlord, suddenly picked me up off the sofa with both hands.

“Aaaah! Je, let me go!”

I thrashed my arms and legs while the self-proclaimed wife of Kobori carried me straight to the bathroom. Then he dropped me into the tub — my dark, thin skirt riding up all the way to my hips.

“Stop acting ridiculous and clean yourself up. You’ve got an early job tomorrow.”

I sat up and tossed my head at him.

“Then bathe me, Je.”

“Ugh! You shameless brat!”

He shrieked, his voice sharp and dramatic as he recoiled like I was some cursed object.

So naturally, I jumped up and lunged at him, trying to drag him into the tub with me.

But Je, the tall gay queen that he was, was just too big for me to pull down. Still, he let out an over-the-top squeal like some innocent schoolgirl, then scrambled out of the bathroom in a flurry of limbs and dramatic flair.

Even after the bathroom door shut, our laughter echoed on opposite sides of the wall.

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And because of what happened that day, today I have to open the door and step out of my shiny black Porsche 911 Turbo S, wearing my beloved bright red high heels, with a rather sour mood, yawning repeatedly.

My manager still walks around to the driver’s side to carry my bag for me before we both head out of the parking lot and into the building— the place where I have to attend a drama fitting today.

“Fix your face, Jay. Stand up straight, chin up, and walk gracefully. Don’t act like a child—what if someone sees you?” He pinched my waist.

“I’m forcing myself here. My heart’s not ready.”

The grumbling was more of a ritual, a little rebellion before I slipped back into my leading-lady persona. It helped release a bit of my spirit that longed for democracy.

“The show must go on, darling!”

Jay spoke firmly.

“Do your best. I’ll go walk around the mall while I wait.”

“Huh? You’re not staying with me?”

“Not today. I’ve got errands… and besides, I want you to be open to good things—without me standing in front of the door.”

He gave a half-smile as he walked me to the elevator.

“When this show is over, I’m firing you.”

“When this show is over, you’ll probably crawl over to hug my knees and thank me repeatedly for pushing you so hard—without charging extra.”

“I’m so done with you, Je.”

If rolling my eyes even slightly got the message across that I was doing this under protest, I’d do it.

“Elevator’s about to open. Put on your mask, Jay. The mask that makes everyone fall in love with you.”

I stepped out of the elevator, wearing a sweet smile—the kind you put on when you have to meet the public. Then I walked into the building, checked in with the staff, and got to work.

“Good morning, P’Pin.”

The elegant woman, clad in a high-collared white blouse paired with tailored black trousers made from expensive fabric, raised her hand in a polite wai.

She was the daughter of the drama studio’s owner—the very studio I’d come to act for—and the wife of the tall, dark-skinned man, P’O, the producer, who was now overseeing the crew from the center of the room. “Good to see you, Jay,”

She said, glancing at her watch before wrapping an arm around my waist.

“Right on time as always. Go ahead and get changed so we can start taking photos. I’ve already had everything prepared for you.”

I began to take in my surroundings as the team led me to hair and makeup.

Everyone was busy with their roles: the photographers continued snapping shots of other actors; some of the crew and actors stood chatting casually in small groups, and the PR team captured behind-the-scenes footage.

Everything passed by like a blur, filtered through the lens of routine—until my gaze landed on a woman sitting quietly in a far-off corner.

In that instant, the numb switch in my brain was abruptly severed. My senses flared awake.

She had flawless skin and was styled perfectly for the lead role she’d been cast in. Sitting with her legs crossed, she glanced at me—just briefly— before quickly looking away, pretending not to notice as I turned in her direction.

In her right hand, she held a white pen with a cute black cat cap perched on the end. Her face was deliberately focused on the photographer taking shots nearby.

And though she feigned indifference, that bold red lipstick on her soft lips stabbed right through me.

“Prang,”

P’Ploy—the sharp-featured actress playing the heroine’s best friend— walked in with a bright smile. She acted as if she were incredibly close to the lead actress.

“Still not done? I just saw you shooting a scene with Dane earlier.”

“One more set left. I still have to shoot with my on-screen sister,”

Said the woman with petite lips, a button nose, and eyes that could cut down anyone who dared cross her line. She smiled sweetly at her friend as they chatted.

I sat still, staring ahead, but my ears were like satellite dishes—tuned in completely to the conversation between the lead and her best friend. They talked easily, comfortably, like old friends.

To be honest, apart from the great script—and a villain role that stood toeto-toe with the heroine—the real reason I agreed to do this series… was P’Ploy.

**P’Ploy**, the radiant one. P’Ploy, with her sultry, seductive gaze and curvaceous figure that could melt hearts. She had melted mine. Melted it, melted it, melted it… from the very first moment I saw her in person at Channel 13’s 100th anniversary celebration months ago.

Taking this role gave me both a reason and a chance to get to know her— really know her, up close.

But the cheerful, whispery laughter between the two women sitting not far from me cut right through my fantasy.

Irritation flared as I watched Prannapat—yes, that woman—pull an easy smile out of P’Ploy. And I hated that I couldn’t stop the jealousy brewing inside.

Still, after years in this business, acting has taught me how to control my reactions, to respond in ways that are appropriate and well-timed. So I just sat there, taking long, quiet breaths to keep my emotions in check.

“Jay.”

I didn’t even have to turn to know the voice belonged to **Ken**, the goodlooking young actor. He walked over and pulled out a chair, settling in next to me.

“We’ll be shooting together soon. Are you cold, Jay?”

Ken’s sharp gaze, framed by thick, dark brows, dropped to my hand—it was trembling slightly, and I couldn’t stop it. I leaned back against the chair, trying to look relaxed, and crossed my arms to subtly hide the shaking.

“A little.”

I wasn’t actually cold, but my body was trembling for some unknown reason—and worse, I couldn’t stop it. Damn it.

“The air-con’s cold.”

“I’ll go get you a jacket.”

Ken stood up the moment he finished speaking.

“No need, Ken. I’m about to shoot soon anyway.”

“Just wear it for now. Why sit here freezing?”

A piercing feeling—like being stabbed—hit me from the icy side-eye I received just as Ken gently draped the jacket over my shoulders. I turned to look, but of course, that leading lady pretended like she hadn’t noticed a thing.

“So what is this now? Are you taking care of me because you’re worried about a friend, or are you trying to spark some fan-service chemistry?”

He let out a soft chuckle, caught red-handed.

“Both, maybe. But yeah, I’m worried about my friend too.”

I kept talking to Ken, while secretly observing my rival from the corner of my eye. The goal? To gauge the nature of the relationship between P’Ploy and Prannapat.

Her long, silky hair brushing the nape of her neck stirred something in me.

That soft, rounded chin, the plump lips painted a glossy red against her

pale, rosy skin, that dainty nose.

Everything on her face looked gentle, but the thing that stood out were the mysterious eyes that had a hidden, innocent look.

I couldn't help but let out a tiny smile—just a small one—at those delicately arched brows, perfectly drawn onto that face.

Were they drawn on or tattooed, Prannapat? Really now?

While I was busy inspecting my opponent sitting across the room, my gaze accidentally locked with the sultry, smoldering eyes of P’Ploy. I smiled faintly and let a glimmer of charm shine through in return.

God, that sharp face… those soft waves in her hair… I was blushing so hard it felt like my calves were about to cramp.

What could I possibly use to hide this ridiculous crush?

“Jay… keep it together.”

A husky whisper tickled my ear.

“All those acting classes you took—maybe use them to mask your wild lust just a little? Unless you want your prey to bolt before you even pounce.”

“Ken, you bastard,”

I muttered without moving my lips.

“This is me keeping it together.”

“Your body might be still, but your eyes? Jay, your eyes are basically committing assault right now.”

As soon as he finished his sentence, a pained “*Ouch*!” escaped his mouth when I pinched the soft flesh of his arm.

I lifted my index finger and wagged it in front of his face.

“Ken, if you don’t know, don’t speak. For all we know, she might already be consenting—in her mind.”

To an outsider, we probably looked like we were flirting, whispering like lovers in a rom-com scene.

But only we knew the truth—we’d seen each other’s darkest secrets, and our friendship was as unfiltered as it gets.

“P’Jay, it’s your turn to shoot.”

That flat, quiet voice arrived with a face suddenly slipping between me and Ken from behind. The unexpected interruption made me jolt.

My heart dropped, and the budding romantic fantasy I’d been spinning around P’Ploy instantly evaporated into thin air.

The girl from the crew—she had long, straight black hair parted neatly down the middle, cascading to her back. Apart from the faint pink gloss on her lips, there wasn’t a trace of makeup on her face.

She wore a pastel blouse and matching skirt that fell just below the knees— an aesthetic that screamed nerdy, demure, shy.

Her fingers twisted together nervously as she smiled at me with an awkward, self-conscious grin.

"Okay,"

I replied, standing up and walking toward the set.

But what truly made my skin crawl—the part that made the hairs on the back of my neck rise—was her smile.

That floaty, slightly off smile… paired with a deadpan, unwavering stare.

She didn’t blink. Not once. Not while I posed, not while the camera clicked.

She gave off the kind of vibe that reminded me of those early scenes in

Western horror films—where a character seems harmless at first, maybe

just overly quiet or plain, but then slowly reveals an unsettling presence the longer the camera lingers.

“Who’s that girl, Ken? That one.”

I whispered, my hand resting gently on Ken’s chest as I gazed fiercely into the camera.

“Her name’s **Kade**. Part of the crew... Why? Switching targets now?”

“Ken, I swear I will pinch your nipple.”

My elbow jabbed into his rock-hard abs. Ken flinched, then laughed out loud.

Which earned us a shout from the photographer,

"Both of you, please keep a serious expression. Jay, you're playing the villain, not the romantic lead. Ken, don’t smile too cheerfully. You’re supposed to be in love with the female lead."

"Next set will be a group shot. Jay, Ken, Prang—come stand together."

*Click, click, click—*the sound of the shutter went off repeatedly as the three of us kept changing poses.

"Jay, give me a more intense look—sharper eyes. That’s it. Much better.

Next, let’s shoot the female lead and her friend. Ken, you can take a break. Jay, go change outfits."

I went to change clothes, then came back and sat waiting for the team while watching P'Ploy and Prannapat’s shoot. Their posing was smooth and effortless.

They seemed to work well together, and I couldn’t deny I was getting more and more annoyed with Prannapat.

"Okay, next up—Jay and Prang. The concept is siblings who are very close and love each other deeply."

"Got it."

I smiled politely and walked over, slipping my arm around Prannapat’s waist and pulling her closer.

"Like this, is it okay?"

She looked at me with clear irritation.

"Keep posing, just like that. Good. Jay, your face is too close. She’s your little sister, not your girlfriend. Step back a bit. Prang, you're doing well, but give me eyes that show a loving older sibling, not a disgusted look."

"Don’t look at me like I disgust you, Phi,"

I whispered as we changed poses.

"Oh? You want me to love you now?"

She replied with a calm smile. The coldness in her eyes slowly softened… softened like—

"Hey, Jay! Why are you just standing there? Keep posing! Prang, that’s good—just like that."

I didn’t think I could keep acting in this drama if someone on set hated me. I might even have to face my mother.

Nearly every time I come to set and have scenes with her, we have to pretend to love each other—like we’re the perfect pair of sisters. It’s too much. I can’t do it.

But if the story were about sisters who hate each other—I swear, I’d crush her without holding back.

"P'Jay, you can go now,"

One of the crew members told me after the shoot.

"Huh? We’re done already?"

How annoying. How could we be done?

"Don’t I have to shoot scenes with P’Ploy? You know, the female lead and her best friend?"

"Nope, not necessary."

"Alright, then."

Frustration. So much frustration. It built up inside me. So, once we wrapped up, I forced a smile, gave my goodbyes to everyone, and walked straight out of the studio without hesitation.

But even then, I ended up locking eyes with little Kade—the nerdy girl. She gave me a vague smile and a cold, eerie gaze before walking out.

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The bubble tea shop on the ground floor was my emotional rescue mission tonight. I hoped that at 9 p.m., it wouldn't be closed yet. And by the honor of Jeerapat, I would never let Je-Ang find out I snuck out to buy bubble tea after 8 p.m.

If she did, she'd probably freak out like a worm touched by detergent, then start furiously tapping her calculator app to count how many calories I’d have to burn off.

Just as I was thinking about her, Je called. She's my personal manager who works way harder than she’s paid for.

“Hello, Je?”

“Jay, you finished work already, right? I’m waiting in the car. I brought you vegetable juice and some clean food.”

Sometimes I wonder if she keeps a psychic named Abdul, because she always seems to know exactly what I’m thinking and doing.

“Thanks, give me ten minutes. I’ll be right out.”

“Why ten minutes? Are you sneaking off to eat something that’s bad for your skin and muscles again?”

“Oops! A fan is here. Gotta go, Je! I’m signing autographs now.”

“Wait, Jay! Jay! Don’t—”

I hung up as soon as I reached the dessert shop. But—

“We’re closed already.”

“Oh, I see… that’s alright,”

I replied, looking disappointed as I turned to walk away.

“Um, P’Jay? I can still make it for you if you’d like. There’s just enough time.”

“Then I’ll take the same order I mentioned earlier—two cups, no ice,”

I said. I planned to stash them in the fridge at home and sneak a sip after Je had gone back.

The young staff member smiled at me with admiration in her eyes, then turned to the register and signaled her coworker to start making the drinks, all while stealing glances at me now and then.

Not long after, she handed me both drinks. Then, shyly, she asked,

“Can I take a picture with you?”

“Of course!”

I said, taking her phone and snapping selfies with both employees.

“How much for the drinks? I haven’t paid yet.”

“It’s on me! I really like you—I watch all your dramas.”

Because of that, I had to discreetly glance at the prices posted above the counter to figure out how much to pay. Then I handed her the money anyway.

“Thank you. I can’t accept freebies, but I really appreciate your kindness.”

The two girls squealed with excitement as I turned to head toward the elevator.

While I waited, I tried to discreetly shove the bubble tea cups into my designer bag. It looked a bit bulky, sure—but not suspicious enough to raise any alarms.

And when the elevator doors opened, my feet instinctively froze.

It was the first time... the first time in who knows how many years that we encountered each other with no one else around. No fake smiles. No polite greetings. Not even the slightest emotion shown on her face.

It lasted only a second, but it felt much longer. I stood there, frozen in place. My brain’s defense mechanism kicked in automatically, and the tension quickly filled every corner of the small elevator.

I lifted my chin, tossed my dark brown hair back, and stepped inside to stand beside the only other woman in the elevator.

Prang Pannapat — my "*older sister*" in the latest drama I acted in.

“Nice bag, *ex-sister-in-law*,” I said.

“It’s from an ex-boyfriend,”

She replied, a wicked smile tugging at the corner of her lips. But her eyes stayed fixed on the elevator doors, not even glancing at me again.

“He left it behind the day we broke up — just before running off abroad. I was thinking of selling it now. No point carrying something that’s been used by someone else.”

The half-a-million-baht handbag I clutched tightly, my fingers turning pale from the grip, looked exactly like hers. Same brand. Same model. Same color.

“Did anyone ask how you got it?”

I said coldly, my voice calm but cutting — just as the elevator doors slid open again. I walked out with all the boredom and indifference I could muster.

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The bag was thrown onto the backseat the moment the car door shut.

“Ow! Take it easy, Jay! Isn’t that your favorite bag?”

The flamboyant woman waiting inside the car shrieked, eyes wide.

“Not anymore.”

I crossed my arms and frowned, which must’ve tipped Je Ang off that something was wrong.

“What happened? Who did what to you, huh? And why does the bag look so puffy? Did it eat too many boba pearls or something?”

“Je, I don’t want to act in this drama anymore.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

Je’s eyes automatically rolled to the left.

“Where’s your sense of responsibility, Jay? You already promised P’Pin before you signed the contract.”

“There are so many excuses you could make. I know you can come up with something. Health issues, whatever. I can’t keep forcing myself to act in this show.”

“No way. You have to do it!”

“No,”

I said firmly. And that’s when Je finally realized I was serious. He let out a long, heavy sigh.

“Fine. But you have to tell me what the problem is first,” Je said.

“You really don’t know why?” I shot back.

“So what if Prang is in it too?”

“I just don’t want to work with her. Why does it have to be more than that?”

“So what, Jay? If every job from now on has her in it, you’re going to reject them all? Why would you let someone you hate get in the way of your own success?”

Je suddenly raised her voice.

“I just don’t feel right about doing this job,”

I said, turning my head toward the car window, showing him my back.

“Jay… Prang is just a co-worker. You don’t like her? Then ignore her. The show will end eventually and you’ll go your separate ways. You’re acting like you secretly have a crush on her or something.”

I whipped around and gave him a glare.

“Of course not, Je!”

“Then what are you so afraid of? Or do you actually have feelings for her?”

Je leaned in close, as if staring into my eyes could pierce through to my brain. I turned away, annoyed.

“All that hating and posturing… maybe it’s just love in disguise,”

He said, tapping his temple like a man deep in thought.

“Ugh, Je!”

I brushed her hand away, irritated by his poking.

“Well, if you really didn’t feel anything, then why is it such a big deal?”

The old-school drama queen gave me a sharp look, clearly thinking he had the upper hand.

"Well...."

“If you ever catch real feelings for her, then come complain to me again,”

Je cut me off, flashing that smug smile he always wears when he’s successfully negotiated my fee with a client.

“Je, seriously—can we drop the nonsense? I really want to back out of this.”

He let out a long, tired sigh.

“Okay then. Get ready to count your money—for the penalty fee.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“Think you can afford it?”

“Ughhhh, I’m so over this!”

“Anyway, tomorrow afternoon you’ve got that variety show taping with P’Zebra. If you finish early, I’ll book your trainer for a quick muscletightening session. If there’s still time in the evening, I’ll take you out for something nice to eat—then you can go home and study your script.”

“I’m not okayyyy,” I groaned.

“I’m tired, Je! And didn’t I ask you to find me a day off?!”

“I am working on it. Be patient. A long break is coming,”

The queen of all gay managers cooed in a syrupy tone like she was luring a 10-year-old into eating their vegetables.

“Oh—and next week, *Devious Hearts* starts filming. So get your body and soul ready.”

And with that, the buff queen leaned in and tapped my forehead, even though I shot him a death glare.

Okay. Okay, Prannapat. We’re going to meet again—no escaping it now.

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# Chapitre 02: CRISPY PORK

"Je-Ang, can you find me a new condo?"

The seat in the large SUV reclined almost flat as I shut my eyes, hoping to catch a short nap on the way to the filming set.

"You're moving again?"

"Yeah. I'll just rent out the old place."

Just hearing his voice, I could already picture Je-Ang shaking his head.

"I don't get you."

"My brother already knows where I live."

"So you're seriously going to move every time your brother finds your place?"

"He drops by too often. I can't get any peace."

"God, you two are driving me insane. The brother's way too protective, and the sister just keeps running away. You've moved so many times, I'm getting dizzy just trying to keep track."

"That's all I needed from you, Je-Ang. Now shut up-I'm trying to sleep," I cut him off. But of course, he wasn't done yet.

"I've got an idea... why don't you just move in with me? When dear Jin comes over, I, Angsumalin, will take care of him for you,"

He said with a sly grin.

"I'll pamper him like he's royalty-he won't even have time to bother you. Sound good?"

"I do love my brother."

"Jay!"

He whined in a way so dramatic I honestly felt like slapping him. No way the 2013 movie version of Angsumalin would ever sound like that.

"Je, please keep your new address a secret."

Finally, I was able to close my eyes and fall asleep in peace.

To me, Je-Ang is like both a friend and an older brother. Other than my family, he's the only one who truly looks out for me.

Honestly.

I've grown used to having this flamboyant gay diva by my side. He supports me in everything-from work to personal life.

Like a loyal warrior, sometimes a pack mule when I need help, and sometimes even a guard dog, scaring off guys I don't want around.

*"Je! Someone's blocking my car. Move it for me."*

He grumbled about being too delicate for this kind of thing, but still went ahead to move the car for me anyway.

*"Je, I'm exhausted. I can't walk anymore."*

I said. Without hesitation, he lifted me into his arms and held me close to his chest.

*"Je, I am heartbroken too."*

And once again, it was him-pulling a dramatic, soft-hearted girl into a hug, letting her cry on his perfectly tailored shirt that he usually guards like treasure, soaking it for hours with her tears.

We've been together for more than ten years-since I was practically an embryo in the entertainment industry.

Back then, Je-Ang reached out to me. He said that the moment he saw my beautiful, striking face in a music video by "The U" back when I was just a kid, he knew instantly that we were meant to be.

*"I have to shape this girl. I'll make her a star. You're going to be famous, and I'll raise you from the ground up into a queen-a butterfly more dazzling than anyone else."*

When he said that, with that confident look in his eyes and that commanding tone, I swear I could almost see a blinding light shining from the body of this skinny gay man.

In case you're wondering what I mean by skinny gay man-back then, the six-pack trend hadn't hit yet.

Je-Ang was just a slim, soft-spoken gay guy with slicked-down hair and a habit of wearing overpowering cologne that screamed "*masculine*."

We've fought through everything together. And through all of it, I know just how deeply I trust and am bonded to Je-Ang. He's more than just a manager-he's a part of my life. If he were ever gone, I know the feeling would be far beyond just missing him.

His big hand gently tapped me awake, just like he always does when the car comes to a stop. Je-Ang still helped carry all my stuff-bedding, snacks, veggie juice, and my personal fruit box-into the filming set.

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We greeted and chatted with the crew before Je-Ang split off to unpack and set up my things, while I was dragged off for hair and makeup, waiting for my scene.

While I was getting my makeup done, I saw P'Ploy walk in-my sexy little angel.

"Hi, P'Ploy," I greeted warmly.

"Oh, Jay! You're here already?"

She replied, taking a seat. Her lips curved into a soft smile, and the little dimples on her cheeks made it even more charming.

"For a little while now," I said.

She was wearing a thin white blouse, with the top two buttons undone, revealing just a hint of her full chest. A dark bra peeked through the sheer fabric that didn't hide much at all.

I wanted to keep looking-wanted to take in every detail-but the makeup artist, bless her overzealous soul, got in the way.

"Jay, can you close your eyes for a moment? I need to do your eyelids."

Reluctantly, I obeyed. Just when I was enjoying the view...

"We have a lot of scenes together today. Want to run lines together, P'Ploy?"

"Sure, that sounds good."

My gorgeous angel leaned over to unzip her bag and pull out the script. Gravity, ever the loyal accomplice, tugged at the neckline of her shirt.

The collar dropped lower and lower with each motion, and something under that sheer blouse began to sway slightly as she moved.

....Oh my goodness, P'Ploy! My heart is about to burst! Yes, just like thatjust a bit more, a little more, a liiiittle bit more!

If it weren't for the thick layer of expensive foundation and makeup covering my face, you'd probably see red streaks spreading across my cheeks.

"P'Jay."

"....!!!!!"

The flat, expressionless tone made every hair in my ears stand up. I turned toward the voice and saw Nong Kade, the nerdy girl, standing not too far away.

Actually, she was very close-close enough for me to notice the tiny watermelon hair clip neatly holding her jet-black hair in place. Her pastel outfit clashed oddly with her pale, thin frame, giving off a strangely unsettling vibe. I felt dizzy just looking into her blank, eerie eyes.

"The director said that if you're done getting dressed, you can go rehearse your scene now,"

She said, standing completely still, staring at me with the same blank expression.

"Okay."

I replied, but Kade didn't move. She stood there like she was sleepwalking, smiling faintly like she was lost in a dream, while her eyes stared at me, wide and unblinking.

...There was a long silence-about five seconds-before I raised an eyebrow in confusion. Then she slowly turned around and walked away without making a sound, just as quietly as she had arrived. ""Umm... Does anyone else get goosebumps like me?"

I asked, rubbing my arms.

"Not me. Are you cold, Jay? Maybe the AC is too strong in here?"

P'Ploy looked slightly puzzled, her delicate eyebrows knitting together.

"Or are you having a stomachache, Jay?"

P'Yoh, the makeup artist, commented in a way that made me sigh. How could she say something like that in front of P'Ploy? So inappropriate.

"Hurry and go to the bathroom if you need to. That way, we can get you into the scene,"

She added before turning to P'Ploy.

"Alright, Khun Ploy. Which lipstick shade would you like today? But honestly, any color looks good on you. Just a little touch-up and you'll be ready for the next scene."

I hadn't even started flirting with P'Ploy properly, and already I had to step away for work. But it's fine-when I'm in battle, I focus on the fight. Once it's over, I'll focus on love. I promise I'll come back to flirt with her again!

Today, my first scene is an emotional confrontation between the younger sister and the heroine. And since arriving here, this is actually the first time I've seen Prannapat, the star of the show.

Everything went smoothly during rehearsals. The director gathered all the actors involved in the scene, explained what he wanted from each of us, and once everyone was clear, we began filming.

"Action!"

I, in the role of Kwan-the heroine's younger sister-burst through the door and saw Prang, playing Saem, my older sister, lying on the bed with Ken, who plays P'Pheem, the male lead of the story.

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"Saem!"

"Kwan!!"

According to the script, I was supposed to walk straight in and try to attack Prang, but Ken stepped in just in time to block me.

"How could you do this, P'Saem?! P'Saem, you knew that P'Pheem was Kwan's boyfriend!"

I shouted with all my emotion.

"I was never your boyfriend,"

Pheem snapped back, his eyes fixed on Saem, clearly worried about her feelings.

"Then why did you sleep with me?!"

I shot back, pouring every ounce of emotion into my voice-my eyes, my lips, even my skin trembled.

"That night, we were both drunk, and you seduced me. I'm a man,"

Pheem said firmly, shaking his head.

"But I only love Saem."

Prang, playing Saem, stepped forward and slapped Ken across the face. Ken timed his reaction so well, it looked like a real slap.

"You're disgusting. How could you say something so careless?"

"But I-"

"Shut up!"

Prang cut him off immediately. Then she turned to me and looked me up and down with scorn.

"And you're no better. How dare you act all innocent, Kwan? You're just as cheap. You knew he was your sister's man, but you still gave yourself to him!"

"I didn't sleep with him! You just assumed that! And I would never throw away my dignity like you-offering yourself to a man completely, like you did."

I clenched my fists tightly, hissing through my teeth while glaring with contempt.

"Don't try to act like you're any better. You're no different. You ran away with him to another province-just the two of you, a man and a woman, sharing the same room-even though you knew he was your own sister's boyfriend."

She shot me a sharp, furious glare as she walked closer with an intimidating aura, like she was about to crush me in her hands.

"At least," her eyes sparkled with rage,

"I've never gotten drunk and acted so cheap, sleeping around like you do." "!!!!!!"

I gasped, stunned. My heart was pounding. This witch Prannapat was going off-script! But since the director hadn't yelled "*cut*," I had no choice but to keep acting, even though I was so shocked I couldn't come up with a comeback.

"Kwan, your sluttiness is so extreme, not even Azkaban prison can't even keep you in."

Wow. She was insulting me with style. My blood was boiling-I could barely stop myself from screaming.

"But I never started dating someone new just two weeks after breaking up with my ex!"

"That's because my ex was a slut as you, Kwan! I couldn't stand him."

"And you still have the nerve to call me slut?! You can say that out loud. Damn it!!!!!!" I screamed.

Everyone on set froze, their mouths wide open at our **unscripted** **fight**. But still, no one yelled "*cut*."

***SLAP!!!***

That slap missed my face by just an inch. If I hadn't been quick enough, her hand would've landed squarely on the one thing I use to make a living-my face.

I pretended to fall to the ground, as the script called for, after getting slapped hard by the character playing my older sister. Right on cue, Ken rushed in to stop Prannapat, and P'Ploy ran into the scene, kneeling down to support me.

"That's enough, Saem," Ken warned her.

"She's your sister, Saem. If you have issues, talk it out properly. Don't get physical,"

P'Ploy added as she gently cradled my face against her chest.

Now was my chance.😅

I took the opportunity to lean into P'Ploy's warm embrace. Ohhhh my god. I swear, it felt amazing. I wanted to freeze time right there-if only that shrieking ghost Prannapat didn't interrupt the moment.

"Just look at her, Fah!"

The leading lady snapped at P'Ploy, eyes fierce.

"Does it look like she has any respect for me? Someone who steals her own

sister's man... is that really someone worth respecting?"

I shot back with a piercing glare-even though my head was still resting on that soft, sweet-smelling chest.

Then Prannapat went off-script again, grabbing the nearest object and hurling it at me repeatedly. I had to throw my arms up and duck like crazy to avoid getting hit.

"Cuttttt!!"

The director's voice saved the day, and everything that had been flying through the air suddenly came to a halt. P'Ploy stood up, Ken looked at me in shock, and Prannapat just smiled smugly. Then P'Pom, the director, walked over with a stern look and an irritated tone.

"What was that? That wasn't in the script! It wasn't like this during rehearsals."

He glanced around at everyone before his eyes locked onto me. "And Jay- the heroine's ex-boyfriend-he's not even part of the script!"

He looked annoyed.

"But anyway, I actually liked how all of you acted. The emotions felt real, like you truly hated each other. I'll ask Taew to revise the script and add an ex-boyfriend for the heroine."

Then he turned to the one who had gone off-script first.

"Next time, just pretend to throw things, okay? Don't actually aim at Jay. If anything happens to her, I wouldn't know how to explain it to her parents."

"Got it. I'll just aim close next time,"

Prannapat replied with an obviously fake sweet smile.

"Alright, let's move on to the next scene. Let's try to get it in one take again... Oh, and Taew-revise the script for me, will you? I really liked it.

Hahaha!"

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We kept shooting until the afternoon. People took turns grabbing something to eat, and the crew had organized food for everyone on set.

On my way to the food area, I ran into P'O, the producer, who had just arrived. We exchanged a quick greeting before I excused myself.

She followed me into the room, handing me a fruit box and a bottle of veggie juice. Then she grabbed her own food and sat down to eat with me.

Before long, Ken and P'Ploy came in to join us. We sat around chatting about random things, laughing like crazy when Ken started mimicking Prannapat's overly dramatic acting.

"Your skin looks so nice, P'Ploy. What cream do you use? My skin's been really dry lately."

"I think your skin is beautiful,"

She said, gently reaching out to touch my arm.

"It's smooth and soft. I don't see any dryness."

"It is dry! See? It's not as soft as yours,"

I said, taking the chance to lift her arm and touch it. I leaned in a bit, pretending to inspect it.

"I've actually been watching you since earlier,"

I added, using a sweet tone just like I learned in acting class.

"Your eyeshadow looks amazing. How did you get it to look so dimensional like that?"

Her bright, sharp eyes locked onto mine, holding a gaze that was both warm and knowing. But she didn't pull her hand away from mine. Instead, she smiled slightly and said,

"I'll teach you sometime when we have free time."

Right then, I couldn't help but think how lucky it is that people's thoughts are private. If we don't say them out loud, no one will know.

Was she flirting? I really wanted to believe she was. She's just so sexydangerously sexy. Her eyes alone could kill me. My heart was melting.

But suddenly, I caught a strange scent when one of the crew members walked by. I looked around to find the source-and then I saw it!

"Ahhh! Je-Ang!!!"

I shrieked and covered my eyes, heart pounding.

"Wha-?!"

Je-Ang jumped and looked around.

"What's going on, Jay? Why are you screaming like that?"

The crew member froze in shock as my pointed finger zeroed in on them. The fear and confusion on their face were unmistakable.

Je-Ang whipped her head around with sharp precision, her eyes scanning the scene like a hawk. And then, a high-pitched scream-louder than minecame from a guy's mouth, making Ken nearly drop the rope he was holding in surprise.

"Ahhhh!!! Who brought crispy pork into the set!?"

Je-Ang shrieked.

"Didn't I make it very clear that our leading lady is allergic to crispy pork!?" The female crew member panicked, trying to hide the plate of crispy pork belly behind her back.

"I'm sorry! I didn't know Jay was that allergic," she stammered.

"P'Prang bought it for everyone on set to share."

"Prang, huh?"

Je-Ang snapped. I was still covering my eyes and nose, tears almost spilling from the smell.

"Yes. People on the team already said P'Jay is allergic and we shouldn't have crispy pork here. But P'Prang said she already bought a lot and asked everyone to help finish it. She thought if Jay didn't eat it, it'd be fine."

"Oh my god!!" Je-Ang wailed.

"So now the whole set is just sitting around eating crispy pork, is that it!?"

"N-Not everyone... just the ones on lunch break."

"Whyyyy!!!"

He shrieked even louder.

"Get out, now! And take that crispy pork with you! And tell everyone-Jay can't even see crispy pork, can't even smell it! She's seriously allergic!"

"Y-Yes, okay!"

The crew member hurriedly replied and rushed off.

Ken turned to Je-Ang, looking puzzled.

"Wait... Jay's so allergic she can't even smell it?"

"Eggs!!"

Je-Ang shouted, still loud, as she pulled my hand away from my face.

"The pork's gone now, Jay. You don't need to cover your eyes anymore."

"But what would happen if you accidentally ate it, Jay?"

Ken asked, still full of curiosity.

"Would you swell up? Get itchy? Break out in hives? Have trouble breathing? How serious is it?"

Je-Ang had to jump in and clear things up.

"Jay's not allergic to anything, Ken. But if she sees crispy pork, she won't be able to stop eating it. And if she smells it, and sees everyone in the crew eating it like this... I honestly don't know how long she'll be able to resist."

I sat there, defeated, while Ken burst into loud laughter.

"I love crispy pork," I groaned.

"But I have to watch my weight-I'm walking in a fashion show next week! And lately all I get to eat is vegetable juice that tastes like Je-Ang's compost!"

I covered my face, nearly in tears.

"Don't even say that," Je-Ang snapped.

"Didn't I see a pearl milk tea in your fridge the other day?"

"That's the only thing keeping me alive right now."

"But Prang's gone too far. She knows! She shouldn't have brought crispy pork to the set just to mess with you. That unscripted scene almost gave you a heart attack! She didn't actually slap you, right?"

Je-Ang looked closely at my face to check.

I shook my head, but raised my arm so P'Ploy could see the red mark where Prang had thrown something at me.

"Just a little red, not a big deal," I said.

But it wasn't P'Ploy who answered-it was a buff gay guy nearby.

"That's not 'not a big deal,' Jay."

"Well then,"

Ken chimed in with a teasing smirk,

"I'll go help them finish the crispy pork outside."

He walked past me toward the door, wearing that smug expression and a cloud of cologne I couldn't stand.

I looked after him, miserable.

"My stomach acid is literally flooding now, Je-Ang."

***I will get my revenge on you, Prannapat.***

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# Chapitre 03: Intense Inner Fire

It was probably around 8 p.m. when Ken supported my seemingly drunk and dazed self into his apartment. The walls were a bright white, with a large painting hanging on one side. The room was tidy and organized, showing clear signs of thoughtful care and decoration.

I was limp and staggering, my head resting against his firm chest-firm from all the time, effort, and money Ken had poured into protein powder to sculpt it.

My graceful body was gently placed on the bed by Ken, while I clung to him, refusing to let go.

"I'm so lonely... Stay with me for a while?"

I looked at him with sugar-sweet eyes, full of longing. Ken tried to respond by gently peeling my arms off him, but it didn't work. Every time he loosened my grip, I grabbed him again. We ended up tangled in a playful little struggle.

"It's not appropriate for just the two of us to be here. Let me go."

"Nope,"

I insisted, snuggling close, my hands gliding along his neck and over his firm chest. But Ken kept trying to remove my hands. So I gave him a little shove, pushing him down onto the cool, thick mattress covered in pale sheets.

"I'll sit right here next to you until you fall asleep, okay? But you have to let go first."

Ken finally managed to free himself and sat up. But I, still pretending to be drunk, followed him-swinging a long leg over him and dropping my weight down fully onto his body.

My hands pushed him back down again, and I leaned in close, our faces inches apart. The heat of his body and the mix of cologne and breath filled my senses...

And I just couldn't hold myself back any longer.

*"Ha... Hatchooo!"*

"Cut!"

Director P'Pom's voice came through the walkie-talkie.

"Let's do it again. That was almost perfect-if only you hadn't sneezed. Jay, give us a more clueless expression. The one you just made looked like you smelled something bad. And when you lower your head, hold it there a bit longer before leaning in closer. Alright, crew, blot the actors' faces so we can reshoot!"

"I told you already, Ken, don't wear that perfume when you're in a scene with me. Don't you have anything softer, more feminine?"

"I'm a guy-why would I have women's perfume?"

"I'll buy you a bottle myself then,"

I grumbled, nose wrinkling in annoyance at both the smell and the situation.

"I'll buy the same scent as P'Ploy's. It'll match the fingers too."

"Did you turn your mic off, Jay? If not, the whole crew's gonna hear you,"

Ken scolded, clearly annoyed by my cheeky grin and tone.

"Oops."

I raised my hand to cover my mouth.

"It's off now."

"Let's get straight back to shooting. One take, please-I wanna go home and have dinner with my wife early,"

Said P'Pom through the walkie-talkie.

After P'Pom gave the signal, we resumed work. This part of the script was a scene where Kwan, the character I play, has to do everything she can to keep the male lead from leaving.

So tonight, Kwan must seduce Pheem and win him over. Everything went smoothly-no need for retakes, cuts, or excessive action-until we reached the kissing scene.

"I am lonely. Stay with me, my sweet Pheem,"

I said, straddling Ken, who was lying spread out on the bed. Then I slowly leaned down until our lips were almost touching, my fingers unbuttoning his shirt one by one, brushing lightly down the line of his masculine chest.

"I will give herself completely to you..."

Suddenly, Ken flipped us over and pinned me beneath him. He lowered his face quickly-and kissed me.

The camera zoomed in to capture our expressions, and if looked through the monitor, would probably see Kwan's eyes widening in shock. But only I knew-that expression wasn't acting.

We had agreed before the shoot to fake the kiss and use camera angles to sell it. So why the hell did Ken suddenly go rogue and actually press his lips to mine?

"Cut! That was great," the director called out.

I immediately shoved Ken off and started smacking the big oaf repeatedly. "Ouchhh!"

"You idiot, Ken! Why did you kiss me?!"

My lips were sore from being rubbed over and over, as if scrubbing could erase the kiss.

"It was the moment! I just got carried away with the scene, with the emotion, Jay,"

Ken raised his hands defensively, laughing.

"Well, I'm not laughing. Don't you ever do that again!"

"Come on, Jay. It's not like we've never kissed for real before. It stirs up fan buzz too."

"That's all you care about?"

I snapped, furious.

"You just want to stir up attention, right, Ken?!"

I grabbed a pillow from the bed and smacked it into his face-this friend I once thought I could trust more than this.

Ken's face fell, and some of the crew started walking over, probably hoping to de-escalate the situation. But it was too late-I stormed off and headed to the bathroom to wash my mouth.

When I came out, I saw Ken arguing with Je-Ang about something. As soon as he spotted me, he walked over. I tried to brush past him without a glancemy way of making a statement-but Ken grabbed my arm.

"Is your mic off? Just give me five minutes, please. I have a scene with Prang coming up soon."

I turned back around, eyes sharp and expression full of fury. If his explanation wasn't good enough, I was ready to slap him hard. "Everyone was watching while we were filming that scene-P'Ploy too. And Je Ang told me to kiss you for real."

"For what, Ken?"

"Testing if someone jealous," Ken shrugged.

"I'm not sure either, but he asked me to help. He said he want to see someone's jealous reaction. I didn't hear clearly... Didn't you complain to me about wondering if Ploy was jealous or not?"

"So what? What crazy theory is that? If she likes me, that's one thing. But we haven't even started dating yet."

After saying that, I immediately walked over to Je Ang. The person accused looked guilty. I stared at her and raised my eyebrows sharply, asking,

"Is what Ken said true?"

Not long after, she couldn't take the pressure and admitted it with a sad voice.

"I thought of it myself."

"This is life, Je! If you're going to do something, tell me first. Don't just decide and do it on your own. Is there anything else you're planning to do behind my back?"

"No, nothing else,"

She said weakly, her eyebrows drooping, making me sigh.

"How are you going to make up for this?"

After winning, I deserved some reward.

"Uh... I'll let you have bubble tea after 9 PM, one day a week, as long as your figure stays okay."

I smiled, but my eyes still glared.

"Good excuse."

"So, you're not mad at me anymore, right?"

"You're a real bad boy, Ken, because you're so thoughtless."

"Oh no, I'm in trouble. Je-Ang told me to do it, so he should take responsibility for my mistake too."

"Everyone has to face the consequences of their own actions,"

I said, pulling Ken's ear until he cried out. Then the director called someone to bring us to change clothes and rehearse the next scene.

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The next scene to shoot was where Ken had to stand sulking next to the pool with Prang, until the two of them slapped and kissed. Then I walked in and separated them.

During the actual filming, Prannapat and Ken argued back and forth, reaching a heated point where they both exploded with anger. Ken suddenly kissed Prang-using the camera angle to trick the viewers-and Prang pushed him away.

***Smack!!***

At that moment, everyone on set covered their faces. Even I, standing with my arms crossed, couldn't help but cover my mouth in shock.

The sound of the slap on the leading man's face echoed throughout the area. Ken's face turned red immediately, and a clear handprint appeared. Standing right there, I could see the muscles on Ken's pale face twitch with the pain and burning.

When he turned back, his eyes showed anger from the role, and he continued acting by pulling Prang into another fake kiss.

Finally, when the director shouted "*Cut*," Ken raised his left hand to hold his face and turned away. The crew rushed over to check if their leading man was okay.

"My face looks really swollen."

He caught his face, which was red and sore from the small handprint, and whispered to me as I walked over. I just gave a sly smile and a light slap.

"Maybe Prang got as into the scene as Ken. I feel sorry, but it's also kind of satisfying. Ha ha ha."

After Ken told everyone he was fine, the director ordered the shoot to continue to keep the emotions flowing.

The next scene was my turn to act for real. And of course, the target couldn't be anyone else but the beautiful heroine named Prannapat.

*"Ac-tion!"*

The lights decorating the pool area at night gave a beautiful, warm, and cozy feeling-very different from the character Kwan's emotions that I had to play. Inside her, there was only burning anger when she saw the man she loved standing there, sharing a moment with her own sister.

I clenched my fist tightly, wore a fierce angry expression, and strode straight to the pool where the two were standing. I pulled them apart, and then surprised the entire crew by pushing Prannapat into the clear pool water.

Screams came first, followed by a huge splash as the beautiful heroine's body hit the shifting surface.

Things almost turned into a mess if Prannapat hadn't popped out of the water just in time. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the director was so shocked he forgot to yell "*Cut*!"

He stood up suddenly from his seat and looked like he was about to come over - but then Prang Prannapat suddenly continued the scene like nothing happened.

"Khwan! Are you crazy or what?!"

"I just wanted to help P'Saem cool off his lust, that's all,"

I replied innocently.

Ken looked stunned, but he quickly pulled himself together, got into character as Pheem, and jumped into the pool to help Prang out.

"P'Pheem!!"

I shrieked while storming over to them, eyes blazing, fully intending to slap someone.

"Enough already, Khwan!"

Ken yelled and grabbed me. He pretended to throw me to the ground, then rushed to cradle Prang in his arms.

Right after that, someone finally shouted "*Cut!"* and the set erupted into applause.

"Wow! That was amazing, you guys! So realistic - felt like you really hated each other!"

A bunch of crew members gushed.

Of course it felt real. It was real. Who said this was acting?

As for the director, he took off his headset, stood up from behind the monitor, and marched over with a furious look on his face. He looked seriously pissed.

"Did I ever tell you to push someone into the pool during rehearsals, Jay?"

"Nope. You just said to push a little."

Why am I the only one getting scolded when everyone was going off script?

"I was just really in character, I guess... Got a little too intense."

"Even if the scene turned out great, your '*in the moment*' acting still has to stay within limits! What if Prang had actually drowned, huh? What then?!"

He ran his big hand through his greasy, black hair like he hadn't washed it in four days, clearly trying to release the frustration he couldn't take out on me directly.

"How could she have drowned? Prang used to be on the swim team in school,"

I said calmly - a line I really shouldn't have said. Realizing my mistake, I quickly slipped back into acting mode, putting on a blank mask to hide how I really felt.

"And how would you know that? You two close or something?"

P'Pom, the director, dropped his anger just long enough to make room for suspicion.

"I probably just glanced at it on her Wikipedia page. I didn't really pay attention,"

I answered, brushing it off.

That was when P'Ploy walked over and immediately turned to the soaking wet girl wrapped in a white towel, asking what had happened.

When Prannapat saw me throw her a sharp look, she curled the corner of her lips into a smug little smile.

Damn. I messed up. I made a mistake falling into the water played right into her hands - now she had everyone's attention, especially P'Ploy's.

"Alright, alright. Whatever happened, it's done,"

The director said with a sigh.

"But next time anyone wants to go off-script, don't take it so far."

"Yes / Yes / Got it," we all replied in unison.

The director gave us all a suspicious look, especially the ones who clearly loved improvising. Then he turned around and walked off, leaving behind a loud, frustrated shout,

"What the hell is wrong with this set?! First you kiss for real, then you slap for real, now someone's actually in the water? Who the hell cast these actors? Everyone's going off-script! Wrap it up! We're done for today!!"

I walked out of the pool without waiting for anyone and stomped off to tell Je Ang to pack up - I was in a foul mood.

"Go change first, Jay," she said.

"I'm not changing. I'm going home," I snapped.

"You shoved her in the pool and now you're the one with the attitude? Shouldn't you be smiling like you just got your revenge?"

"Oh, I *am* satisfied,"

I replied with a raised eyebrow, feigning indifference - my go-to mask.

"So what? Can we go back now or not?"

"Ugh, fine! Let's go. Your mood swings are like a rollercoaster - or worse, like bus number 8!"

I shot her a cold glare, nodded sharply, and motioned for her to pack up and hurry after me.

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***Major Gossip Alert! Famous Actress "J" Causes Drama on Set***

*Fresh gossip has just dropped! According to inside sources, a well-known actress whose name starts with "J"-and who is currently shifting from playing leading roles to villain roles-reportedly threw a major tantrum on the first day of filming a new drama.*

*She even went off-script and pushed a fellow actor into the water, causing chaos on set. The director was left with a headache, and the whole crew was clearly frustrated.*

*But that's not all-what really got people talking was when she got so into character that she actually kissed her co-star for real, even though it wasn't in the script and the director never asked for it.*

*If she couldn't hold back, maybe she should've booked a room instead! Now people are wondering: was she just too into the role, or was she finally revealing her true self? Oops.*

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This piece of gossip, captured from social media, was sent to my chat early this morning. The funny part?

More than three people sent me the same headline-just from different pages. The only difference was the messages that came along with the screenshots.

*"Gorgeous wife of Kobori loses it!"*

Wow, written like that, who wouldn't guess they meant me? Journalists these days just make up stories.

What's the truth? I don't know and don't care. They just want to sell gossip and make money. Have journalistic ethics gone extinct like the western black rhino?

**Je-Ang:**

***'Gorgeous wife of Kobori'* - Don't forget you have a runway show today at XXX mall. Be ready to answer questions from the media. Also, the outfits from brands AA and BB are being sent to you-has someone delivered them yet?**

**KEN:**

**Saw the gossip. There'll probably be interviews. Want to meet up first so we can give consistent answers?**

And the last message I received was short-but enough to make me want to bury my face in my hands. ***Call me when you're free.***

I closed the chat app, then opened the social media post to assess the situation and damage.

If they wanted to use my drama to promote the show, they could've done it more subtly. There was no need to leak that "*pushed-into-the-water*" story. Now I'm probably going to be stuck with the villain image forever.

There were tons of comments flooding in. Overall, the response wasn't all bad. I still got encouragement from fans and many thoughtful people who know how to read news critically.

Reading through the comments-some of them were really harsh-it does affect your mental state. Sometimes it gives you strength, other times it drags you down.

It's like the price I have to pay for everything I've gained. If I were afraid of all this, I might as well stop creating anything and just waste away doing nothing.

When there's news, there's buzz. And with that comes a wave of reactionssome unexpectedly good, others painfully bad. Privacy disappears. The good parts of your life get shared if people like them.

But the moment you stumble, past mistakes come back to haunt you, torn apart and repeated endlessly.

Every step I take now has to be careful, because anything I do can be sold and sensationalized for the world to see.

To some people, I'm a kind person. To others, I'm arrogant. Some think I'm sweet, while others see me as the villain. But living through all this has taught me that what people say about me doesn't define who I am. What truly defines me are my thoughts and my actions.

So, I only read the news to understand how it might affect my career and life, and to prepare myself to respond in the right way.

I stopped reading the comments, turned on some music, and let my bare body move to the rhythm of the drums and guitar all the way to the bathroom.

The warm water brought a refreshing feeling. I didn't want to keep any stress in my mind. But having to see Prang Prannapat almost every time I go to the filming set is exhausting-I don't even know how many times it's worn me down emotionally.

Today, everything went smoothly. The trip was fine, work was fine-until after it was all done and I had to give an interview to the press.

*"There are rumors going around about a certain lead actress, Jay, being difficult on set. Is it true that Jay had a meltdown during filming?"*

Asked a familiar face, a gay reporter from Channel 19.

"I don't pay much attention to articles like that. I just try to do my job the best I can. After that, it's up to each person how they see things. Opinions are just opinions," I replied.

*"What about the rumor that you pushed a fellow actor into the water?"*

Dozens of microphones came toward me like kids sharing candy.

"I'd say it was a timing mistake,"

I replied, wearing a well-practiced smile. No question could crack through to the irritation behind it.

"According to the script, there was supposed to be a push. In that scene, Prang was standing right by the pool. The timing was off, so she ended up in the water. But Prang is really professional-when the director didn't yell 'cut,' she just kept acting. The scene wasn't removed, so you'll probably see it in the show."

*"Since the timing was off like that, was Prang upset? Did you have to talk things out? There are already rumors that you two don't get along."* "I wonder how much the person spreading the rumor really knows,"

I said with a teasing smile.

"I haven't cleared anything up yet. Prang understands what's going on, and our relationship is the same as before."

*"And what about the rumor about a real kiss off-script?"*

"That scene will also be in the show. Watch closely to see who really kissed who... Anyway, I have to go now. Please watch the drama *'Le Rai*' too."

Flashes from cameras blinked rapidly, and the sound of shutters clicked nonstop, along with calls of *"Wait! Jay! Nong Jay! Phi Jay!"*-but none of that made me slow down.

People followed me closely all the way to the van. Seeing that, I couldn't help but open the window and wave goodbye to the lovely fans. But tonight, I had to hurry home.

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The things I carried were piled together in the middle of the room in my luxury condo. The bathroom door slid open, and water from the shower splashed down in lines. In less than ten minutes, everything was ready on time.

My iPad was placed on the table, cosmetics and a mirror sat nearby. I crossed my legs, folded my arms, and stared at the clock on the wall, waiting for the long hand to pass 10 PM by about 5 or 6 minutes.

Then I picked up the iPad and started a video call. After just three beeps, the other party pick up the call.

A sexy-eyed young woman appeared on the screen. Her thick wavy hair was tied up messily on top of her head. Her face was clear and bare of makeup, but her cheeks still had a natural rosy glow. Her lips curved into a smile the moment she saw me.

"Right on time."

"Jay isn't like this with everyone," she said.

"You could say I'm flirting a little. If I want you to teach me makeup, you had to be punctual."

"With a cute face like that, how could the reporters say you're badtempered?"

The woman on the screen walked across the room to get some makeup and put it in front of her.

*Camera.*

"Forget about the reporters. It's enough that the people around us understand," she said.

"News can cause more damage than we think. People already have an image of Jay- you should be careful,"

The beautiful woman said as she sat back down, her hands busy arranging her makeup.

"Are you worried about me?"

I asked, a shallow, obvious joke. I knew she knew.

Son smiled back, simply saying,

"Okay, ready?"

I smiled and motioned toward the makeup in front of me.

Makeup tools and various techniques for applying color on the skin were being shared through the video call.

Here is your text translated into simple and proper English:

Because of my profession, doing makeup and dressing up are basic skills I need to have.

And even though I do this kind of look on myself almost every day - even though I could just take a course or watch expert tutorials on YouTube - it seemed better to pretend I wasn't good at it.

That way, I'd have an excuse to talk to P'Ploy every day.

"Why doesn't my makeup look as good as yours, P'Ploy?"

I asked, turning my head left and right in front of the mirror and leaning close to the camera.

"You probably need to cover your cheekbones a bit more."

"I feel like something's missing. Around the eyelids too."

"It's not bad, but..."

She frowned slightly.

"Hmm... I'm free tomorrow night. Are you? Let's do it again."

"If the shoot ends early, sure!"

That's how it all began - makeup, skincare, fashion, restaurants, stories from the set, and our daily lives. We shared them through the screen almost every night.

Slowly, we became familiar with each other. After a while, I didn't need an excuse to talk to her anymore.

"***Want to try this place?"***

I sent a message along with a photo review of a restaurant.

"***Sure, invite me. I'd like to try."***

*"****Are you free for dinner tomorrow, P'Ploy?"***

It didn't take more than three minutes for her reply to come through.

***"Set the time, Jay."***

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And so, the night arrived - a dinner high above the city, with a stunning view at the heart of downtown. The elevator climbed to the very top floor. With a soft "*ding*," the doors slid open from both sides.

My heels clicked confidently against the floor as I stepped into the elegantly decorated restaurant.

"Good evening,"

A voice greeted me the moment I exited the elevator. A man in his midthirties, dressed in a sharp suit, bowed politely as I approached.

"Your table is ready, Ms. Jay. This way, please."

He led the way into a spacious, luxurious room lit with warm lighting - not too bright, but not too dim either. Glass walls surrounded the space, offering a panoramic view of the sparkling city lights below.

I casually glanced at the hardcover menu while gazing out at the view, waiting for the person I'd made the appointment with. She didn't keep me waiting long.

She stepped through the door, eyes sharp and gleaming. The lighting caught the high bridge of her nose and the clean line of her jaw, making her look like a living work of art.

Her long hair swayed as she tossed it lightly behind her shoulders and walked toward me. A soft smile appeared, and the sweetness in her eyes sent a flutter through my chest, like my heart forgot how to beat properly.

"Have you been waiting long, Jay?"

Her manner was soft and sweet, but everything about her - the look, the scent, the sound of her voice - felt like a silent invitation, like a flower luring an insect in without warning.

"Not long,"

I replied, handing her the menu and signaling the waiter to come take our order.

"What would you like to eat, P'Ploy?"

We didn't order much - just a few dishes - then sat back and chatted casually, letting time slip by amidst smiles, laughter, and personal stories.

"Can I ask you something?"

She said suddenly, her tone cutting straight to the point.

"What happened between you and Prang?"

It caught me off guard. I had no idea how to answer in a way that felt appropriate.

"What makes you think something happened between us?"

"I don't know... I've just never seen Prang act like that with anyone before."

"You mean the hostile attitude?"

I smiled playfully.

A trace of amusement curled at the corner of her lips and sparkled in her eyes.

"Can we not talk about other people?" I asked gently.

"Tell me something about you instead, P'Ploy."

"What do you want to know?"

"Your love life."

Her sharp, sweet gaze met mine. A soft dimple appeared on her cheek. I had the sudden urge to reach out and touch that warm little dip in her skin.

"I don't have a boyfriend."

"No boyfriend, really?"

I tilted my head with a playful smile.

"I keep up with entertainment news now and then, you know. Wealthy bachelors, businessmen... Someone as attractive as you - how could you possibly be single?"

"Maybe... because I prefer something gentler than those men."

We were speaking the same language now. The frequency I'd been tuning into was finally sending a signal back.

She tilted her head slightly, a thoughtful expression flickering across her face as she narrowed her brows just a little. Her gaze lingered on me, light but deliberate.

"What kind of smile is that?"

She asked, half-teasing.

There was something in the air between us - something hazy, unspoken, and invisible, yet thick enough to feel. Like the moment before an asthma attack - tight, breathless - when those seductive eyes locked on mine.

"I'm thinking..."

I began, lowering my gaze before looking back up, sugar-sweet and sure. **"...that P'Ploy is cute."**

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# Chapitre 04 : An Old House & Two Blankets

What should I even call this?

Whatever it is between me and P’Ploy.

If I had to give the kind of answer celebrities usually give, I’d probably say we’re “*very close, like sisters*.”

But if I had to tell the truth...

“Jay… I swear that car looks familiar.”

A white Bentley Continental GT Speed Coupe, pristine like something sent from heaven, quietly glided into the parking lot. The 21-inch wheels wrapped in Pirelli PZero tires came to a smooth stop. The driver’s door opened just as the 4.0L twin-turbo engine fell silent.

“Shit. That’s not just familiar… That’s exactly who I think it is.”

A clean-cut man with pale skin stepped out, his crisp black shirt sleeves rolled neatly to his elbows. His long legs moved confidently beneath sharp brown trousers, striding directly toward us.

"How the hell does he know I’m filming here?"

I muttered, sneaking a glance at the person beside me — who had one hand dramatically over her chest and eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Do I look okay? Am I a mess?"

My fabulous manager — a proud queen through and through — ran a hand through her styled hair, eyes locked on the man stepping out of the car, whose face bore a striking resemblance to mine.

"Jay—"

"Jin called and asked, so I told him. But even if I hadn’t, he would’ve found you anyway. It’s not like it’s some big secret."

"Did you forget I’m shooting a love scene with Ken today?"

"Oh dear god!" she gasped.

“Love and longing completely clouded my judgment!”

Ya, my manager, started pacing in little frantic steps — totally panicked, as always, whenever a handsome man showed up unannounced.

“Phi Jin,”

I called out with a bright, beaming smile and eyes lit up like I was genuinely thrilled to see him — every acting trick *Teacher Lingzhi* had ever taught me, I pulled out on the spot.

“What brings you here? I missed you so much.”

“You didn’t even bother to call me back,”

He said calmly, voice deep and even — though his eyes softened.

I rested my temple gently against his arm.

“I’ve been working since early morning. And when I get home late, I’m just exhausted. If anyone’s to blame, it’s Je-Ang for overloading my schedule.”

Jin’s eyes flicked sharply in that way only he could manage — making my flamboyant gay manager freeze, mouth hanging open in awe. Again. And again.

I quickly stepped in before things escalated, steering the conversation away with a casual question.

“Did you bring me any snacks?”

The innocent smile of a little sister — it might not solve everything, but it could help soften whatever reason brought my big brother all the way to set today.

“Of course. I even ordered extra for the whole crew. It should be delivered soon.”

His dark eyes glanced toward the filming area inside, where cameras were already rolling.

“I feel like going in there and knocking Ken around a little.”

*Oh no. Oh no oh no oh no.*

I had a feeling today was going to be full of retakes — dozens of them — thanks to this exact scenario. It had happened once before, during a past shoot, when Jin showed up unannounced and made Ken so tense he could barely act.

I grabbed his arm.

“Phi Jin, the more stressed Ken is, the worse his performance will be.” My 35-year-old brother turned to look at me.

“You mean you’ll have to go through that love scene again and again, wasting yourself for each take.”

“We’ve already talked about this — I’m not ‘*using*’ myself for anything.”

“Phi Jin,” I pouted.

“I’m just doing something I enjoy. It’s not hurting me. I have my boundaries. And Ken respects them.”

He didn’t like it when I got angry at him, so he gave me a gentle smile.

“I just came to say hi… that’s all.”

But his eyes were far from gentle. They were sharp and intense, filled with determination. He always looked like this whenever my older brother was serious about something.

It seemed like the entire crew was thrilled when a handsome man named Jin Wiboonthanakit, an executive of Thanakit Hotels & Resorts, suddenly dropped by the set—with a large food set ordered from the five-star restaurant of his hotel chain.

Everyone was happy—except for poor Ken, the only lead actor still waiting to film the final scene with me.

“Why is he here, Jay?”

Ken asked, clearly nervous. His handsome, bearded face showed his concern, and I actually started to feel sorry for him.

“He just dropped by,”

I said, patting his shoulder.

“You’re lying, aren’t you?”

“Yeah… I’m lying. He came to see us.”

Ken cursed under his breath.

“Why’s he watching us?”

“Come on, it’s nothing. Just do your best, finish the scene quickly, and we can all go home. I’ve got plans after this.” “Don’t worry. This scene’s easy. I’ve got it,”

Ken replied confidently.

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“Cut!!”

P' Pom shouted loudly through the megaphone.

“Ouch! Ken, this is take twenty-four already. Are you going to finish all one hundred takes or what? Why are your hands so tense?” He put down the megaphone and walked over.

“I’ll show you how to do it.”

The director pulled Ken aside to demonstrate the correct way to play Pheem.

“Your hand, hold it and slide it down like this.”

His rough, strong hand moved over Ken’s body.

“Then, you bury your face into the heroine’s neck like this.”

At that moment, I could hear Ken giggling softly as P'Pom’s rough beard brushed against his neck.

“Understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

While P'Pom was explaining what he wanted from Ken, I decided to walk over to my older brother, who was sitting nearby with a serious look on his face.

“You’re glaring.”

“I haven’t done anything.”

“Exactly. Just sitting there. Silent. Staring.”

“You know, I don’t believe the rumors about you going off-script and doing something inappropriate. If anyone did that, it would be Ken.”

I sank into the chair next to him and rested my head on his shoulder. “I am tired. I want to go home, but I can’t because the work isn’t finished.”

“I’ll take you home right now,” he said, standing up.

“Phi Jin… let me finish my work first, please.”

He stood still and silent, but the tight clenching of his jaw gave away the emotions he was holding back.

“I’ll just go sit behind the monitor with the director,” he said.

Then my brother walked over to Ken and whispered something before stepping outside.

“What did he say, Ken?” I asked.

Ken tried to mimic his serious tone.

“Do a good job. I love my sister very much.”

Then Ken turned to me with a dramatic shiver.

“Man, the way he said it... I actually felt sorry for your future boyfriend. What do you even do when you're in a relationship, Jay?” “My ex-boyfriend was more scared of my brother than me.”

. .

*Okay, now back to my relationship with P’Ploy…*

It was kind of like—I approached her first, and she didn’t seem to mind. Sometimes she looked shy, sometimes amused. We’d text and video call each other before bed pretty often… even when she was taking a shower.

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***Rrrrrrrr***

When I saw Ploy’s name pop up on the screen, I answered the call immediately. But as soon as her face appeared, I suddenly realized—I was completely naked. I quickly ducked out of the camera’s view from the iPad sitting on the bathroom shelf.

I think I dodged in time.

“Jay? Jay?”

Her voice called out through the speaker.

Slowly, I lifted myself up, letting only my head appear on screen.

“I’ll call you back in a minute.”

. .

We’d been filming this drama for almost two months. As for my relationship with P’Ploy, I tried to make the most of the time we had— making sure she noticed me, showing care, bringing little treats or souvenirs whenever we met.

“Jay, this color looks great on you.”

Her lips were just inches from mine as she spoke, casually giving me makeup tips like an honorary beauty coach.

“Try looking in the mirror. If you like it, I’ll let you keep it.”

What I saw in the mirror was my own reflection, lips coated in a lipstick shade with a weird, fancy name.

“I want to try the shade you wear,” I said.

Her lips were only a hand’s length away. Our faces, already close, inched nearer—until the space between us was filled only by breath.

Then came a soft whisper.

“This one… I can't give you this color yet..”

We played dress-up together often—just the two of us—in my condo.

Honestly, I couldn’t really say what stage our relationship was in. Maybe it was the kind where P’Ploy knew exactly how I felt—she didn’t reject me, but she hadn’t truly accepted me either.

We kept seeing each other, growing closer little by little. It felt good just to see her beautiful face often.

And I got incredibly irritated every time she interacted with Prannapat. I could sense some kind of chemistry between the two of them.

Throughout filming, the unscripted moments and petty clashes between me and Prannapat were constant. As long as there was even the slightest opening, one of us would strike—whether it was snide comments about food, little jabs hidden in our lines, or even the occasional physical scuffle.

Sometimes I wondered if I was mentally unstable or just plain unhinged. I’d spend entire days thinking of ways to tease that heroine like it was some kind of hobby. The more upset or flustered she got, the more amused I felt.

“Don’t get too mad, sis. You’ll crack all that foundation on your face,” I’d say with a grin.

After one of those improvised jabs, Prannapat would always shoot me a furious glare, her eyes silently saying, *You’ll pay for that.*

And honestly, all I ever felt in those moments… was pure entertainment.

There was a time when I went on set wearing the outfit the crew had prepared for me. When it came time to shoot, I was surprised to find that my sworn enemy suddenly acted like a friend.

There was no going off-script, no physical aggression. Anyone unfamiliar with Prannapat might have let their guard down—but for me, that was exactly what made it dangerous.

I figured she was either unwell or had already done something sneaky—I just didn’t know what it was yet. Until I slipped both hands into the pockets of the coat I was wearing.

My scream was louder than a possessed spirit being violently exorcised. It was so loud the director forgot to call "cut."

One of the crew ladies came running over in a panic, Ken stood there with his mouth agape, and the entire crew scattered in all directions—because in my hands were the corpses of brown-winged, six-legged insects known for their excellent flying skills.

The foul stench of death, caused by oleic acid, filled my nose as I pulled my hands from the coat pockets.

I screamed at the top of my lungs, stomped my feet, flailed my arms, and the entire set ran away from me. Only one person stood at a distance, laughing—*Prang*!

The whole incident ended with me tearing off the coat in tears and running to find a shower. I scrubbed my hands with soap over and over again, but the creepy sensation of insect legs brushing against my fingers just wouldn’t go away. I gagged and sneezed nonstop.

That day ended with the villainess—me—unable to continue filming. The director had no choice but to call off the entire shoot.

Because I have a deep-seated fear of this winged creature, I hate the feeling of its legs crawling on my skin.

In that moment, I felt just as disgusted with myself as I did with the cockroach. And the news published the next day was:

*“Gossip spreads:*

*The drama’s temporary villain, whose name is hinted by a rice-eating utensil, throws a tantrum. She’s overly dramatic and difficult, causing the production to stop filming. Pity the producer and director who had to cancel the shoot. Who knows how much damage was done.”*

. .

**“The news about you haven't been good lately.”**

“I didn’t do anything wrong.”

“But no one knows the full story. Some of the comments are just awful— rude and unreasonable, like people are just looking for a place to vent their anger.”

The soft white glow from the thin bracelet—custom-made by my older brother—still sparkled, even under dim light. I always keep it with me. If I’m not wearing it, it’s in my bag. It was a birthday gift from Phi Jin.

“Forget it.”

The sky outside the window was dark. The clouds had swallowed the metal wings that once shimmered at sunrise. Now everything looked dull.

“I don’t want to care. In just one night, people will move on to the next drama.”

“But we’re being unfairly judged.”

“So what, Je? That’s just how nature is,”

I closed my eyes as the electric window screen was raised, ending the conversation.

“Jay, I think we need to create some positive buzz. Maybe you should post something on IG?”

“Not really feeling like it.”

“Well, it’s time you did. We need to start some marketing.”

. .

After that conversation, I fell asleep. And even though I was in a first-class cabin floating above the clouds, it didn’t mean I slept soundly through the night.

The world changes every second. Just yesterday I was walking on Thai soil. Six or seven hours later, I found myself surrounded by people of different nationalities. In just one day, the land I stepped on had changed, along with the culture and the environment.

So why should I let a few careless words—thought and typed in under a minute—leave scars on my life?

They didn’t think about the consequences. They just wanted to speak out, to play judge, to feel seen. They wanted to leave their mark and then walk away without any sense of responsibility.

But I know who I am, what I’m doing, and why. So other people’s thoughts reflect their own world—not mine.

The exhaustion from a restless flight still hadn’t left me, even when I sat down in the van the drama crew had arranged to pick me up from the airport in Japan.

We had moved our production here to film in late December. Only the lead actors—myself, Ken, Prang, and P’Ploy—were flown in, along with a small team of key crew members. And of course, nerdy Kade came along too.

The car we were in drove through the city and into the countryside. We passed agricultural fields that kept changing as we went along. There were fewer and fewer people, until it became very quiet and lonely.

I wasn’t sure how long the car’s wheels had been rolling on the wet road, which was covered with snow. In some spots, it was a bit dangerous because the white snow had packed down and turned into slippery ice.

The city roads were okay, but outside the city and on the highway we were driving up the mountain on, even though the tires had chains for snow, some curves still made me secretly feel a little scared.

. .

We arrived at a very quiet small village surrounded by trees and hills all around. Since it was snowing, everything was covered in a cold white blanket—roofs, paths, and treetops were all covered with snow. Some trees had even turned to ice.

The snow was falling harder than when we arrived at the airport. I was carrying my personal bag, walking on a bridge over a stream. The clear water flowed around rocks, making a soft rushing sound.

It was so beautiful I had to stop and take a picture. Then I turned around and saw someone walking behind me. A faint smile appeared on my cheeks, but no one noticed.

“Jay, where’s my hat?”

Here’s the English translation of the text you provided:

“Where’s my hat?”

The older man kept walking toward me as I started to pick up a tissue to wipe my nose while passing a man in a red fur-lined windbreaker, unzipped. He was using a pickaxe to chip away ice on the walkway along the snow.

“I don’t remember where I put it.”

“Why are you doing this? You’ll get sick soon,”

Je-Ang said as she stretched out her own wool hat toward me and grabbed my bag to carry instead.

“You know you get sick easily and don’t really take care of yourself.”

She grumbled, huffing, then strutted past a steaming ramen shop, leading me toward a wooden house on the corner.

Allergic to the weather, prone to sickness, asthma, and allergic to beautiful women — it was like an organ attached to me since I was young.

I’m allergic to dust and strong smells, but there was a certain person’s skin scent that never made me wrinkle my nose and that I was addicted to.

The crew and everyone gathered in front of one of the houses before being split into groups to greet each person in different houses. The problem was that I, Prang, and P’Ploy couldn’t agree on the accommodations.

“Here’s the deal. There’s limited space here. For the male crew, whoever wants to share a room can arrange among themselves. The female crew will stay in female-only rooms. No mixing of men and women, even if someone is ‘given’ to someone else,”

The chubby young woman explained while handing out room keys.

“The last house has three rooms. Nong Ken will share a room with P’Pom and Jae Thong. As for Nong Jay, she gets her own room, right? We arranged a private one just for her.” She handed me the key.

“Nong Prang will share a room with Nong Ploy. At first, we wanted to give everyone a private room, but we couldn’t book enough—it’s full.”

Her repeated use of “na” at the end of almost every sentence almost made me forget the key point that Prang was going to share a room with P’Ploy!

“I can share with P’Ploy. Then Prang can have the room to herself comfortably. I will sacrifice myself,”

I said. *They can’t sleep together—I refused.*

“No, it’s better this way. I am scared of ghosts, Jay. I feel safer sleeping with P’Ploy. You should just take the single room. Don’t overthink it.”

Total lie. Is she really scared of ghosts?

I covered my mouth and laughed.

“Ho ho ho... A ghost wouldn’t dare haunt a demon queen like you, Prang.”

My eyes lit up. If someone had recorded that moment on video, they could’ve edited in visual effects—demonic wings flapping behind Parnpach.

“Say whatever you want. I’m still going to sleep in the same room as P’Ploy.”

“No, you’re not.”

“The rooms have already been assigned. Don’t cause problems, Jay.”

The chubby girl in charge of the keys looked left and right as she watched me and Prang argue. Ken had already gone off with P’Pom.

P’Ploy stood there smiling beautifully, clearly entertained. Meanwhile, JeAng, she raised both hands to hold her temples.

“I don’t want to sleep alone. It’s a strange place.”

“Me too—” Prang said.

“Oiiiiiiiiiiiii!!!”

A loud scream came from the flamboyant gay man.

“So you’re scared of ghosts, huh?”

Je Ang pointed at Prang, who nodded. “And you don’t want to sleep alone, right?”

She pointed at me. I nodded.

“Then the two of you can just sleep together! Ploy can sleep alone in a single room, perfect."

The manager snatched the key from the plump woman and shoved it into P'Ploy's hand.

"Go! Carry the sign and get into the room!"

That annoying gay guy dragged me and Prannapat enter the room.

"Wait!!!!!! I'm not—" I tried to protest.

"Stop," she cut me off.

I was just about to argue back when Angsumalin raised her finger and warned,

"Both of you! You're sharing the same room. Don’t even think about fighting and making noise!"

Then that evil manager unlocked the door and pushed both me and Prannapat inside the same room. She gave us a mocking look before turning away and slamming the door shut.

***Bang!***

Silence.

We stared at each other in shock.

I glanced around the room. It was small and mostly empty, with only a few essentials, a tiny heater, and bedding rolled up in the corner.

"I'm not sharing a room with you!" I snapped.

"Don’t think I want to either,"

She shot back, and quickly rushed to claim her spot first.

"Sleep wherever you want, just don’t even think about taking my side. I won’t allow it. I’m taking this corner by the window—first come, first served.”

I smirked, raising an eyebrow as I unrolled the bedding to claim the spot.

“You cheat! I wanted that side!”

“How could you claim it? I got here first. Don’t be ridiculous.”

Prannapat ran over and tried to push me away from the spot I was spreading out on. When that didn’t work, she got up and started pulling me by the leg, dragging me around the room.

We wrestled, hair tangled, breathing hard—until a phone rang and broke the chaos. I reached over and picked up my smartphone.

"Je-Ang?"

“Guys… keep it down,”

Came the voice on the other end.

“The floor’s wooden—it shakes the whole house. Also, you only have three hours to rest. The crew’s already out scouting locations and setting up the cameras!”

The call ended as quickly as it came.

We finally called a truce. Prannapat gave in and let me sleep by the window, while she dragged her bedding to the other corner—whichever one felt the farthest from me.

But, well, the room was tiny. No matter where you went, it was just a few steps apart anyway.

. .

It was a terrible weather day. I hated snow—especially thick piles that reached up to my knees. And the worst part? It just wouldn’t stop falling.

The freezing temperature made every part of my body that wasn’t covered feel numb. Even the big, shiny red strawberry I was about to eat felt like it had come straight out of the fridge.

“There are just a few more shots left.”

We were standing outside, under a clear plastic umbrella that barely kept the white snowflakes from falling on us.

“There are eleven more scenes left for you,”

I said, chewing on another strawberry.

“You okay?”

The person holding the umbrella asked me that for the fifth time today. They looked up at the sky, which hadn’t shown the sun all day. From morning until now—just before dusk—there had been no sign of the sun, or even the moon. Just endless gray clouds. “I want one of those things on a stick,”

I said, nodding toward a food stall surrounded by people. The skewered snack was ground seasoned meat, shaped into balls and grilled. The delicious smell of it filled the air.

“Hold the umbrella and wait here. I’ll go check it out.”

“Love you.”

“Stop being sweet,”

He said with a smirk before trudging through the snow toward the stall.

My breath turned into mist in the cold air. My nose was sore and runny, so I had to wear a mask. Earlier, when I wiped it with a tissue, I saw a bit of blood—probably from broken capillaries.

He always made sure to wrap me in his big coat whenever I wasn’t filming. His voice had started to sound hoarse, like he was catching a cold, but he still—

I was exhausted. The weather made me feel lonely. And even lonelier as I watched someone else filming in a scene. The discomfort in my body stirred something in my heart.

I longed for warmth, for attention, for someone to care. But how could I ask for that if she didn’t even seem to care at all?

Even though we were assigned to separate rooms at night, outside, P’Ploy and Prang still walked side by side, chatting and laughing like they were made for each other.

Their chemistry made me feel even more left out. To be honest, I was sulking. I felt fragile. Unimportant. Even when I was sick, it felt like no one noticed.

“One stick enough for you?”

He asked, holding out a skewer with ugly-looking but great-smelling meatballs.

“Why do you have two?”

“Because I’m not the star here. It’s okay if I get fat.”

She knelt down beside me.

“I love you, Je.”

I leaned my head on his firm shoulder, covered in a leopard-print mink coat. He was the only one who truly took care of me.

“Aww…” He cooed affectionately.

“You’re so sweet when you’re sick. Not as feisty as usual. Here, I’ll give you the rest of my treat to eat.”

I laughed softly and pulled the big, muscular gay girl into a hug.

.

The cold didn’t let up—it lasted until the very end of the day. The snow fell as if it would never get the chance to fall again. The soft white flakes clumped together and drifted down from morning until night.

I started coughing badly. My body felt hot, my breathing got harder, and nothing felt fun anymore. It was a relief to get back to my room—the tiny heater made it warm enough. I was too weak to argue with Prannapat about anything.

After finishing up in the bathroom, I came out to find P’Ploy sitting in the room, chatting with Prannapat. She walked over to me, smiled gently, and placed her hand on my forehead like I was a little kid.

“You’ve got quite a fever.”

“Are you here to take care of me?”

I asked. I caught Prannapat rolling her eyes three full times behind her.

“I have to go back to my room,” P’Ploy replied.

“Take your medicine and get some rest.”

After P’Ploy wished me a quick goodnight, she left the room.

I turned to look at her walking out, feeling indifferent. Fever medicine and other supplies were placed beside my bed, along with a glass of water.

Maybe things wouldn’t have gotten this bad—this painful—if the temperature hadn’t dropped even further during the night. The snow didn’t stop falling.

I wasn’t sure if the roof of this old house could handle the weight piling up on top. The small heater, oscillating between me and Prannapat, wasn’t providing enough warmth anymore.

I stirred in my sleep. The thick blanket was no longer enough to protect me from the cold.

I was freezing. I kept shifting uncomfortably, and my breathing became harder. My chest felt heavy. My mouth opened as I gasped for air, breathing quickly and shallowly. My chest rose and fell rapidly. It was getting harder to pull in oxygen—my asthma was flaring up.

I pulled the blanket tightly around me and tried to sit up, reaching for my inhaler in my bag. But a voice behind me made me freeze in place.

“Sit down.”

My knees gave out, weak.

“Open your mouth.”

I exhaled deeply as she shook the inhaler, then placed it gently into my mouth. One slender hand supported the back of my neck while the other pressed the inhaler, releasing a mist of bronchodilator just as I took a deep breath in.

She rested her hand on my face and neck, as if checking my temperature, while waiting for my breathing to return to normal.

“Feeling better?”

Her voice came quietly through the darkness.

I closed my eyes and nodded. My body trembled slightly from the chill in my stomach before I lay back down, curling under the blanket.

The figure in the dark moved to turn off the heater’s oscillation, then placed it at the foot of the bed instead. She dragged the mattress from the other side of the room and pushed it right up next to mine.

Then she took her own blanket and layered it over me, doubling the thickness, before slipping under it herself.

The warmth from the heater at our feet, combined with her body heat, made the space under the blanket much warmer. The cold slowly faded. Darkness may have hidden our faces, but the gentle shaking of my ribs revealed every breath I took.

I curled into myself tightly, hoping my heart wouldn't drift away when I felt the sweet scent of caramel in her breath touch my skin—she had moved in close, so close that the blanket barely covered the two of us.

We faced each other. Her eyes met mine in the dark—silent, stubborn, and so close I could almost reach out and touch her.

*Do you care about me, even just a little?*

*Or are you simply being kind… as one human to another?*

The ache deep inside me pulsed along with the quiet joy of her presence. I didn’t have the right to ask for anything—yet, at least for now, she was here.

*Do sick people get special privileges sometimes?*

*Can I use that as an excuse—to lean a little closer to her?*

My body trembled in response to that longing. Maybe she thought I was just cold, because she moved in closer, wrapping her arms tightly around me.

It wasn’t exactly what I wanted… but it was more than I could have asked for.

Not only did I get to lean against her, but my nose, tucked beneath her chin, caught the clean, comforting scent of her skin.

And still—my body wouldn’t stop trembling.

“Are you okay?” she asked softly.

“If you're still cold, I can go find another blanket—if there are any left.”

She started to shift away, as if to get up.

“No…”

The word escaped my throat in a whisper as I clutched her shirt tightly, pulling her back.

“Everyone else is already asleep. I’m starting to feel better.”

*Please… don’t move away.*

Her warm, soft body settled back in, close again—pressing against me, holding me tight.

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# Chapitre 05: Telephone Line

After that night, we moved into the city. But just because I spent one night hugging Prang didn’t mean we were suddenly on good terms. My body was getting better, and I returned to being the same bad-tempered person—only this time, even more short-tempered than before.

I sat alone in the car with the heater on, waiting to go on set. I wasn’t sure if it was the cold weather or something else, but the physical closeness between the two women had noticeably increased.

Sometimes, I’d see P’Ploy walk over and wrap her arm around Prang, and Prang would lean into her. The way they looked at each other and took care of one another—if I were looking with an innocent heart, I might’ve thought they were just close female friends being playful and caring.

But with a not-so-innocent heart like mine… No, that wasn’t just friendship. My gaydar was going off like crazy.

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***BANG!!!***

I turned toward the car window on my side and jumped out of my skin in fear. A small shriek escaped from my throat as I clutched my chest.

For god’s sake! Was this girl Kade created just to scare me? She stood silently by the car window like a shadow with a knife, smiling eerily like Esther, the creepy kid from Orphan. Her eyes were locked on me, and I got chills all over my neck.

*Again! Again!*

She knocked on the window again when she saw I was still sitting there, blinking rapidly, refusing to roll it down.

No way was I going to open it.

I thought to myself as I sat up and checked to make sure Ged wasn’t carrying a hammer or a chainsaw.

“…Yes?” I finally rolled the window down.

“The director sent me to get you,”

She said with that same chilling smile. The creepiness never left her face.

Everyone on the crew was working hard to finish filming in time for us to return home. The difference from the first day was that ever since we moved into the city, I didn’t have to sleep in the same room as Prang anymore.

Each actor and crew member stayed in separate rooms—or shared, depending on the arrangements and personal preference.

In the end, we finished filming on time and even had a day left to explore the city.

As the New Year and Christmas approached, the city was decorated with Christmas trees, snowman figures, and colorful lights.

The streets were lively with activity, and there were event areas set up in the city center. People were out shopping and walking around everywhere.

From what I observed, Japanese people are very disciplined and dedicated in their work. They move with purpose and are incredibly patient when it comes to queuing.

There’s no pushing to get on the bus, no fighting over food, and no loud behavior. They smile and welcome you warmly.

Everyone was doing their job, but who really knew what kind of pressure they were hiding behind those smiles?

. .

The day before we returned to Thailand, P’Ploy disappeared somewhere with Prang. I had no idea where they went. I was feeling a bit down, so Ken took me out to walk around the city to lift my mood.

We stopped by a famous temple to pay our respects, just for the sake of tradition, before heading to a trendy street popular with young people.

“That looks tasty,”

I said, walking toward a colorful, strange-looking snack, while Ken tried to drag me into a shop packed full of capsule toy machines.

“You can eat later. I only need two more to complete the set. Help me turn the machine—maybe your luck will help mine.”

“Are you going broke yet?”

I asked, eyeing the dozens of tiny toys in the bag Ken was holding.

“Come on, help me out. Our luck might balance each other.”

I reached out and lazily turned one of the machines. A round plastic capsule dropped out.

“See? Did it help?” Ken laughed.

I rolled my eyes when I saw that the toy inside was a duplicate—she already had eight of the same one in her bag.

“Let me try again,”

Ken said, feeding more coins into the machine.

Again and again. In the end, I couldn’t stop spinning that stupid machine. We ended up with Ken getting another whole bag of tiny toys—this time paid for with my money. And all the while, Ken kept cheering me on... without putting in a single coin herself.

. .

Later that night, I rejoined the group because P’O, the producer, wanted to treat the whole team to a farewell dinner before we returned home.

At first, P’O planned to take us to a barbecue place, but some staff members didn’t eat beef, so we changed plans and went to a sushi restaurant instead.

The long table was filled with sashimi and all kinds of sushi. Laughter and conversation filled the air, and drinks were served to those who wanted alcohol.

I sat in the middle of the table, with P’O on my left and Ken on my right— Ken was laughing loudly at some gossip P’Pom was sharing about his wife.

Sitting next to Ken was Je, and at the far end of the table across from me was Kade, smiling creepily as always. Right in front of me sat P’Ploy and Prannapat, both of them watching me closely.

“Try this,” P’Ploy said.

“The seafood here is really fresh. The shrimp is super sweet.”

I looked down at the plate. Just a moment ago, those sea creatures were alive in the tank—and now they were laid out as raw shrimp sashimi.

The flesh was glossy, fresh, and translucent, just like people always brag about. The shiny meat almost whispered for seafood lovers to taste it. “Thank you, P’Ploy,” I replied politely.

But instead of feeling tempted, I felt nauseous. I’ve always hated raw shrimp. The fishy smell and just the thought of it made it impossible for me to eat. I couldn’t stand it.

*What should I do?*

*If I eat it, I’ll throw up.*

*If I don’t, P’Ploy might feel hurt.*

I looked at the shrimp on the plate with hesitation, then glanced up at P’Ploy again—only to catch Prannapat, sitting next to her, leaning in with a smug little smile, clearly waiting to see what I would do.

No way was I going to let Prannapat smirk at me like that.

I glanced briefly at P’Ploy, who was still smiling sweetly, then picked up the sashimi shrimp I hated with my chopsticks, lowered my face toward it,

and—

Another pair of chopsticks suddenly swooped in and stole it before it reached my mouth.

“P’Ploy! You always give things to Jay. I want some too!”

Prannapat said, popping the shrimp into her mouth without hesitation.

“Mmm, it’s delicious. Can I have another?”

“If you wanted it, you could’ve just told me. Why are you taking Jay’s piece?” P’Ploy replied.

“Because Jay’s piece looked more appetizing,”

Prannapat said with a grin.

“Then I’ll pick a new one for Jay,”

P’Ploy offered, reaching out to grab another shrimp for me—but Prannapat quickly snatched it away again.

“This one looks yummy too,” she said, still chewing.

It was great that I didn’t have to eat the shrimp, but it wasn’t so great being reduced from main character to background prop, sitting there watching the two of them flirt and bicker like some romcom couple.

“Girls, why are you fighting over it?”

P’O jumped in, noticing the commotion.

“If there’s not enough, I can just order more.”

He reached out to place a fresh shrimp on my plate.

“No more shrimp for me, P’O,” I said quickly.

“I’d rather have some fish instead.”

And everything that happened was happening under the haunting gaze of Kade, sitting quietly in the corner like some kind of ghost in a horror film.

. .

That evening, everyone split up into their own groups. I chose to go shopping with Je and Ken to buy some things to bring back to Thailand. It was around 10 or 11 p.m. by the time we returned to the hotel.

We got into the elevator and went up to our floor. When the doors opened, we all fell silent, too busy uploading pictures to Instagram.

As we turned the corner toward our rooms, we suddenly heard two women talking softly and sweetly. Just as we were about to walk around the bend, Ken suddenly stopped.

He quickly reached out and covered Je’s mouth before she could call out a greeting.

The three of us froze and tiptoed closer, staying quiet. Just ahead were two women caught in the middle of a tense moment.

“Are you jealous yet?” one of them asked.

“Let go of me, P’Ploy,” the other replied.

“You’re acting all moody—so are you still upset about what happened earlier today?”

P’Ploy tugged at the woman’s arm gently.

“No,”

She said, turning her face away and shaking Ploy’s hand off before trying to walk away.

“Let’s talk, Prang. Don’t just walk off,”

P’Ploy said, following her.

“Or are you walking this way because you want them to hear us?”

That last sentence made Prannapat freeze. She turned around and walked back from the hallway leading to her room, which was right next to mine.

“What do you want from me?” she asked.

“You’re mad about what happened earlier, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am! Happy now?!”

She crossed her arms tightly.

“You knew she wasn’t feeling well, and you still went ahead and did that— why?”

“She was already feeling better after you gave her medicine earlier, wasn’t she? And besides, I didn’t force her to eat the shrimp. Come on… So, are we making up or not?”

Prannapat said nothing, just shook her head quietly.

“I don’t know what’s going on between you and Jay, but I’ve already tried so hard to make things right with you. If you keep acting like this… I might start dating Jay instead.”

“And what’s that supposed to do? Make me jealous?”

“I don’t like taking things too seriously. Can’t we just have some fun?”

As she said that, Prannapat pushed P’Ploy away—but P’Ploy followed her, pulling her in by the waist and holding her close.

Ken quickly put a hand over Je’s mouth as she let out a surprised little gasp, and Je squeezed my hand tightly in hers.

“You told me yourself that Jay can’t eat raw shrimp,”

P’Ploy said softly.

“But when someone like Jay doesn’t like something, she says it straight out —yet she didn’t refuse when I gave it to her… If you still won’t talk things through with me properly, then I won’t wait any longer.”

“No need to wait,” Prang said coldly.

“I never asked you to. But stay away from Jay. You’re not right for her.”

“But Jay didn’t act like she agrees with you.”

“Whatever. Our relationship… there’s no way it can go back to what it was.”

Prannapat’s hand was still on P’Ploy’s shoulder when the older woman leaned in closer…

“What’s going on here, huh? Why are my beloved actors all gathered out here like this?”

*"!!!!!!!!"*

A voice broke the tension—P'Pom, with his slicked-back, greasy hair, came walking from the direction of the elevator. He looked at us with casual curiosity, unaware that he was the one who had earlier exposed my, Je Ang’s, and Ken’s situation.

“Oh, Ploy and Prang are here too?”

He added, smiling with a confused look when he noticed the strange tension in the air.

P’Ploy and Prannapat quickly pulled away from each other just as I turned to leave. But by then, we all knew who had done what… and who had seen it all.

“I’m going to bed now,” I said quietly.

I walked past the two women without even glancing at them. The only place I wanted to reach as quickly as possible was the large door not far ahead. The key turned in the lock, and a loud bang followed as it closed behind me.

A woman’s scent is always strong. I hadn’t misunderstood the chemistry between them. But seeing it and hearing it up close like that—*it hurt more than I expected.*

So whose fault is it? Who should I blame?

... **I guess I can only blame my own heart for feeling this way.**

.

I waited in the room for a while, making sure no one was in the hallway. Then I put on a mask, opened the door, and took my heavy heart out for a walk in the cold night air.

Even though it was already midnight, there were still people out and about. Some food stalls were still open.

Bright lights decorated different spots, adding a festive touch for the end of the year—but for me, it just felt lonely. I ended up walking along a small canal, letting the quiet place soothe my heart.

There was no snow in the city like there was outside the city on my first day, but the air was still so cold it stung my skin without gloves.

I stopped in front of a takoyaki stall. Even at this late hour, people were lining up.

A small smile appeared on my face as I received my tray of takoyaki. I thought about how my sister would probably scold me if she knew I was eating fried dough filled with meat this close to 1 a.m.

I sat on a bench by the water in front of a ramen shop and started eating the hot takoyaki, blowing on them to let out the heat. White steam rose into the air.

Not far away, a teenager who seemed drunk was lying on the sidewalk. After a while, he began to stir, rolling around and trying to get up—but his legs were too weak. I kept my distance, just watching, unsure if I should go help him or not.

After a while, a group of four or five teenagers—both boys and girls— walked up. They were talking and laughing together before helping carry the drunk guy away.

And then I thought… what the hell am I even doing here?

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***Rrrrrrrr!!***

**Angsumalin**

“Hello?”

“Hello? Are you in your room? I’ve been standing in front of your door and knocking forever—why didn’t you open it?”

“I went out to get something to eat.”

“Went out? Where? And why did you go alone? Do you know what time it is?!”

“I’m coming back now.”

“Where are you? Send me your location. I’ll come pick you up.”

“No need, Je. I’m on my way back now,” I said gently.

After I hung up the phone, I buried my face in both hands and quietly sobbed. I didn’t know if my tears had messed up my eyeliner, but I really couldn’t stop crying.

Only a fool keeps making the same mistake over and over without learning from it… and I guess I’m one of them. Heartbroken again and again—and I never learn.

I wiped away my tears, stood up, and walked to the ramen shop’s ticket machine with a flushed face. I pressed the round buttons over and over, adding extra toppings—more pork, yes, yes, yes—and an egg too. Tonight, I was going to eat to my heart’s content.

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It must’ve been a little past 2 a.m. when I stepped out of the shop, my hands full of food, and started strolling down the street back to my place.

It was probably around 2:30 a.m., I thought, as I hummed *Telephone Line* under my breath in the cold night air. That’s when I saw someone walking toward me from the opposite direction, holding a phone to their ear.

“Found her,” she said into the phone.

The person in front of me suddenly stopped walking. Her eyes locked onto me with a stare that felt like a scolding—sharp and full of judgment. But not a single word came out of her mouth as I quietly walked past.

“Idiot!” a voice shouted from behind me.

I kept walking.

“Still the same stubborn idiot,”

Came another voice—this time from beside me, as the speaker walked past to get ahead.

“Your eyebrows are still just as thin as ever,” I said calmly.

The person in front turned around. White mist from her breath floated in the cold air. The accusing look in her eyes now seemed to tremble slightly.

I stepped closer to her and gently reached out to touch her face. My fingers lightly brushed against her long, delicate eyebrows.

“You used to draw them unevenly. And you used to get mad because I didn’t have time to teach you... But today, you did them better than I ever could.”

Prannapat went silent.

I stepped back, a faint smile appearing on my lips before I turned and walked away.

“Jay…”

But I didn’t look back.

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# Chapitre 06: Bitch, Jennie's Solo

"Still not back together with Ploy yet?"

"That's none of your business."

"Everyone wants a second chance, you know."

The sound of the car’s air conditioner filled the silence. It was just the two of us talking inside.

“If you don’t know the full story, maybe don’t say anything.”

“I just know that other people’s mistakes always seem bigger than our own. By the time we realize it… we’ve already lost them.”

“Exactly. By the time you understand, they’re already gone.”

There was a moment of silence before I said,

“Some people are still watching from afar. Maybe they haven’t really gone anywhere.”

“Then maybe they’re so far away, the person being watched doesn’t even know if they still care.”

*Was that anger? Or hurt?*

“They do care. But if the person they care about is dating their own brother, maybe they just can’t show it.”

She gave a bitter smile.

“Some people waste so much time. They had all the time in the world, but they ran away and disappeared. Then when that person starts dating someone else, they come back and make a scene.”

“They were only together for two weeks, and then she dated my brother. I don’t think that’s a long time… What would you have done?”

“If it were me, I wouldn’t have cheated in the first place. I would’ve gone to talk to her, call her, explain things.” “Then who said ‘*don’t call me’?* Who?”

I raised my voice.

“If someone says ‘*don’t call me*’ when they’re angry, it usually means they want you to call. Call until they pick up. Show them you care. Prove that it was just a mistake. Make them feel like they matter. Not just disappear and actually do what you said.”

Tears welled up. Was she just hurt by the past—or was she feeling something now too?

“So you closed the door and got revenge on me by dating my brother?” “You didn’t care anyway.” Her brows furrowed.

“I was hurting more than you think... I’m sorry for ruining everything.” She shook her head.

**“Someone who never truly loves can’t really feel pain like I did, Jay.”**

Were you just saying that to hurt me? Or did you really mean it?

"Okay, the camera issue is fixed!"

Someone shouted through a megaphone, the sound cutting through the car’s glass window.

"Actors inside the car, get ready. We're about to resume shooting!"

The crew, who had been moving around outside a moment ago, returned to their positions. Multiple pairs of eyes were now focused on us again.

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"Action!"

"Mom asked me to tell you she wants you to come home."

I stared straight ahead.

"I’ll stop by."

"Khwan," Prannapat shook her head,

"I don’t want us to be like this. Can’t you go back to being the little sister I used to know?"

"Time doesn’t go backward, P’Saem."

My eyes met hers, filled with sorrow.

"Time changes people."

"If I break up with Pheem, will you go back to how you were before?"

Her eyes were pleading so genuinely, I felt my emotions falter.

"Can’t we go back to being siblings like before?"

"P’Saem already has P’Pheem’s heart. Leaving him now won’t change anything. He doesn’t love me anymore."

"I don’t care about him. I just want my little sister back... I miss you,

Khwan."

*You miss me? You say I never truly loved anyone?*

I turned away, staring out the car window. Tears slowly filled my eyes and slid down my cheeks.

Prang reached out, wrapped her arm around my neck, and pulled me close again. My eyes, filled with fury, darted toward the camera still filming us. Then I snapped—broke away from her embrace…

***And slapped her!!!!!***

"Cutttt!" the director yelled sharply.

"Jay, why did you slap her? The script says to look past the camera and push her away gently—not slap!"

Prannapat glared at me furiously as I turned to the director and calmly said,

"Sorry, I didn’t sleep much. Thought I was supposed to slap her."

"Ugh! Take a break! Someone go check on the lead actress, make sure she’s okay."

*Sigh*… I barely even touched her. It was just a light slap—for the drama.

I opened the car door and walked out to the restroom. I was aiming for a quiet corner near the dressing rooms—but of course, I ran into someone who never fails to stir up my heart. "Jay," she raised an eyebrow,

"Are you going off script again?"

I looked right through her and walked past to a plush sofa, sinking into it. The air conditioner in the room was set to freezing.

"You know,"

She said as she sat down beside me, a dimple appearing on her cheek,

"I’ve always liked it when you act a little mean."

"Why are you telling me about P’Ploy?" I said coldly.

Ever since coming back from Japan, P’Ploy had turned into the aggressive one. She chased—I ran.

What happened that day drained me. I didn’t have the energy to play her games anymore.

"Why aren’t you sweet to me like you used to be?"

I turned to her, clearly annoyed.

"Can you move over a bit? You're too close—I can't breathe."

"Okay."

She backed off with that same stubborn smile, refusing to admit defeat. Then, without warning, she pulled her shirt over her head.

Her full, firm chest—something I used to sneak glances at—was now in full view.

She was beautiful. But I couldn’t lie to myself anymore. I didn’t love her.

"If you're just changing, hurry up and put your shirt back on. The crew might walk in and see everything."

Before P’Ploy could finish getting dressed, another woman suddenly burst through the door. Her eyes flicked toward Ploy with thinly veiled irritation.

“P’Ploy, I need to talk to Jay in private for a minute.”

“Well... isn’t it fun when all three of us are together?”

The gorgeous woman said sweetly, now fully dressed in her new costume.

“We should do dinner sometime.”

I shot her a sharp glare, clearly telling her to get out. But P’Ploy didn’t flinch. She smiled with that soft dimple, stepped over to me, and without warning—kissed me on the cheek.

“Don’t argue too loudly, okay? Or it’ll end up in the news,” She whispered into my ear before sauntering out of the room.

I almost swore in Spanish.

I used to think P’Ploy was sweet and seductive. I never realized she could be this aggravating.

“What the hell was that?!”

Prannapat’s threatening tone snapped me back to reality.

"So tell me—do you think that kiss on my cheek meant she wants you to leave her, or that she really likes me?"

"Cut it out, Jay! Enough!"

Prannapat snapped, her voice sharp with frustration.

"We’re working here. Can’t you leave all that old drama behind for now? Whatever you’re feeling, don’t let it mess with the job. If you pull another stunt like slapping me off-script—"

"You want to slap me back?"

I cut her off coldly before she could finish.

"Go ahead. Get even. Just like you did back then."

Prannapat was smaller than me—maybe ten centimeters shorter. But the way she stepped forward, the fire in her eyes… she moved like a predator, fast and precise, ready to rip me apart in an instant.

And maybe, because of my smart mouth just now, she decided I didn’t deserve the right to speak anymore.

***"Son… shin… neun… man… eun… son… garyeo…"***

The lyrics of that song I’d been listening to in the car the other day started playing in my head again.

***"Saesimhan sogae jense chyeona…"***

My nails dug into the couch cushion as the tension surged through me.

***"Kwee Cha Na"***

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When our soft skin rubbed against each other,

It didn’t really matter what the song’s lyrics meant. The point was, before I even realized it, my heart had jumped out of my chest, beating to *Jennie Blackpink’s* solo.

My shoulder was pressed hard against the sofa back, and one of the woman’s hands held my chin locked in place. She was leaning her weight on her knees — her knees trapped between my legs.

My lips were being threatened by hers, my tongue captured. She crushed my pride so painfully, but my heart was flipping and screaming...

***“Bitch, Jennie’s solo!”***

It wasn’t a loving kiss. It felt more like a harsh lesson with her lips. She punished me — fierce, violent, and sharp. But maybe I had a lot of gangster blood in me, because I actually enjoyed fighting with her this way.

I pushed her hard away.

“I’m not as good at acting as you,”

I said, then flipped over to straddle her body.

“You got a golden doll,”

She said through clenched teeth, digging her nails into my arm.

“I’m not good at acting in real life like you.”

She kissed me fiercely again — sucking, pulling, invading — before I bit back. She bit my lip hard, and it hurt so much I instinctively squeezed her shoulder.

If I tried to take control by pressing my whole body down on hers and pulled her head close to crush a kiss, her biting became too strong to bear.

“Please...stop...,”

I pulled away, surrendering the fight, and asked her to please stop chewing on my lower lip.

“Oh, A-Am, I’m in pain,”

I said, my mouth tinged with the metallic taste of pain and blood.

Finally, she let go. With my mouth free again, I regained the right to speak.

"......."

“You still love me, don’t you?”

I was an actress — I could read that look in her eyes. There was so much hesitation, so much emotion behind them.

“Oh sure, we’ve broken up, but your feelings… they haven’t ended, have they?”

Maybe it would’ve been exhausting to fight like this with someone else. But not with her.

Deep down, maybe I wanted this — any kind of reaction, anything but the cold indifference she showed.

Just don’t act like I don’t exist. That hurts too much.

“If you don’t get off me, I’ll slap you.”

*“Hachoo!”*

The new perfume she was wearing today wasn’t good for my breathing. It was strong and irritating — it made my nose burn.

“I don’t like this scent.”

“That’s your problem.”

“But you made me sneeze, so now it’s your problem too.”

I slowly leaned my face in, inch by inch, until the tip of my nose rested gently beside her cheek.

Prannapat seemed unsure of what to do — awkward and hesitant. She didn’t move away, yet she didn’t quite resist either.

“Don’t, Jay…”

I smiled slightly at her words before planting a kiss on her smooth, pale neck.

She instantly pushed me away. Her hand came up to strike me, but I grabbed her wrist just in time.

“I told you — don’t hit my face. This is my moneymaker!”

She froze.

“Then…”

Her lips curled into a mocking smile,

“don’t wear crop tops that show your belly.”

“Ouchhh!!”

She twisted the skin at my waist so hard I had to jerk my body away.

“Listen, I don’t want to keep working with someone like you — a flirty drunk always pushing boundaries. So please, act like an adult. I just want this drama to end already.”

*That hurt.*

She drove a sword straight into my chest — then walked out of the room like a winner, leaving me behind in a daze of loneliness and emptiness.

And then it came again — that tightness gathering in my chest.

Breathing was getting harder.

I clutched my chest and slowly collapsed to the floor, trying to breathe in and out deeply.

A wheezing sound escaped my throat, strained and shallow — as if the air couldn’t reach my lungs at all.

The medicine was in my bag, which I had left outside.

I didn’t want to face Prannapat right now. But the longer I stayed here, the worse it got.

“P’Jay?”

Someone opened the door.

It was Kade. The usual playful smile she always had for me was gone, replaced by a stunned, rigid expression.

Her eyes widened in shock when she saw me half-sitting, half-laying on the couch, gasping for air.

Before I could close the door, Kade had already ran away.

And the one who came rushing back —was Prannapat.

She had the emergency asthma inhaler in her hand.

Without a word, she administered the medicine, pressing it into my mouth. Gradually, the tightness in my chest began to loosen.

“Why did it happen again?”

She said, sitting down on the couch beside me.

“I told you not to overwork yourself until your body breaks down like this.”

“Where did you get that? That’s not mine.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

I leaned my head on her shoulder.

“Why did you help me? You hate me.”

For a brief moment, I could almost feel that old familiarity — as she gently rested her temple on my hair.

“Yeah, I hate you,” she said quietly.

“But my conscience won’t let me just stand by and watch you die.”

“I know,” I whispered, eyes slowly closing.

“I know.”

“Jay!!!”

The Japanese soldier’s wife came rushing in, holding my inhaler, with little Kate right beside her.

“Um… I ran to tell her you were having an attack,”

Kate said quickly,

“so she came right away. We didn’t think—”

Prannapat stood up so fast I almost fell backward.

“Well, it’s good you came. I’ll excuse myself now.”

With that, she turned and walked out, disappearing behind the door.

She was gone.

And then a stupid thought crept into my mind —

Maybe… if these asthma attacks could bring out even a little tenderness from Prannapat, maybe I wouldn’t mind having them more often.

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# Chapitre 07: The Smell of Chlorine

"Do you like it?"

The question came with a smile from a tall, dark-skinned man—he’s the producer of the drama I’m currently acting in.

"It's beautiful," I replied.

I looked around the luxurious condo suite. The floor-to-ceiling glass walls revealed a stunning view of the river outside, letting in plenty of light and giving the space an airy feel. On the other side, you could see the city.

Everything—the interior design, the materials, and the layout—was just perfect. I really liked it.

“I’m totally rooting for this one, Jay. Beautiful view, beautiful room, it’s at the corner, and there are only eight units on this whole floor. Very private— just like you wanted.”

I kept a neutral expression.

“I’ll have to think about it a bit more, Khun Phong. I’ll let Je-Ang handle the rest later.”

Je-Ang wasn’t just my personal manager anymore—she had become everything to me. It wasn’t always like this, but after I broke up with Prannapat, I gradually changed.

I guess I must have been in such bad shape that Angsumalin started taking care of me like I was a princess.

“That’s fine. Or you can go through Mr. O if that’s easier. Honestly, if he hadn’t asked, I wouldn’t be selling this place to anyone.”

This new condo—I had asked Je-Ang to help find it. The owner turned out to be a friend of P’O. I didn’t know how Je-Ang went about it or how she talked to P’O, but here we were, able to view the room—even though the owner had made it clear they’d only sell if P’O was involved. “Thank you so much, Khun Phong, for letting me see the unit today.”

“Come on, Jay. I really think this place is beautiful,” Je Ang insisted.

I reached over and pinched her to make her stop talking.

“It is beautiful, but give me a bit more time to decide. I’ll let you know soon.”

“No rush, Jay. Just tell me when you’re ready. I’ll handle everything. I won’t let anyone else buy it before you.”

“Thank you, P’O.”

“Let’s grab something to eat before we head back. I know a really good restaurant. Want to come along, Khun Phong?” Khun Phong shook his head.

“No, thanks. I have other business to take care of.”

So it ended up being just P’O, me, and Je Ang at the restaurant. P’O recommended the dishes and took really good care of us. He was attentive, thoughtful, and charming.

He noticed the little things—what we liked, what we needed—and spoke sweetly and politely, just like people said about him. P’O really lived up to his reputation as a true ladies’ man.

Our time at the table passed smoothly. The three of us chatted and laughed comfortably, like people who had known each other a long time.

Eventually, it was time to go our separate ways.

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Once it was just me and Je Ang in the car, she immediately asked,

“So what do you think about the condo?”

“Are you getting commission from it or something? Why are you pushing it so hard?”

“It’s a great room, Jay. The project is solid, and the location’s super convenient. I just don’t see any reason you wouldn’t like it.”

“I do like it. Everything’s great... but it’s expensive. Way above the market price.”

“If you really like something, nothing’s too expensive.”

I really started to wonder if Je Ang was getting a commission.

“If it’s priced way above market, and I ever get tired of it and want to sell, it’ll be hard. Even renting it out would take a long time to make the money back. Plus, the building will just keep getting older, while new ones are popping up everywhere.”

“You’re already thinking about selling it?”

“I’m just keeping my options open. Nothing in life is guaranteed.”

“So, do you actually like the place or not?”

“I love it a lot. But I think you should try to negotiate the price a bit first,” I said, raising an eyebrow playfully.

“I knew it! You were sitting there quietly just to try and knock the price down!”

“I’m not lowballing. It’s just overpriced.”

“Alright, I’ll talk to them and try negotiating. If they agree, then you’re taking this place, okay?” “Deal. You’re the best, Je Ang.”

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And that was that. Less than two weeks later, I moved into the new place. Bigger, fancier, and more to my taste than the old one. I was happy—and Je Ang was even happier.

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***"Chinese fans flood to welcome Jay Jeerapat."***

I scrolled through social media aimlessly.

***"Famous actress Jay Jeerapat turns down wealthy admirer."***

Well, I did turn him down—but yeah, the rich guy really did try to court me.

***"Flawless beauty! Jay Jeerapat stuns in a shoot wearing ZA brand."***

That one’s actually true. I looked really good—super cute, very kirei.

***"Jay Jeerapat updates Instagram for the first time in weeks."***

It was just a photo. Does that really need to be headline news?

***"Producer wins over top actress — secretly views luxury condo worth tens of millions."***

Now that news is completely false. I practically blew a fuse when I clicked to read more.

***"Actress 'J' Becomes Producer’s Favorite — Can’t Do a Show Without Her!"***

*The gossip pages say that every drama this dark-skinned producer works on must star this one actress.*

*The latest rumor? The two were seen secretly checking out a luxury condo worth eight figures. Some are even whispering, “Did the producer ask his wife for money yet?”*

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That condo? Every single baht of it came from my hard-earned money. I’m going to sue! Sue all of them! I’ll shut their site down—where do they get off writing garbage like this?

“Jay, calm down. I know you’re angry,” Je Ang said.

“I am going to sue! This page has done it so many times—spreading false news that damages my name!”

“Okay, let’s just breathe and stay calm first. I’ll look into the legal side for you.”

“Good. They need to be taught a lesson. They can’t just throw mud at me and make money off fake gossip.”

I paced angrily around the drama set.

Today, the place was full of all my favorite snacks, but I was too frustrated and furious to enjoy any of food had lost its flavor—thanks to the fake news and those sweet photos of P’Ploy with Prannapat.

P’Ploy’s behavior remained a mystery to me. That older woman was dangerous—she flirted with me, yet also seemed to be chasing after Prannapat at the same time.

As for Prannapat, she looked tired of it all. She knew P’Ploy was always looking for chances to get close, yet still let her flirt and touch her in small, subtle ways.

“How many scenes do you have left to shoot, Jay?”

“Two more, P’O.”

“Want to grab dinner after we wrap? I’ll invite Je Ang too.”

When he saw the surprise on my face, he added,

“My friend just opened a restaurant. They’re looking for people to try it out and give honest feedback.”

“And what about P’Pin?”

I asked. Why invite me and not your wife? “P’Pin already went—she gave her full critique,”

He said with a friendly smile.

“She’s not free today either. She went out with Sek this morning.” *His wife went out with her personal assistant?*

“If you’re not free, I can always ask Prang and Ploy to come instead.”

Prannapat and Ploy. He dropped their names casually—how could I say no after that?

“I can go. But I won’t be back late. I’ve got work tomorrow.”

“No problem. Quick dinner, then I’ll get you back.”

After he firmly agreed, he really did as he said. We went to a friend of P’O’s restaurant, tasted the food, chatted, and he took good care of me. Time passed smoothly, and when it was time to leave, we did. Everything felt easy and friendly.

The roads in the city center were quite jammed that evening, but having someone drive me meant I didn’t feel stressed at all.

Back at the condo — a new place, a new atmosphere — and the funny events of the day made me want to go out and enjoy the night air more than stay cooped up inside.

The sky pool, which offers a panoramic view of the western side of this 50story condo, became my escape.

I claimed a quiet corner on an outdoor sofa. The soft orange lights created a warm, dim glow around the area. Only a few health-conscious people were gathered around the pool.

The sky was pitch black, and the city lights were too bright to see any stars. But the glittering lights on the ground had their own beauty. Boats sailing along the river carried their lights along, creating a moving display.

I stared out, letting my eyes wander — until I noticed two glowing, petite women at one corner of the pool. One was circling the other, half-walking, half-swimming. They teased and played with each other, smiling and clearly happy.

*Why were Prannapat and P’Ploy here?*

I remembered the time I video-called P’Ploy to ask her for makeup tips.

*Damn it!*

The background in her room during that video — the decorations and layout — looked just like the condo I’d just moved into.

Don’t tell me we’re living in the same building. And what about Prang? Are they living together? Just the thought made my chest ache.

I couldn’t watch them any longer. I quietly packed up and went back to my room.

I used to think that seeing them again wouldn't be too hard. After all, it’s been three years since we broke up.

Three years of attending events where Prannapat would be, raising *little Liew* all on my own... My feelings should have ended three years ago — not come back to hurt like this.

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***Rrrrrrrr!***

[Hi..]

"Hey, Phi Jin?"

[I saw the news. What's this about a new condo?]

"Just another fake story, as usual. No one bought it for me. That’s my own money. I get mad just thinking about it."

[Where did you buy this time?]

He asked in a calm voice.

"Well—oh! I’ve got another call coming in. Talk later, okay? Might be work."

I was about to hang up when his voice came through clearly again:

[You're pretty good at making money, huh? Where did you get the money to buy a condo and run away from me?]

"What are you saying, Phi? I didn’t do that at all!"

[No need to run anymore. I won’t bother you unless it’s necessary. Just...

save your money.]

Now I felt guilty.

"Phi Jin, I didn’t buy it to run from you. I just bought it as an investment."

Then a teasing voice came through — Phi Jin’s voice:

[Sure, sure, 'investment', huh?]

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If you ask me where all of this began — it probably started with this man, six years ago.

"Jay, if I wanted to flirt with an actress, what should I do?"

"Which actress?"

He just gave a faint smile instead of answering.

It all began with a question like that. Then time passed, and no one ever brought it up again — until the day Phi Jin called me. He said he would come pick me up the next day.

"Why are you picking me up, Phi Jin? I have a magazine cover shoot."

"Where’s the shoot? I’ll drive you there."

"Someone’s already taking me."

"Cancel them. I’ll take you myself."

At first, I was surprised. Phi Jin never got involved in my work, so why was he suddenly offering to take me? But when we arrived at the shoot location, everything became clear.

"That’s her."

The woman with naturally dark brown hair — she was the one Phi Jin once said he liked. She had a sweet, pointed chin and stubborn, distinctive eyes.

"I’ll wait here to take you home later. In the meantime, introduce me to her."

"Are you serious, Phi Jin? That’s Prang Prannapat. She’s a top-tier actress!"

"And I’m the brother of a top-tier actress."

"But I don’t know her personally."

"Now you do."

Because of my brother’s determined smile and hopeful eyes, I decided to help introduce Prannapat and Phi Jin to each other.

But like I’ve said before, I’ve always had a weakness for beautiful women. So when the photographer had Prannapat wear a short outfit and sit on top of me on a big motorcycle, it really shook me up.

Her soft, fair skin and petite frame wrapped around my neck, her nose almost touching my cheek—so close I could feel her breath against my skin. Our eyes met, full of emotion.

I told myself it was just a normal reaction to being close to a beautiful woman, and I tried to stay focused on work and not let it get to me.

But the photographer wasn’t very kind to someone as emotionally sensitive as me. He told Prannapat and me to pose even closer together in a pool, with nothing but a thin piece of fabric between our bodies.

The water, the contact, and the way her bikini barely covered her—it was overwhelming. Just playing in the pool shouldn't have felt this intense, but my heart was racing.

Before I knew it, I was in the bathroom, kissing the woman I had meant to match with my brother.

It was hot, thrilling, and left me full of guilt... because since that day, I’ve been in love with the smell of chlorine.

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“Phi Jin, would you be upset if I told you that you’re not really Prang’s type?”

“Did she said that? Or… does she already have a boyfriend?”

“You should flirt with someone else. Prang already has a boyfriend.”

Phi Jin can seemed a bit down when he heard that. But he bounced back and kept trying to win Prannapat himself.

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“If Prang makes your brother sad, would you be mad at her?”

“I should be mad at myself for betraying Phi Jin—helping to play matchmaker, only to fall for the one he asked me to help with.”

“So would it be better if I dated Jin instead?”

“That wouldn’t be good either. Neither option is. If you dated Phi Jin, I’d be devastated. But if you’re with me, I feel guilty toward him.”

She cupped my face with both hands.

“Stop feeling guilty. You didn’t steal anyone. Prang made her own choice. She just... doesn’t like men.”

I didn’t know what to say. I just...

I sighed and pouted.

“Can I touch your boobs?”

She rolled her eyes—maybe annoyed. Yeah, that smile said she was. But there was a mischievous sparkle dancing in her eyes.

“Wait till we’re back home.”

That night was one of pure happiness—a shining moment, filled with secret love and the thrill of career success.

At the time, I’d occasionally stay over at Prannapat’s place. But since her younger sister lived there too, it wasn’t ideal for me to move in completely.

Prannapat’s sister, Puin, was still a freshman in university—and a true party girl. She loved dim lights and bass-heavy music that shook the walls. She often came back to the apartment in the middle of the night, a group of noisy friends in tow, banging on the door.

Then by morning, she’d rush off to class with booze still lingering on her breath, playing the part of the drunken but carefree young girl.

After Je-Ang and I started dating, my career really took off. I went international—photoshoots, film projects, constant travel abroad.

Headlines, media coverage, fans, fame, and money. It was, without a doubt, my diamond-studded golden era.

But I started getting whiny with Je-Ang. I was exhausted, and my time with Prannapat kept shrinking. Sometimes I skipped work or canceled gigs just to be with her, especially when we hadn’t seen each other for weeks. Eventually, Je got fed up and gave me the cold shoulder.

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*"Jay, this isn’t cute at all. Skipping work like this only leads to loss— nothing but loss."*

*"You have to be more responsible. If you make a commitment, you need to follow through."*

*"Success, growth, your dreams—they’re all right in front of you. Why are you being so careless?"*

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I often got scolded with words like these.

"You really don’t understand, do you? Everything we’ve worked so hard to build—it could all fall apart because of your recklessness."

"I’m sorry, Je."

"Sorry isn’t enough."

"Then can I take on fewer jobs? I haven’t seen Prang in over a month. I just want some time with my girlfriend."

"Your girlfriend’s at home. She’s not going anywhere. But opportunities? They come and go. You decide. This is the only time we can truly seize them."

I wanted to say I’d choose Prannapat. But I didn’t. I was afraid she’d lecture me into enlightenment.

"Don’t skip work again, Jae. Please I beg you."

"Yes."

Yes, I promised her that day. But I still did it. I called in sick once in a while when I just couldn't bear it. Because love isn’t an object that stays where you leave it, like Je made it sound. Prannapat has a heart. She feels, just like I do. And every heart needs care.

"Jae, seriously, what’s up with you?"

My girlfriend held up a small note in front of me on a groggy morning. I had only slept for four hours.

I squinted and said, “Can I sleep a bit more first?”

“Jay, thank you for the gift from Korea,”

She read out loud from the note before crumpling it up and throwing it at me.

“Come again next time,”

Was written on another one.

“0968470469 — see you again when your girlfriend’s not looking.”

And another.

“What?” I lifted my head.

“Want to explain this, Jay? Or do you just want to walk out and not come back in again?”

She was angry and trying to intimidate me.

“I meet a lot of people. It’s not like I gave them my number, Prang,” I said, pretending to be half-asleep.

“And what about this one, written in Korean? What does it say?”

“Probably a Korean fan. I can’t read it.”

“Do you want to know what it says? Because I just asked Google Translate!”

I walked up to her and hugged her, resting my face in the curve of her neck.

“Don’t do this, Jay.”

“Please don’t be mad.”

“Don’t let me see these again. I don’t want to see anything like this again.” That day ended with me staying calm while she was furious. All the notes were torn up and thrown away, and they never came back into the room. But I know that I am not a good girlfriend. I have an affair—that is the truth.

“Jay, tell me—who is this woman?”

A photo of a woman close to me, which I had deleted from my phone, was opened again on a smartphone. The person holding it had eyes burning with anger. It felt like dark energy was surrounding them.

Damn! I deleted it, but it wasn’t completely gone from the trash!

I had no choice but to admit the truth because I didn’t have time to come up with a lie.

My clothes were thrown out of my lover’s room right away. I had to wait outside and knock on her door for almost half an hour before she finally opened it and showed her angry face again.

But I used the same old trick — I ran in and hugged her tightly, pushing her back inside the room. The door closed behind us, and I acted like a kitten begging for forgiveness.

“Give me a good reason why we should still be together.”

I sat there, worried and serious. I admitted everything about those women. I confessed that I never had a serious relationship with that woman —I was just messing around.

She didn’t really believe me and slapped my face.

“Don’t mess with my face. This is how I make a living. If you mess up my looks, how will I make money to build a family with you?”

I was sly and admitted it on purpose, but I was honest.

Prannapat softened and dreamed about a future with me. We made up soon after.

“If I secretly talk to other people like you do, what would you say?”

That question made me realize my mistakes, and I tried to be better. I still flirted a little with beautiful girls, but I loved Prang. I’d be heartbroken if she was with someone else, just like she was hurt when I cheated so many times.

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We had probably been together for about three days when this happened— on the night before I had to fly to London for work.

I said, “Tonight, I’ll just sleep at home. That way, I don’t have to drive back to get my stuff. My flight is early tomorrow.”

“Nooo, Jay! You have to sleep in my room!”

I was very drunk because my friend, Kara, made me play games and drink at a friend’s birthday party.

I heard Je still talking to Prannapat on the phone before I was laid down on the bed. Everything was blurry. Maybe I got up once to vomit before I completely passed out. But I faintly felt someone doing something to my body.

I was tired and fell asleep. I stood there feeling confused, dreaming of many chaotic things. I didn’t know how long it all lasted, but I was sure it happened before I felt a cold splash hit my face.

I heard faint sounds.

I seemed to wake up with a start but wasn’t fully awake yet. There was shouting I recognized, and then cold water was splashed on my face again —my “tools of the trade.”

“Jay,” came Je’s voice,

“Enough, Prang.”

“Get out of my room right now!”

Her face was angry, disappointed, furious, and sad.

It stabbed my heart. The feelings in her eyes were more than I’d ever seen before in Prannapat.

Had I done something wrong?

Even though I was still dazed, my drunkenness vanished instantly when someone yanked my arm, pulling me up. My eyes started scanning the room.

Prannapat was furious. She was holding a small pink plastic basin. Je was next to her, still holding my arm. I was lying on our bed—naked—next to another woman.

It was Puin, Prang’s younger sister.

"You’re disgusting! Pathetic! Don’t ever show your face to me again, Jay! Don’t call. Don’t text. Don’t ever come near me again!"

I didn’t know what happened. I couldn’t remember what I had done. The whole thing was so awful that I kept asking myself over and over—Did this really happen? Did it actually happen?

My mind was still numb when Je-Ang dragged my lifeless body into the car that morning, then onto a plane to the other side of the world.

I cried from the moment I left Prang’s room until I arrived in the UK. I cried until I passed out from exhaustion, had nightmares, and woke up crying again. The cycle repeated for hours.

Je-Ang tried to comfort me and help me pull myself together so I could do my job. I managed to work—but it was awful. It felt unbearable.

I wanted to quit my job and go talk things through with Prannapat, but I knew it was my fault. I didn’t know how I could even face her. The guilt and self-disgust were eating away at me. I didn’t deserve her. I couldn’t even bring myself to call her—let alone look her in the eyes.

“Wait until Prang calms down, then talk to her,”

Je always stayed by my side during the hardest times.

When it was time to return to Thailand, my heart raced. The first place I wanted to go was Prannapat’s condo. But I had to go home first—and that’s where I saw her. At my house. She looked tired, but she was with Phi Jin… as his girlfriend.

“Prang agreed to be with me”

Phi Jin was told me.

“…Really?”

I walked out of the house before I broke down.

That night, and every night after, my tears soaked Je’s shirt. But after that day, I got better at acting. I became better at hiding my emotions. My career kept rising, but my heart kept breaking.

If I said it was the worst kind of pain, I wouldn’t be exaggerating. Someone I used to be so close to—body and soul—had become a stranger I could never touch again.

I moved out into a condo and avoided going home unless absolutely necessary. It was my way of running from the pain. And I never went back to Prannapat’s condo—not even to collect my things. I just… left.

The image of us together has faded so much, I can hardly see any way to love each other again.

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🍁🍁🍁🍁🍁 ***sunyan***

**Note:**

**Updates will be slower... I'm currently on an extended trip, so I can only work on translations during my spare time...**

# Chapitre 08: Line Fucks Me Every Day

*"The more I hate you, the more I find love."*

Oh, what I really meant was:

*"You often get what you hate most."*

That’s an old Thai saying I’ve heard since I was young — and now, I finally understand it.

The more I try to avoid you, the more I end up running into you. Even when I don’t want to see you, you always manage to show up... right in front of me.

She teases another woman.

"Should we invite Jay to join us?"

She asks, smiling slyly like someone who's always a step ahead. Her sweet eyes sparkle with amusement as she raises an eyebrow.

"What are you trying to do, P’Ploy?"

"I just like it when the three of us are together,"

She says casually, tying her long, wavy hair into a bun on top of her head, leaving some strands loose that cling softly to her neck.

“There’s just something about the chemistry between us — it’s...

enjoyable.”

She leans in and whispers into the other girl’s ear, standing close together in the pool. I can’t hear what she says next.

I’m lying on a poolside lounge chair, pretending to read a novel but actually using it to spy on them. Steam practically pours out of my ears like a boiling kettle — that’s how furious I am at P’Ploy’s flirting with Prang.

But when Prang pushes her away with a clearly annoyed face, I feel satisfied.

“That’ll never happen,” I tell myself.

P’Ploy giggles mischievously and touches Prang’s bare shoulder. Prang slaps her hand away and glances in my direction, almost as if she knows I’m watching. I quickly hide my face behind the book. Then Prang swims away to the other side of the pool, away from P’Ploy.

She knows I’m staying here.

Once they swim to another corner, I get up, tighten my robe, and walk quickly back to my room. I still try my best to avoid the both of them.

This condo was bought for a high price, and all I wanted was peace and quiet while staying here. But it feels like the gods must hate me — because they keep sending heartache to torment me again and again.

. .

A word on an unseasonal rainy day—I drove into the condo’s parking lot and headed straight to the elevator. The door closed behind me, the keycard was scanned, and I pressed the button for the 48th floor. But before the elevator could move, the door opened again — someone from outside had forced it open.

She froze for a second when she saw me. Then, her face immediately turned cold and emotionless as she stepped in. Her eyes flicked to the panel of floor buttons, and her red lips pressed tightly together.

“You live here?” she asked, curtly.

– – Just that one question. No reply followed.

Never in my life had I felt an elevator in Thailand move so slowly between floors.

The awkwardness, the tension — part of me wanted to see her, part of me wanted to escape. I felt happy and miserable at the same time. All those emotions clashed, stirring me up so much that I unconsciously held my stomach. Prang noticed right away.

She gave me a steady look, as if trying to figure out whether I was sick or just nervous. I hated that she knew me too well.

So, I put on my acting mask. I dropped my hand to my side and forced my expression into calmness. My heart may have been trembling, but I wouldn’t let my face or eyes show a hint of it.

When the elevator doors finally opened, I could finally breathe — it felt like I could fill my lungs again. But that relief didn’t last long, because I had just realized — we were getting off on the same floor.

She lives here too? Or is she just visiting P’Ploy?

*The gods must truly hate me!*

I let Prang walk ahead because I wanted to see which room she was going to. But she didn’t seem to trust me much, glancing back suspiciously when she saw I was still walking behind her.

"Why are you following me?"

She asked, clearly on edge and surprised.

As usual, I gave no answer. We may have been apart for a long time, but my feelings were still very much alive. That’s why I didn’t want to speak to her. I was angry — angry that I kept seeing her getting close to P’Ploy, both on set and now here, at the condo.

I kept walking past her, pretending not to care, but when I stopped at my door and pulled out my keycard, she followed and saw it in my hand.

“Please tell me... you don’t actually live here.”

Still, I didn’t answer. I placed my hand on the door handle to unlock it — but she grabbed my wrist.

“Trying to relive our memories in my room, is that it?”

She teased, sarcastic and challenging. I meant for her to feel every bit of it — teasing, provoking, baiting — all aimed at the one who always questions everything. And today, she looked so beautiful I almost wanted to hug her, even though I was still angry.

“The guy who owned this place — I know him,” she said.

“He sold it to me,” I replied calmly.

Her face froze with disbelief.

“No way. You're not just messing with me again, are you?” “Don’t flatter yourself. I wouldn’t go that far just to annoy you.”

*Am I a good actor or what?*

Her fingers slowly let go of my wrist. She turned and walked away, then opened the door to her room and slammed it shut with a loud bang.

The gods must really hate me. The room that Prang just moved into is right next to mine.

So in the end, are P'Ploy and Prang staying in the same room, or just in the same condo?

My phone call with my manager had already started when I walked into my room.

“Je, are you there?”

[Yes, sweetieee.]

She said in an overly dramatic way.

[I was just about to call you. You’re in your room now, right? I’m coming over to talk about a new presenter job and also to give you some scripts.

There are several offers. Read them and pick the one you want.]

“I have something to talk to you about too. When will you get here?” [I’m just around the corner from your condo, but the taxi is stuck in traffic.] She said with frustration in her girly voice.

[The taxi just stopped in the middle of the road to pick someone up. That’s why traffic in Thailand is so bad—motorbikes, buses, no one follows the rules, no kindness. People just want to cut in, park wherever, drive however they want. Ughhhh!]

Angsumalin kept ranting non-stop, so I put the phone down without hanging up and went to take a shower while waiting for the fancy lady to arrive.

After a while, my glamorous manager arrived, carrying lots of stuff from work and some snacks she bought for me.

“I bought this for you, but don’t eat it tonight,”

She quickly slapped my hand when I started to open the snack.

“Save it for tomorrow.”

“Just one bite,”

I said with a pout, pretending to be annoyed.

"No."

I looked over at the TV screen behind the big gay guy. “Is that model Taylor Swift’s new boyfriend? He’s cute.”

Je Ang quickly turned around.

“Where? I don’t see any model.”

She falls for anything if it’s about men.

While she was distracted by the TV—which was actually showing cute animal news, not a model, just a chimpanzee—I quickly grabbed a snack from in front of her.

“Jayyy!!! Why are you tricking me again like this?”

I laughed and stuffed the snack into my mouth quickly, afraid she’d take it back. She waved her arms around angrily, gathered all the snacks and things on the table, and took them to the kitchen. Then she came back to talk business.

“I’ll take the presenter job with Khun Yo. But no acting, okay?”

“The script is really good. You should at least read it,”

She said, handing me a stack of papers.

“There are so many offers. There’s even a movie from GDS. That one’s gonna be big—even in Laos. Trust me, I’ve studied this stuff.”

“That’s what I wanted to talk to you about,” I said seriously.

“After *'Lae Rai*', I’ll just finish the stuff I already agreed to. No more new jobs. I need a break.”

“But I already arranged a one-month break for you.”

“I want a break with no set time to come back.”

“What do you mean no set time? Jay, you need to stay in the spotlight. If you disappear too long, people will forget you. When you come back, you might not be as popular.”

I leaned back in my chair.

“I’m tired.”

“You’re just tired and upset, that’s why you’re saying this,” she replied.

“How about this—take a month off, fully recharge. After that, I bet you’ll change your mind and want to come back to work.”

“I don’t know. I just... feel like going far away. I don’t want to be here anymore.”

“It’s not just physical tiredness, is it?”

I nodded. Then Je Ang stood up and walked into the kitchen. She came back with the snack bag from earlier. “You can have three pieces tonight.” I smiled as she sat down beside me.

“What’s going on? Tell me everything.”

“I want to sell the condo.”

“What?!” she jumped in shock.

“I don’t want to live here anymore.”

“What are you saying, Jay? You’ve only been here for less than a month. How can you sell it already?”

“Thanks, Je, for finding this place for me.”

“I want a reason.”

She looked more upset than I did about moving out.

“Prang,” I said shortly.

“So what? She has her room, and you have yours.”

“Je, did you know that Prang lives here too?”

She hesitated for a moment before saying,

“Jay…”

“Then why did you still let me buy this place!? Same floor! Next to her room!?”

I turned to Je, eyes wide with disbelief. I couldn’t believe what she had just said.

“Jay, you told me yourself, remember? You said you were over Prang. So what if she lives here?”

“I lied!” I shouted, full of anger.

“I never forgot her, Je! Never!”

Tears started welling up in my eyes.

“And now I can’t face her. I can’t. It hurts too much.”

“If you still love Prang, then why don’t you try to get back together with her?”

“You know what happened three years ago.”

Je stayed quiet. Her face showed how serious and troubled she felt.

“If what happened three years ago didn’t exist, would you still want to be with Prang?”

I didn’t answer. Only tears slowly fell from my eyes, streaming down my face.

"Jay."

She gently held my shoulders and turned me to face her. Her eyes were serious. She looked like she had made up her mind. Then, in a soft but firm voice, she said:

“Listen carefully. I have something to tell you. The truth.”

She began to speak. One sentence after another, she brought up the past— things I’d never known before. Her tears came too, as she told me everything. A truth I had never seen, from a side I didn’t know. All from the person I trusted most.

I started shaking all over. My face burned with anger, heartbreak, disappointment, and betrayal. I felt like I was going to explode. My tears flowed freely with all those mixed-up feelings. I felt lost, empty, like the ground had disappeared under me.

And that’s when I realized… I never really knew Je Ang at all.

I didn’t know who he was. But he wasn’t the person I had loved and trusted all this time.

“Don’t ever come near me again!!” I yelled.

"Jay..."

“Get out! Don’t come back here ever again! Get out!”

I screamed and ran toward Je Ang, hitting him when he didn’t move. He raised his arms to shield himself as he sat there crying hard, begging for forgiveness.

“Jay… I’m sorry! I know I was wrong! Please don’t hate me, Jay. Please don’t do this to me… *sob.*”

He hugged me tightly, trying to stop me from hitting him, but I struggled and pulled away.

“Don’t let me see your face again!!”

“No, Jay, please!”

The big man sobbed uncontrollably, his whole body shaking.

“Don’t do this. I’ve felt guilty all this time. I haven’t loved anyone. I haven’t been happy at all.”

“Do you even realize what you’ve done?”

I shouted and pushed him away, slapping his hands off me. I stepped back like I couldn’t stand being near him.

“Jay…”

He clutched his chest, his voice trembling with pain.

“I tried to fix everything. I tried to bring you closer to Prang—with the drama, the condo, and everything else. I made it all happen… *sob*. Do you know the condo owner didn’t even give you a discount? I paid the difference myself… just so you could be near the person you love. I wanted to help you get back together.” “What the hell were you thinking?!”

I screamed on his face.

“You hurt me! What’s the point of bringing us close again now? Do you have any idea how much damage you’ve done? Do you know how, for the past three years, I’ve carried guilt, felt worthless, like I didn’t deserve to be loved, disgusted with myself, and in so much pain? Phi Jin, Prang, and Nong Puin too… Do you even know what you’ve done?!”

“I'm sorry, Jay…”

He whispered weakly, collapsing to the floor.

“You’ve never been happy. I know you hate me now… but I just wanted to make things right.”

“I loved you like a sister, but you only saw me as something to sell!”

I raised my fist and hit him again.

“You destroyed me—just to make money from me. How could you do that? Get out! From now on, we’re nothing. Don’t talk to me, don’t come near me, don’t ever let me see you again. Leave this room before I call security!”

The person I once loved and trusted fell to the floor. As I walked toward the door to kick him out, he hugged me tightly.

“No, Jay, please don’t! Don’t push me away like this! Please… *sob..sob..sob*”

I shook my head, tears streaming down my face.

“Leave me, before I hate you even more.”

He sobbed out loud. He stood up, wiping his endless tears. His face was filled with pain—more than I had ever seen.

“Jay… Prang still loves you. Please believe me. Tell her the truth. She’ll come back.”

“Enough, Je!!” I cried into my hands.

“That time is over. She’s with someone else now—can’t you see? Prang has no love left for me. Just leave. Don’t ever get involved again. Leave!!”

His strong arms wrapped around me one last time, his face resting gently on my head.

“When I’m not around… take care of yourself, okay?”

I would’ve collapsed to the floor if he hadn’t been holding me. My hands clutched his shirt tightly as I cried into his chest.

“Leave…”

He hugged me a little tighter, then slowly let go. His deep, dark eyes looked at me with sadness before he finally turned, opened the door, and walked out.

Everything went quiet, except for my own sobbing. I walked to the corner of the room and sank down to the floor. My mind kept going in circles— replaying the words, the truth, everything that had just happened.

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*"You didn’t sleep with Puin."*

That night, Prang had work. She told me she would come back to the condo and that I could go wait in her room. When I got there, I saw Puin passed out drunk in front of the door.

*“You were doing so well, Jay. But then you became careless. You lost your sense of responsibility. And you were about to ruin everything—because of your girlfriend.”*

*“As someone older, watching from the outside, I thought it was just a phase —just young love. I admit, I didn’t want you to be with Prang. But I couldn’t stop you… until that night with Puin.”*

*“I thought, if you did something with your girlfriend’s younger sibling, it would leave a scar deep enough to make you two break up. I didn’t think much about what might happen after that. I just set things up to make it look like you and Puin had something more.”*

*“Then I went back down to wait in the car. I stayed there until morning, waiting for Prang to return. And when she did, I pretended like I came to pick you up.”*

*“My plan worked. No one found out.”*

*“But I was completely wrong. I didn’t think things would get so bad when Prang went on to date Jin. And your heart… I can see how much it hurt you. I’m so sorry. It wasn’t just a silly teenage love like I thought.”*

*“The longer you stayed alone, not dating anyone, the more it showed how much pain you were in. And the worse I felt.”*

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If only he had told me back then… maybe things would’ve turned out better. But telling me now?

It’s all ruined.

I cried hard, burying my face into my knees. The memories are still here, but the feelings have changed with time—there’s no getting them back.

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# Chapitre 09: The gods hate me

"Jay, you're so cute! Can I take a photo with you?"

"I love you, Jay. Your smile is so sweet!"

***Fame***

"Jay, your walk at the event last night was amazing, sweetheart! I was cheering with my light board. I’ll send you a new set of clothes to choose from soon. If you wear our brand at the next event, this collection is sure to be a hit!"

"Miss Jay, this makeup from YMCA was sent for you. They said you can pick out anything else you like at the store – everything's free."

***Gifts***

"Jay, three bouquets of flowers were delivered for you today. I wonder which one is from that rich guy."

***Love***

"Please touch up the actor’s face. If she doesn’t look good on camera, the movie won’t sell."

"Give Jay a towel too, or she might get sick and miss tomorrow's shoot."

***Care***

"So stunning! Everything about you is perfect. Jay Jeerapat, whatever you do, wherever you go – it always shines."

***Flattery***

"Jay is here! Over there, quick – can we get a short interview? Is the news that came out true?"

"Are you really dating the person in the rumor?"

"There she is! Jay Jeerapat – even more striking in person!"

***Attention***

Back when I was still famous, I was always surrounded by people and all these things.

But none of it ever came for free.

Behind every smile and act of kindness, there was always something they wanted in return.

It was never this lonely — not when I still had my manager by my side.

. .

“Jay, today at the set, they have sour curry with yellowtail fish — your favorite! I ordered it from a famous restaurant. Tomorrow, there will be bubble tea too. I read on Wikipedia that the lead actress likes to eat that.”

“You don’t have to go that far, P’O. I’ll eat anything,”

I said. Wikipedia seems to know me better than I know myself.

For the past 2-3 weeks, the food on set has been only the things I like. It might sound good, but actually, it makes me uncomfortable and less hungry.

That’s because P’O is spoiling me so much that people on set have started whispering behind my back. There are also mixed rumors and too much good news in the media.

“Why haven’t I seen Je-Ang around the set lately? Is he busy training new talent?”

“Probably busy.”

"Normally, I’ve never seen you this far away. So how did you get to the set? Isn’t your car at the service center?"

"Ken picked me up yesterday."

"Ken’s not coming today. How did you get here, Jay?"

"This is the capital city, P’O. Cars aren’t that hard to find, and I had a lot of friends."

"I forgot, everyone wanted to give '*Sup Ta'* a ride."

"Not everyone, though."

"So how will you get home tonight?"

"Haven’t thought about it yet."

"Then I’ll help plan it. After wrap, I’ll take you myself."

"I was about to refuse."

"Don’t hesitate like that. I’ll be passing by there anyway. ‘*Le Rai*’ is almost done filming. I have a new role for you. We can talk about the details on the way."

"I want to rest for a while and might not take any jobs right now."

"Don’t refuse yet. Take the script and read it first... okay?"

His kind eyes and simple smile made me feel at ease, so I gave a short answer,

"Okay."

Because of that short, thoughtless answer, the news that spread online the next day had the following headline said...

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*The entertainment industry is buzzing with rumors. A famous producer was spotted sneaking into the condo of his own lead actress.*

*It caused a big stir when someone with a sharp eye took a photo of a young woman who looks like a top actress, Jay Jeerapat, riding in a car with a man who resembles the producer of the show “Le Rai” late at night. They turned into a luxury condo they recently bought. The two were walking closely together, not caring about anyone watching—even though the man’s partner was waiting at home.*

*Before this, there were rumors that a certain producer secretly bought a condo for a famous female star. But the woman strongly denied it, saying she paid for the condo entirely with her own money.*

*It’s believable that she bought the condo herself, but what about going into the condo together? How would she explain that when the pictures clearly show it?*

*. .*

The news showed several photos of me opening the car door and getting out, and a few more of P’O carrying lots of stuff for me. To be honest, those were the times when P’O helped me carry all the gifts fans brought to the lobby.

That morning, I held my head in frustration. My phone rang all day and gave me a headache. I ignored most calls and only answered those that seemed work-related—calls from my mother, Phi Jin, and I wasn’t sure if I wanted to answer Je-Ang’s calls.

“Je-Ang?”

“Jay,” the voice was faint on the other end,

“I am worried.”

A tight pressure grew in my chest. Was he sincere or just caring because I’m a contracted star, and it’s about business?

“Don’t worry, Je. I won’t let anything affect the percentage you get from my income.”

"Jay, please don’t say that... I really care about you."

“Are you just calling to talk to me about something?”

“Don’t read the comments on social media. Tomorrow you have an event and the press will be there for sure. Just say I was with you at the condo. There was nothing going on in the room. P’O just dropped you off because you took the car for a service.” “Anything else you want to say?”

I replied with a tired tone.

“When will the car be ready? Why didn’t you tell Nong Jin to bring his car? You can just have he pick you up and drop you off like before.”

“No need. I don’t want to bother anyone.”

“Jay,” his voice cracked, shaking my heart,

“I miss you. You’ve lost 4 kilos. I’m worried you might be depressed.”

“It’s nothing to do with you,” I said.

“Can I say something as a friend?”

Her voice sounded like he was about to cry.

I swallowed hard, feeling a lump in my throat, tears welling up. His oncestrong voice was now soft and small.

“No.”

"...."

“I don’t know how to give you that kind of chance. I don’t even know if our friendship was ever real.”

“Please, Jay,” she begged,

“At least let me do my part. You don’t have to renew my contract or have any business with me. Just let me take care of you like a sister once did.”

“I don’t know how I can be near someone I don’t trust.”

“You don’t have to trust me. Just let me take care of you, as I should.”

Because of that, I felt like I had my armor back on again. It might not fit as well as the old one, but at least I wasn’t as lonely as when he was gone.

The day he came to pick me up at the condo, his face, which used to be bright and lively, looked tired and sad. The big man had lost weight, just like people said.

His eyes were watery as if holding back tears when he almost walked closer to me but then stopped and kept his distance. His broad shoulders slumped, and his shy, unsure behavior made me want to hug him. But how could I know if he was being genuine or just pretending?

I missed him. I missed our friendship, even though I wasn’t sure if I could trust him again.

That evening, reporters surrounded me, asking about the scandal. He stood by my side like a protective giant. He was still the same, standing with me, shielding me from everything around. He didn’t leave—but he was also the one who had hurt me before.

Prang. Je-Ang. The past that was just revealed. All of this made me feel exhausted by everything happening.

When the bad rumors and social media attacks came in that week, it made me even weaker.

“Is it true you’re a mistress?”

That’s what people were saying. Some were angry and disappointed, ignoring my work. Others said to wait for my interview. Some warned me to be careful about getting pregnant.

Some sold diet pills or body enhancement products using my name. Others cursed and insulted me. And many said they would judge me by my work from now on.

Sometimes, I don’t understand why someone would throw hateful and rude words at a person they don’t even know, who has never hurt or been involved with them. They judge me without knowing the truth or what I’ve been through.

I still choose to ignore all the drama and live my life, doing what I have to do. Even though I get hurt sometimes by the stones thrown at me, it’s like everything else—it will eventually pass.

. .

One evening, while I was taking the elevator up to my condo after finishing a recording, P’Ploy suddenly stepped in. The scent of her perfume filled the small space, mixing into the air. A sweet smile appeared on her face, along with a slightly surprised look.

“So you really live here. Why are we just running into each other now?”

"....."

She gave a teasing smile when she saw me standing still, silent, and clearly annoyed.

“I miss the old Jay who used to be so easygoing. But I actually like this feistier version of you more. You’re cute when you’re snappy.”

“Which floor are you going to, P’Ploy? Please press the button.”

“You’ve been mad at me for so long. These days, you won’t even look at me when we talk. You’re just like....”

She scrunched her nose with a mischievous smile.

“Or is it... Prang?”

Just as I was about to walk out of the elevator in frustration—it hadn’t even moved yet—another woman, my other rival, stepped in.

She tapped her keycard on the reader, pressed her floor number, and the elevator finally started to move upward. Then P’Ploy did the same—tapped her card and pressed her floor.

Oh, the gods must not hate me enough to put P’Ploy on the same floor as me... but they clearly hate me just enough to put me, P’Ploy, and Prang in the same tiny elevator, in the most awkward silence imaginable.

Prang, standing on the left, looked visibly irritated, while P’Ploy kept smiling cheerfully. As for me, I really wished I had a smelling salt.

The elevator crept slowly up to the 12th floor. If suffocating tension could destroy things, this narrow little metal box would’ve already exploded into pieces.

And if the elevator decided to get stuck right now—well, that would make one hell of a novel plot. I rolled my eyes at my own dark sense of humor.

*Ding... whirrrr... pffffft.*

The digital display flashed a glaring red number 13. Prang looked up at the ceiling just as the lights flickered, then came back on. P’Ploy kept smiling. I, on the other hand, burst out laughing—loudly enough for both of them to turn and look at me.

“God, do you two realize the spirits in this building hate me?” I threw my arms up dramatically, then let them drop with a sigh.

“Then go ahead and apologize to them,” Ploy replied cheerfully.

“Maybe we’ll finally get out of here.”

Prang crossed her arms and slowly shook her head, clearly over both my antics and Ploy’s misplaced sense of humor.

She pressed the emergency call button—because yes, this cursed elevator had decided to stall on the 13th floor, with me and the two people I least wanted to be trapped with.

I stepped back to lean against the wall while the other two remained standing in silence. About ten minutes passed before Ploy started softly humming what I assumed was a *Palmy* song—with *Bella* as the heroine in the MV.

“Did you bring any meds?”

"....."

“Jay,” Prang snapped, her tone sharp as she noticed me ignoring her.

“Do you realize that top you’re wearing—so low-cut in the back it wraps around to the front—looks really revealing?”

I looked Prang over from head to toe. The front was all modest and covered, while the back was completely bare down to her waist… People these days —you never really know someone until you’ve seen their *back*, huh?

“Answer the question like an adult, Jay,” she said sharply.

"....."

I reached into my bag, pulled out my asthma inhaler, held it up in the air, and looked at her with an expression that said, *“Satisfied now?”* Then I put it back into my bag.

Prang let out a short, tired sigh, and the other woman in the elevator chuckled softly, clearly amused.

“I just love it when we’re all together,”

She said with a sly smile and a cute dimple on her cheek.

“When the elevator opens, want to hang out in my room?”

Prang shot her a sharp look that clearly meant,

“Are you serious?” looking annoyed.

Seeing that, the woman with the wavy hair looked a bit embarrassed and quickly added,

“Or we could go to your room Prang and Jay. I don’t mind.”

I looked at the two of them, confused.

“What kind of relationship do you two have?”

P’Ploy seemed to always have a slight smile on her face, while Prang looked stiff and serious. But before anyone could answer, the elevator doors began to open.

We were rescued from the elevator, which had been stuck between floors, and we each headed to our respective floors.

P’Ploy got off on the 42nd floor. Prang and I didn’t say another word as we continued up to the 48th.

We walked in the same direction, but I let her go ahead. When we reached her room, she hesitated to go in. She looked at me like she wanted to say something. Even when I came to a stop at my door, she still hadn’t said a word.

I watched her and secretly hoped she’d speak. Her lips moved slightly—as if she was about to say something—but then she closed them again. She tapped her keycard on the reader, the door opened, and she disappeared inside.

I stood still for a moment, thinking, before my feet carried me to the room next door. I raised my hand and placed it gently on the doorknob.

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🍁🍁🍁🍁🍁 ***sunyan***

# Chapitre 10: Good girl. I just want to make you happy

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My finger hovered over the doorbell, frozen. Something inside held me back from pressing it. It’s not the act of confessing love that scared me—it was the answer I feared.

And in the end, fear won over courage. I lowered my hand to my side and walked back to my own room, without doing what my heart was begging me to do.

At that time, my reputation was taking a hit. You could say the “*tea*” about me was pretty bad.

New stories, old stories, true ones, fake ones—gossips twisted beyond recognition—were spreading like wildfire, as if they were airborne toxins. Even though I tried to keep my distance from P'O, it didn’t help much.

“Wanna grab something to eat? A new place just opened.”

“Sorry, P’O, I’m busy with work. Maybe next time.”

Over and over again.

“You didn’t drive today, right? Want me to drop you off? It’s on my way, and you won’t have to arrange a ride.”

“Thanks, P’O, but Je-Ang is already on the way.”

Again and again.

“Jay, can we talk for a bit?”

“Yes.”

“Why did you do that?”

“What did I do?”

“You know exactly what you did.”

“I really don’t.”

“You’ve been distant. What are you mad at me for?”

“I’m not mad at you at all, P’O.”

The seat next to him was empty, but I walked past it and sat at the far end of the table instead. Every time he invited me somewhere, I said I was busy. When he tried to talk, I kept my distance. He looked at me and asked,

“What game are you playing?”

“P’O… people are watching us. I don’t want to be the center of gossip.”

“Let them talk. They make up whatever they want anyway. We used to be close, didn’t we?”

“You have a family, P’O. We should keep things appropriate. I don’t want any problems.”

“And if I didn’t have a family—would that be okay with you?”

“…What are you saying, P’O?”

“You heard me.”

“I’ll excuse myself now.”

“Jay—wait, Jay…” I kept pulling away.

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Ken and I quietly faded out of the “*shipped couple*” spotlight.

Meanwhile, P’O’s background was being brought into public attention more than ever. As for his wife, P’Pin, she was interviewed about the rumors and calmly responded:

*“I haven’t had a chance to talk to my husband about it yet, but I don’t think it’s anything. He probably just gave her a ride. Her car was in the service centre at the time. And as for their closeness, it’s probably just because they’ve worked on several projects together.”*

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Despite the negative buzz, the drama didn’t affect my career much. I still had events, fans, and offers for films and dramas coming in as usual. Meanwhile, filming for “*Leh Rai*” was coming to an end—and with it, my last excuse to see Prang often.

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“Jay, have you lost more weight?”

“Maybe a little.”

“You know, I don’t think you have to come to the wrap party tonight. Everyone knows you’re working in Chiang Mai.”

“It’s just a one-hour flight. I can go, no problem.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to just rest? You look thinner—maybe eat something and get some sleep.”

“I want to go,” I answered plainly.

“Jay…”

Je-Ang's voice trailed off with a soft whine, as he leaned slightly toward me, as if to hug me—but hesitated, unsure.

“If you’re going to hug me, just do it.”

And just like that, the muscular giant wrapped me in a hug. My body swayed as we shifted left and right—almost like he was excited I finally let him touch me again, after all the tension since our fight.

“If you want to see her, just go to her room. It’s right next door.”

“And what excuse am I supposed to use?”

I lifted my chin to rest it on the shoulder of the tall man still hugging me tightly.

“Just tell her the truth—that you miss her. That you want to see her.”

“Alright, let go already. Don’t hug me for too long. You’re hot—and stiff like a rock.”

I pushed my hands against Je-Ang’s belly, trying to break free, but the arms around me just tightened, squeezing me even more.

“You little brat! Calling my sexy body stiff? That deserves a squeeze you won’t forget!”

“Oww—let go!”

He let out a high-pitched laugh and lifted me clean off the ground.

“Je-Ang! I said let me go!”

It felt like maybe… we were getting better. I think we were close to going back to how things used to be. Maybe Je-Ang wanted a second chance too —a chance to make up for the past, to heal the hurt, and to finally forgive himself.

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The plane landed at Suvarnabhumi Airport in the evening. From there, JeAng took me straight to the van waiting for us, and we headed directly to the restaurant where the wrap party for the drama was being held.

“You okay, Jay? Don’t fall asleep while walking now.”

“Who falls asleep while walking?”

I opened my eyes wide and said.

When I arrived, the first person I saw was Kade. She greeted me and gave me her usual cold, sweet smile. Then, Kade took the gift I brought from the North with an even colder, sweeter smile than before, before going back to stand and dance like a wooden plank in the corner of the noisy room.

“Jay, you just got here?”

A tall, broad-shouldered man, P’Pin’s personal assistant, came out of a door just as I arrived. He always smiled wide like that whenever we met.

“Yes, P’Sek.”

“Let me help you carry those.”

P’Sek took the bags from me and Je-Ang and kindly carried them inside. Helping everyone like that was a sign of a man named Sek.

We walked into the party while everyone was enjoying the music. Ken was on stage, jumping and dancing to the song he was singing. P’O was on drums, and the other musicians—including the sound engineer and other actors—each played their parts.

I stood in the middle of the room, scanning the crowd as the lively sounds and laughter surrounded me. I watched a girl—someone who had no right to love—dancing wildly, swinging her hair beside P’Ploy. I silently mourned my own invisibility.

“Hey, our other leading lady just arrived!”

Ken’s voice broke through the music as he spotted me. His big hand reached out, and people around turned to look.

Almost everyone here whistled and cheered to welcome me. People rushed to pull me inside. I went with the flow—eating, drinking (no alcohol for me), singing, dancing, laughing—but my eyes kept searching for Prang.

Where is she? Who is she with? Is she laughing? What is she thinking? Does she even care about me at all?

When everyone had gathered, P’Pin and P’O called the team together for a group photo. The fun and laughter were clear on everyone’s faces in the pictures—except me and Prang, who stood far apart, like opposite poles.

As the night grew late, Ken excused himself first because his dad and mom called for him. I was starting to feel tired and sleepy, but I wasn’t going to leave as long as Prang was still there. “How’s it going, beautiful? Having fun?”

“Yes,” I smiled politely at P’O.

“Have you read the new script I sent you? I really want you to play this role. The character was written just for you.”

“I want to rest, actually. I’m sorry, P’O.”

“Okay, no worries. If you don’t want to do it, you don’t have to. I won’t force you.”

My brow twitched at P’O’s calm smile before he walked away quietly—no push, no insistence. Maybe he finally realized he shouldn’t mix romance with me.

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*“Now he's thinkin' 'bout me every night, oh*

*Is it that sweet? I guess so*

*Say you can't sleep, baby, I know*

*That's that me espresso*

*Move it up, down, left, right, oh*

*Switch it up like Nintendo...”*

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Prang’s soft, sweet voice didn’t match her wild, silly dancing moves as she swayed on stage with the others.

Working together for months had sparked familiarity and old memories— clear in my mind but out of reach. All I could do was watch.

I felt proud of Prang standing there, and a full smile naturally spread across my face. Just then, she turned and smiled brightly right at me. Our eyes locked for what felt like forever, tightening my heart. If only that smile was meant just for me.

When Prang stepped down from the stage, I got up to go to the bathroom— and met P’Pin coming out.

“Hey, how’s it going? You look tired, Jay.”

“It’s fun, but I’m probably worn out from the trip.”

“The girls sure went all out tonight. Prang just left too—she said she has an early morning.”

*Prang already left?*

“I was about to leave too. I’m going to call Je-Ang.”

“Oh, why are you leaving so soon? Stay a bit longer, Jay.”

“I’m just done for today, P’Pin. The party’s almost over.”

“Okay, that’s fine. Go get some rest then.”

P’Pin is someone who knows how to take care of herself and always carries herself with maturity and respect.

Even though the gossip about me and her husband wasn’t good, she never showed any anger or resentment toward me without thinking first.

She once called me in to ask about the rumors after she was interviewed, and she listened to what I had to say like a thoughtful and mature person should.

I walked back to the table and realized Prang was really gone, and so was P’Ploy. So, I called Je-Ang, but no one answered. I called two or three more times and then got up to look for her. Je-Ang was still missing and not picking up the phone.

“She was seen getting into a car with the driver, but no one knows where they went.”

The nerdy girl I’d seen dancing stiffly like a wooden plank when I arrived was the one who answered. Then she ran up on stage and shouted off-key: *"Tell me why, we mama, mama... chagu, sindilrininnan, yeo-go bok, nae yeope itjanha, seongsin charyeo, Lion Heart."*

(Girls' Generation, K-pop' song)

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I waited for 10 minutes, getting annoyed. This building is huge. I was thinking about calling a taxi to go home but was afraid I’d end up on the front page with a headline like “*Taxi Scandal.”*

Je-Ang, where are you? You went out without telling anyone, and you’re not answering—so frustrating.

“Oh, Jay, you’re still not back?”

“Waiting for Je-Ang, P’Pin. She’s gone somewhere, and his phone’s off.”

“Ang still hasn’t shown up? I heard the new trainee skipped work and the client called to complain, so she had to go clear things up.”

“Marissa, you mean?”

“Probably her. If you want, I can take you home. I pass by your condo anyway.”

“Thank you, but don’t you have to stay until the end of the event, P’Pin?”

“No need for that. I already left instructions for the kids. Let them enjoy themselves—old folks like us should just go home and rest.”

“You’re not old! Don’t just give in to age.”

With that, P’Pin walked off and returned shortly with P’O. The three of us walked out and got into the black car belonging to her husband. Soon, the wheels were rolling us away from the venue.

But not even five minutes passed before P’Pin’s phone rang. She listened quietly to whoever was on the other end and only responded with, *“Uhhuh… okay.”* Then she turned to her husband.

“Oh, make a U-turn up ahead. We need to go back to the event.”

“What happened?”

“Sek just called. There’s some kind of issue with the venue owner.”

“Can’t they handle something that small on their own? What’s the point of hiring Sek as an assistant if he can’t even manage this?”

P’O grumbled, clearly annoyed.

“Come on, don’t get grumpy. Are you tired, O?”

“Still okay.”

“Jay,”

P’Pin turned to glance at me in the back seat,

“could you hand me the water over there?”

I picked up the bottle from the seat and handed it to her. She took it, opened it, and then passed it to her husband.

“I’ll pass. Let Jay have it—it’ll help her feel more awake. She looks really tired.”

“There’s another bottle in the back. I’ll give that one to Jay instead.”

“I’m not sleepy. I’ve had too much to drink already, and I don’t want to stop for a bathroom break. Just let Jay have it.”

“Jay, want a sip? It’ll help you stay alert.”

I took it reluctantly.

“Thanks.”

I sipped just a little from the bottle as the car made a U-turn and returned the way we came. When it stopped in front of the restaurant again, I saw Kate walking out just at that moment.

She looked surprised to see us as P’Pin got out and walked over to talk to Sek, her assistant.

P’Pin soon returned to the car, looking slightly apologetic as she said,

“I’ll have to stay and sort things out here.”

“That’s okay, P’Pin. I’ll wait for Je Ang, or call someone from home to pick me up.”

“Sigh... let’s do this instead. O, you take Jay home. I’ll stay here and handle everything.”

“Then how will you get home?”

“Sek will drive me.”

“Should I stay? Just in case you need help dealing with it.”

“There’s really nothing to worry about. Just take her home—she looks done for.”

“I can go home on my own, really. You should stay with P’Pin,”

I said, barely keeping my eyes open. My body was heavy with exhaustion, every motion a struggle.

“Take Nong Jay home. There’s no issue here. I’ll go back with Sek... Jay, go with P’O, okay?”

"Yes."

I shifted into the front seat. The car started moving again, gliding through the quiet night. The cold air conditioning, mixed with the scent of masculine air freshener, made me feel dizzy. A soft classical melody played in the background. No one said a word.

“Are you cold?”

It was like the smirk of someone who’d just won a prize—like the smile of someone who already knew their exam results but hadn’t told anyone yet.

That look was on his intense face when he suddenly pulled the car over to the side of the road and grabbed a jacket from the back seat to gently drape over me.

“I run hot and always blast the AC… Wear this so you won’t get cold.”

“Thank you.”

I pulled the jacket tighter around me up to my chin and stared blankly out at the roadside, letting my gaze drift.

Calm.

So calm that the lights outside the window began to blur. My eyelids grew heavy, like slabs of stone slowly descending—lower… and lower.

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“We’re here.”

The voice sounded like it came from a faraway land.

“Jay… we’re here.”

My eyelids fluttered, too heavy to fully open. It was hard—nearly impossible—to lift them entirely.

“How are you feeling? Can you walk?”

His intense face hovered too close, making me uncomfortable. His breath carried a faint trace of alcohol. I blinked slowly and tried to lean away, needing space—but my arms and legs were weak, my limbs heavy. I didn’t even have the strength to fully open my eyes.

“I am tired…”

The weak words barely made it past my lips.

“Then I’ll carry you up, okay?”

I took a deep breath. My gaze drifted aimlessly out the car window. No…

“No… P’O, no…”

“Hm?”

He smiled kindly, like an older brother—but his eyes glinted like a predator in the night.

“Still a bit aware, huh? Then I guess just helping you walk will do.”

I tried to pull away with what little strength I had. No.

He turned and chuckled to himself as I struggled to sit upright, unlock the car door, and push it open. My body slumped and collapsed onto the ground.

My limbs were limp, but I tried to crawl away from the car. Yet here… there were only rows upon rows of parked vehicles, dimly lit and eerily silent. Not a single living soul around to call for help.

“Where are you going, Jay? Crawling like that, you’ll just get yourself filthy. I can’t give you a bath while you’re like this, sweetie.”

His hands—soft like someone who’s never done a day of hard labor, yet forceful like any man—grabbed my arm and pulled me up. He held me, maneuvering me to fit his intentions. My strength was gone. I couldn’t even stand on my own two feet.

“No…” I pushed weakly at him with both hands.

“This… this isn’t my condo…”

“Nope. Not your condo,” he laughed through his nose, mocking.

“It’s a hotel. A five-star one, too. I wouldn’t take someone like you to a sleazy love motel. You’re not even worth a place like that.”

I was disgusted. Disgusted by the hand brushing my hair from my cheek. Disgusted by the tender gestures. Disgusted by the body forcing itself close to mine. Disgusted by the thoughts and filth reflected in his eyes.

And I was terrified. My body, now so powerless, had become nothing more than a prison for my spirit—completely without agency. Anyone could move it, place it, or do anything to it with ease. And yet, the physical sensations and emotional pain remained acutely vivid.

"Please.. please... Don’t cry, sweet girl. I won’t hurt you. I’ll only bring you happiness.”

His hand roughly stroked my arm and then pulled me close. That was when I buried my face into his chest—and bit down as hard as I could.

“Owww!!”

He shoved me, and I tumbled to the floor. The impact sent a searing pain through my elbow, and blood began to seep out.

“That wasn’t very nice of you, was it?”

His voice came in a threatening shout, and he advanced with a furious expression, yanking me up.

***Rrrrrrr!***

My phone! My phone was in the car. Someone was calling. Please—please let me get it. I needed it.

He dragged me back to the car.

“Angsumalin,”

He sneered as he picked up my phone and glanced at the caller ID.

“Ringing nonstop. Really ruining the mood.”

And with that, he threw my smartphone to the ground and stomped on it until the screen shattered into pieces.

Fear overtook my body. I screamed, hoping someone nearby might hear— but it was a terrible mistake.

His strong hand clamped over my mouth. I bit him again, but his violent shove sent me crashing to the ground a second time.

“BITCHH!!! You like it rough, don’t you?! You want me to be rough, huh?!”

His face twisted like a madman.

“I told you—I won’t hurt you,”

He said, with a wicked grin so chilling it made my tears fall uncontrollably.

“I don’t like my toys damaged. That injured elbow is more than enough.”

He walked back to the car. Something on the back seat was quickly unwrapped. I didn’t look to see what it was. All I could think to do was crawl—crawl away with everything I had. But before I knew it, something was pressed tightly over my nose.

“At first, I gave you just a little dose—so you could stay conscious and enjoy it with me. Such a shame you had to be so stubborn, little girl.” What I inhaled made everything worse.

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My body is completely out of strength to resist....

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Consciousness is blurred...

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And...

The light fades....

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# Chapitre 11: Unusual Incident

On the 9/xx/xxxx, the authorities were notified about a mysterious death of a man inside a luxury hotel room in the city center. The body was found naked and swollen, lying on the bed.

There were no signs of a struggle at the scene. A rope was tied above the left elbow. Drugs, a syringe, and Viagra were found at the scene. A video camera was set up, but no memory card was found.

It is estimated that the man had been dead for at least two days. The deceased was identified as **Mr. Arun Kobkitsathaporn**, also known as **Mr. O**, husband of the daughter of a famous drama production company owner.

Earlier, **Mrs. Pranee Kobkitsathaporn,** or **Pin**, the wife of the deceased, reported on the 8th that her husband had stopped contacting her since the night of the 6th. She and the family tried to reach and find him but failed.

Until this morning, when the hotel cleaner noticed a strong bad smell coming from the room and decided to open the door. That’s when they found Mr. O’s body on the bed.

The police then questioned the hotel receptionist, who said the room had been checked in since the 5/xx/xxxx. On the night of the 6th, someone saw Mr. O enter the hotel but never leave until his body was discovered.

The news was immediately shut down once I confirmed the deceased was P'O. The phone was dialed, the ringing tone heard, and soon someone answered.

“Hello, P’Pin? I just saw the news about P’O. I’m really sorry.”

“Thank you, Prang. I’m still trying to understand everything. We’ll talk later,”

The woman's voice didn't sound very good...

It’s truly heartbreaking. I never thought that someone I just talked to three days ago would pass away so suddenly. I didn’t expect to come across news of someone close to me dying while I was simply scrolling through headlines about a *“scandalous actress skipping three events*”.

For the past two or three days, the news has been all about Jay skipping various events. Photos and video clips posted online showed her personal manager dealing with the press and answering questions, while Jay herself had seemingly disappeared.

*"As previously explained, Jay didn’t intentionally skip the events. She had to rest. It was an unavoidable situation," the manager said.*

The event organizers were furious that Jay didn’t show up as promised.

*"Yes, Jay fell ill suddenly," the manager continued.*

*"What’s wrong with her? Why isn’t she coming out to speak for herself?"*

*"She’s sick. We’ve also had to call other organizers to cancel upcoming events because her health just isn’t good right now."*

*"Can you tell us what illness she has?"*

*"Jay tends to fall sick easily, and lately her schedule has been packed. She’s exhausted. We just want her to rest."*

*"Has J heard about the news of Mr. O?"*

*"Yes, she found out along with everyone else."*

*"And what did she say?"*

*"She’s very sorry for Mr. O’s family. They used to work together, so of course she’s heartbroken."*

*“And what about the rumors of a love affair between Jay and Mr. O? What does Jay have to say about that?”*

*“She has no comment, because it’s not true… Excuse me, I have to go now.”*

There were many comments online, most of them negative.

*“I feel bad for her manager, always having to do damage control.”*

*“So irresponsible.”*

*“I used to like Jay, but not anymore.”*

*“Judge an elephant by its tail.”*

*“Is she obsessed with men?”*

*“I’ve seen her in real life—she acts all high and mighty, never smiles. I never thought she’d be the type to steal someone’s husband.”*

*“There’s definitely something suspicious going on.”*

*“By the way, it’s not ‘ka’—it’s ‘kha’.”*

*“Thank you ka.”*

*“It’s not ‘khob khun ka,’ it should be ‘khob khun kha.’”*

*“Got it, ‘ka.’ I’ll get it right next time, na ka.”*

*“Got it—‘kha.’ I’ll make sure to say it correctly next time, na kha.”*

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Lately, Jay has been in a lot of bad press, and it got worse after a secret photo of her and Mr. O surfaced in front of a condo. I know for sure that Jay never had any feelings for him, but the photo was plastered everywhere. No matter how she tried to explain, no one believed her.

People believe what they want to believe. And the media? They feed off the drama, making it uglier than it needs to be.

All I could do was watch Jay from a distance.

I know we had some bad times in the past. After that incident, my younger sister Puin asked to study abroad. Puin woke up with no memory, and nobody ever talked about that day again.

As for Jin and me, we dated for less than five months before breaking up because of a foolish mistake I made. I was hurt, betrayed, and wanted to hurt Jay too. That’s all it was.

Our breakup was never healed or resolved. We fell apart badly, and I was angry that Jay disappeared back then. But recently, Jay has seemed down.

She stopped picking fights with me on set and stopped acting childish, which took away some of her usual brightness. I didn’t like that because it felt like her attention toward me was fading.

I don’t know if it’s because she’s stressed about the news. Jay gets sick easily, and seeing her get thinner worries me a lot.

A few days ago, I saw her in the elevator with that mean girl, Ploy. I didn’t want them alone together, so I hurried in before the doors closed.

Jay seemed uncomfortable with me there, but I didn’t mind. I really wanted to ask if she was okay, how she was doing, or say something to support her. Seeing her like that made me very uneasy.

That day, when we reached the 48th floor, I went into the room first. I hid behind the door and watched Jay through the small peephole called a "damaeo." I didn’t understand why she just stood still like that.

I wanted her to knock on my door, please, knock. Then maybe I would soften, let go of the past, and speak kindly. I prayed silently. But then Jay just walked away.

The last time I saw her was on the final day of filming the drama. I waited for her, even though she was late because she had just returned from Chiang Mai.

I don’t know what her true face looked like beneath the fresh makeup, but Jay’s behavior and eyes showed exhaustion. We had been apart for so long, yet her smiling face hid everything so well that I hardly ever felt like I knew the Jay I once did.

After singing until I was tired that night, I left the stage and found that Jay was gone. Had she already left? Then I felt there was no reason for me to stay late either.

I said goodbye to O and the crew and left because my personal manager had called three times to remind me about a job early the next morning.

I still care about Jay. She is strong, but can still show vulnerability. The favorite shoes we used to wear that fit perfectly—wearing them again after a break only reminds me how familiar they are and that no one else has given me such comfort.

But I never thought or hoped we could go back to loving each other like before. She moved close by, just to be seen—to know she is still okay, still doing well—and that alone makes me happy.

There’s no need to be together again, no need to demand anything, no need to worry if she has someone else or when she might stop loving me. Watching from afar—maybe deep down, the pain of the past is too heavy for me to return to.

And those favorite shoes? They’re not mine anymore.

Every time I arrive at the condo parking lot, I look for her car. Is Jay back?

Is she home? When did she come back? The light outside her room answers these questions well.

But for the past two or three days, Jay has disappeared. Her car has been parked in the same spot since before she went to Chiang Mai. The next-door room shows no sign that its owner has returned.

It’s not strange that she’s not home, but Jay is responsible. Even though she can be moody sometimes, she never neglects her duties like this. The news about her skipping work, with Jay’s manager stepping in to explain, and many other things made me worried.

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**“Hello, P'Je? This is Prang,”**

I finally couldn’t wait any longer and called.

**[Prang, what’s up?]**

**“It’s about Jay…”**

**[Jay?]**

The voice on the other end sounded alarmed.

**[Are you with there, Prang?]**

**“Huh?”**

Was it just me, or did something feel off?

**[You mean you called ask about Jay? What’s going on?]**

**“I saw the news, so I wanted to ask what’s wrong with Jay.”**

**[She’s... a little sick, just a bit under the weather. So I told her to rest. Jay’s wanted a break for a long time anyway.]**

**“Where is Jay now?”**

**[That’s a secret. Jay doesn’t want anyone to know—worries about privacy. Do you have something you want me to tell her?]**

**“No, I just called because I saw the news.”**

**[Okay. So you haven’t seen Jay at the condo, right? That’s why you called me?]**

**“I have**,” I lied.

**[You have? When did you see Jay?]**

**“We’ll talk about that later. I’m busy right now.”**

**“Wait, Prang!”**

The voice couldn’t hide excitement mixed with curiosity.

**[Answer me first—when was the last time you saw Jay?]**

**“I won’t answer that unless you tell me the truth about what’s wrong with Jay.”**

The line went quiet for a moment before a hint of stress crept into her voice.

**[*Sigh*… I can’t say much right now. But if you know anything about Jay, please tell me.]**

**“Then… can I have Jay’s number?”**

**[Zero-nine-six, nine-zero-eight—beep beep beep beep.]**

.

After hanging up with her, I dialed the number she gave me. But no matter how many times I tried, the call wouldn’t go through.

So I decided to try again—but this time, I dialed a number I hadn’t called in ages. I wondered if the owner of the number would even pick up, especially since it belonged to the person who ended things with me nearly three years ago by saying,

*“I just feel like you don’t have any passion for me anymore.”*

.

**“Hello.”**

Finally, a calm, low voice replaced the dial tone.

**“P’Jin, it’s Prang.”**

**[…Yes?]**

**“I heard Jay’s not feeling well… I just wanted to ask if she’s doing any better.”**

**[Jay's fine.]**

...was the short and cautious reply.

**"Where is she now? I have something urgent to talk to her about, but she hasn't come back to her room for days. Her car is still parked there."**

**[If it's something important, you can leave it with me. I'll let her know.]**

**"I really need to talk to her in person."**

**[Okay, I’ll tell her you want to see her.]**

**.**

At first, I wasn’t sure. But after talking to Je-Ang and Jin, I’m convinced something is wrong.

Last night, I dreamed about Jay—back when we still had each other.

We used to talk about all kinds of things—people, life, dreams, experiences. Sometimes we’d call each other just to ask silly questions like, *“What are you eating tonight?” “Do you hate cockroaches?” “Why do you love strawberries so much?” All of that was just a way of saying, “I miss you.”*

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I remember sitting cross-legged on the floor, watching her serious expression while she taught me how to put on makeup.

*"This one first, then that one. Blend like this. Use this shade—it gives more dimension."*

*“You look so pretty. Do I get a reward?”*

*“Are you doing this for a reward?”*

*“Well... maybe just a little hope.”*

Jay was great at makeup and had a strong sense of fashion. Whatever she wore would become a trend. And something else she was really good at... was being playful and teasing.

*“Not now, Jay.”*

*“But they say this lipstick is waterproof.”*

*“No, finish teaching me first.”*

Our laughter used to fill that small private room.

*“This is part of the lesson too—how to test the durability of lipstick.”*

Her first kiss landed on the inside of my wrist.

*“Stop messing around. Teach me first. We won’t have time later.”*

*“Done. That was the express course.”*

*“Yes, ma’am.”*

The second kiss landed softly on my chest.

*“What do you mean ‘done’? You haven’t even drawn my eyebrows yet.”*

She moved closer, slowly but surely. The more I leaned away, the more it seemed like I was just lying back—giving her the upper hand.

The third kiss, lipstick-stained and red, was pressed onto my ear.

—And I let her kiss me. I let her kiss me...again and again...

. .

After that dream, I woke up to a heavy silence. My manager called early to confirm the work schedule. Everything went on as usual, like any other day —except the growing weight of unease in my chest.

It’s been a full week since Jay disappeared.

Yesterday, the news came out. The main story was that police had just released the autopsy results for P’O. They found evidence of a head injury that likely caused unconsciousness before death—caused by drug use. They now doubt the earlier claim that he overdosed on his own.

What worries me is that on the night P’O went missing, a witness saw Jay leave with him in a car. And up until now, Jay still hasn’t shown up.

I’ve called Je-Ang several times to ask about Jay, but never got any real answers.

After the media reported that Jay was last seen with P’Oh that night, everything escalated. People started speculating, digging into the timeline, spinning all kinds of stories—and things quickly got out of hand.

*Where is Jay? I’m going out of my mind.*

That night, just after I returned from P’Oh’s funeral, I saw light slipping out from under the door of the room next to mine. My heart pounded in my chest.

I pressed the doorbell several times, but no one came to answer. Finally, I decided to try guessing the passcode.

What kind of password would someone like Jay use?

I first tried her birthdate.

Wrong… it wasn’t that.

Second attempt—her body measurements.

Also wrong. That’s not it either?

Third attempt… I stood there quietly, thinking for a long while. I don’t know what pushed me, but a new combination of numbers came to mind, and I entered them.

***Click!***

The lock released. And I nearly broke down in tears right there at the door —because the code to Jay’s room was *my* birthdate.

With shaking hands, I pushed the door open. The room was quiet, as if no one was there. I slowly stepped inside, one foot at a time.

There was a bottle of water and a glass, half full, sitting on the dining table. In the kitchen sink, a couple of dishes hadn’t been washed. A pile of clothes lay scattered near the big sofa.

I kept moving further inside.

Maybe she’s asleep in the bedroom.

Would it be too intrusive if I went in?

The bedroom door creaked open slowly… but all I found was emptiness. The lights had been left on—in the bedroom, the bathroom, the walk-in closet—but there was no one there.

I stepped back into the living area… and then noticed another room without a door. The lights inside that room were dimmed, while every other part of the apartment was brightly lit.

It was a small, cozy room. The walls were lined with built-in shelves filled with books. In the center of the room stood a large gray sofa, facing out toward the view through the window.

Step by step, I walked in—closer and closer.

The sofa.

A tall woman lay curled up on it, her calm face resting on a pillow. She hugged herself, her back pressed against the cushions.

I slowly knelt down beside her, watching her chest rise and fall in a steady rhythm. I couldn’t help but lift my hand toward her warm, sleeping face.

You’re the one they say is sick. Are you okay now, Jay? Have you gotten better?

Tears welled up in my eyes without warning. Suddenly, my phone rang. And just as suddenly… she stirred.

I glanced at the screen—it was Je-Ang calling. I planned to call her back later. I didn’t want to make any noise and wake the person lying here.

But it was too late. She was awake now.

The moment she saw me, panic flared in her eyes. Jay gasped and recoiled, pressing herself tightly against the back of the sofa.

But when she came to her senses, the tension on her face slowly began to ease.

“Prang?! How did you get in here?”

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Her face looked pale, almost bruised.

Dark circles under her eyes, like someone who hadn’t slept in days.

Still hugging herself, as if to hide the trembling.

Her eyes—unsteady, unsure.

My tears are overflowing.

What happened to her? What’s going on?

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🍁🍁🍁🍁🍁 ***sunyan***

# Chapitre 12: I ran out of fish sauce in my room

"Prang?! How did you get in?"

She was sitting on the floor in front of me—beautiful, pristine. But her face showed clear signs of worry, her bright eyes glistening with tears that streamed down her cheeks.

"My... my fish sauce ran out. I came to borrow some."

A silence fell between us, and the tears from her eyes kept flowing. Did she want fish sauce so badly that she had to sneak in and cry in someone else's room?

I nodded, dazed from the sleeping pills I had taken.

"Prang, don’t cry."

I tried to wipe the clear tears from her cheeks with both hands, but they wouldn’t stop. The more I wiped, the more they flowed. "I'll go get you some fish sauce."

I staggered to the kitchen and grabbed what she needed.

Prang took the fish sauce, then quietly walked out of the room, tears still streaming down her face.

Not even a minute passed before the doorbell rang again. I went to open the door.

"Um... I ran out of sugar too."

I nodded, went back into the room, grabbed a bottle of sugar, and handed it to her.

"Just now... how did you get into my room?"

"I rang the bell, but no one answered. So I used the passcode to come in."

I nodded in hazy acknowledgment once again, then closed the door and returned to face the emptiness of my own room.

The same home that once felt cozy and comforting now suddenly felt too spacious, too quiet.

I walked over and sat curled up on the floor in one corner of the room. I wrapped my arms tightly around myself.

A narrow sofa, a small corner—those were the places I wanted to bury myself in. They made me feel safer than lying on the wide bed. The bed that reminded me of that night.

The light from the neon bulb on the ceiling was the first thing I saw. My eyelids blinked slowly as I adjusted my focus. I took a deep breath to push out the fatigue from my body while I pulled the blanket tighter around myself because the room was cold... piercingly cold.

Freezing cold!!

I jolted upright as a flashback flooded back into my memory.

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*“I am hot. The AC is on cold. Cover yourself or you’ll get chilly.”*

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My eyes darted around. The bed was messy. The shirt I had neatly worn the night before was now disheveled.

Every button had been undone. The front of the shirt hung wide open, unable to cover my skin or the bra that was awkwardly in place. My skirt was bunched up to my waist—exposing my underwear completely.

My hands clenched the blanket tightly. My mind became alert, taking in the situation around me—just before the pain slowly seeped in, crushing my heart.

*“Please... please… don’t cry, sweetheart. I’m not hurting you. I only want to give you pleasure.”*

My hands came up to cover my face as I curled into my knees, sobbing in agony—nearly choking on the sound—when I saw that lying next to me on this wide, soft bed was a dark-skinned man, completely naked.

I hurriedly dressed, fumbling to put every piece of clothing back into place. I took a wad of cash from the sleeping man’s wallet for travel expenses, my feet stumbling out of the room—unsteady, still affected by the chemicals I had unknowingly inhaled that hadn't yet worn off.

He didn’t wake. I didn’t want anyone to know what had happened. I had to leave. I had to get out of there.

The sun had just risen when I arrived at a small resort in the countryside. I had no idea how I got there—only that I needed to be far away.

In the bathroom, I stripped off my clothes to examine my body. Red marks from the assault showed clearly on my neck and upper chest. Aside from those, there were bruises on my elbows and a few more minor ones—likely from the struggle with that vile man the night before.

What did he do to my body?

I collapsed onto the bathroom floor, letting the water wash away all the filth that might have clung to me. Hour after hour passed. My tears mixed with the cold water streaming over me, releasing confusion and fear all over again.

*"I’m not hurting you. I only want to give you pleasure."*

His words, his expression, and the look in his eyes were burned into my memory. They made me hug myself tighter and scrub my skin even harder.

The longer I stayed in the water, the colder my body became—but I couldn’t stop. The cold began to seep into my bones.

When I finally came out of the bathroom, I sat silently, huddled in a corner of the room. I didn’t touch any food. I didn’t move much—just stayed there until morning came.

The image of that vile man dragging me, forcing me, back when we were in the car, kept haunting me. I would drift into sleep only to wake again and again from nightmares. If it hadn’t happened to me, I wouldn’t have known what it meant to be terrified to death.

*Should I go to the police?*

*If I do, will it make the news?*

*How will people judge me? Serves her right? Pity her? Disgust?*

*Will I be seen as a worthless, disgraceful woman?*

*Will people believe that I was a victim—Not someone who asked for it. Not someone who dressed too provocatively.*

The shame and confusion were too overwhelming to make any decision at all.

I reached for a phone to contact Je Ang, thinking he must be worried if he couldn’t find me.

“Jay, where have you been? There’s an event this afternoon. I’ve been calling since last night but couldn’t reach you. I was so worried—do you know that? And why did you go back with Phi O? You know he’s been all over the news lately… sigh. Also, whose phone are you calling from?”

“I won’t be around for a while, Je.”

“What? What are you saying? I don’t understand... and why does your voice—”

I hung up before she could finish, and handed the phone back to the stranger I’d borrowed it from—someone who had just happened to walk by.

My own phone… I must have dropped it somewhere around...

The car was gone, and so was my handbag. I was too emotionally drained to go back and collect my things—including the bracelet that Phi Jin once gave me, which had fallen and gone missing.

The TV in the middle of the room was left on day and night to keep the silence at bay. Room service food was left uneaten, more than half of it. The news about Je Ang stepping in for me after I bailed on my work was the headline of every entertainment program—until one report shook me to my core.

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*“On 9/xx/xxxx, authorities were notified of a mysterious death of a man found in a luxury hotel room in downtown Bangkok. The body was found naked and bloated on the bed. There were no signs of struggle or forced entry. A cord was found tied above his left elbow. Drugs, a syringe, and Viagra were discovered at the scene. A video camera was found nearby, but there was no memory card. The man had been dead for at least two days. The deceased was identified as Mr. Arun Kobkitsathaporn, also known as Mr. O, the husband of the daughter of a well-known drama production company owner.*

*Investigators are focusing on two main questions:*

1. *Was Mr. O alone before he died, given the presence of Viagra and a videocamera at the scene?*
2. *Was there an attempt to destroy evidence, as some items believed to havebeen at the scene appear to be missing? Some details cannot be disclosed by the police at this stage.*

*So far, multiple witnesses have been questioned. Key evidence has been sent for forensic analysis, and investigators are reviewing additional CCTV footage from the area.*

*Mr. O was the producer of the drama "Leh Rai" ("Devious Trick"), and had recently been involved in a scandal with one of the top leading actresses in the industry.”*

"He's dead? Since when? Am I going to be held responsible?"

I paced around the room. Did they find my belongings? Would they know that I had been there too? I was confused, anxious, terrified, and I didn’t dare tell anyone.

Staying hidden away at a resort in the middle of nature for days did nothing to stop the nightmares. Some nights, I jolted awake from running away.

Some nights, I was caught. Some nights, I dreamt I woke up to find a mutilated corpse. Worse still were the nights I dreamt he assaulted me.

I couldn’t bring myself to sleep on the bed and had to rely on sleeping pills.

Then one morning, a female news anchor on TV told the public exactly what I had feared the most:

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*"The police have just released more information: According to the autopsy results, Mr. Arun Kobkitsathaporn died from a drug overdose. However, there was also a dent on the skull caused by a blow from an unidentified hard object prior to death. Further investigation is underway. Witnesses who saw Mr. Arun last—on the night of the wrap party for the drama Leh Rai—reported that he drove off with the lead actress, Ms. Jay Jeerapat Wiboonthanakit. Police are now attempting to contact the actress and are summoning more individuals for questioning."*

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Fear shook me to the core. After calming myself down, I stepped outside and borrowed a phone from the resort staff.

“Jay? Jay, where are you?”

The voice on the other end was filled with anxiety.

As soon as I told him where I was, Phi Jin appeared two hours later. He took care of everything and then drove me home. When we got there, he scooped me up into his arms just like he did when I was a little girl who came home with scraped knees after playing outside.

Phi Jin carried me home and took care of my wounds. Now, he’s taking his younger sister to the room I never returned to — Room 14714.

The door was closed to keep things private. Then, Phi Jin turned back and looked at me closely.

"You’re so skinny. Was the food at the resort that bad?"

“.....”

“Don’t worry. I’ll take care of everything. But you have to tell me everything.”

So I told him everything. The whole time I was speaking, I could see anger in his eyes as he listened silently.

After I finished telling him everything, Phi Jin left the room and came back with something in his hands.

"Where did you get that?" I asked, confused.

He dropped a small necklace — the one I thought I had lost that night — into my hand. He also placed a new phone and my personal items next to me.

“The old one was destroyed. I bought you a new one,” he said.

“How did you manage to get all this from that place?”

His eyes were sharp and full of determination. His jaw was tight as he told me a story — and what the main character (me) needed to do next.

“I was waiting for you to come back. But you disappeared,”

He said, pulling me into a hug.

“Don’t ever do that again. From now on, if anything happens, you have to tell me.”

“I was scared. I didn’t know what to do back then.”

“You don’t have to be afraid anymore. I’ll take care of it,” Phi Jin reassured me.

“Does Mom know yet?”

Phi Jin Jinn nodded.

“She prays every day, asking the sacred spirits to protect you.”

“Did she pray for Dad too?”

“Of course,” he said gently, his deep voice comforting.

“Even if she didn’t ask, Dad would still be watching over you.”

My dad had passed away from heart disease when I was still a teenager. Since then, the one who took responsibility for caring for everyone in the family was my brother, Phi Jin.

He had always done a great job — he always had. That’s why, when Phi Jin and Prang were dating, I never asked Prang to come back.

“I want to go back and sleep at my condo,” I said.

“Let’s wait and talk to Mom first. I’ve already called and told her you’re back. I’ll drive you to the condo myself.”

It felt like a heavy weight had been lifted off my chest — like Phi Jin had taken on half of my burden. With him around, it felt like things might be okay after all.

Mom scolded me harshly for disappearing and even looked like she was going to hit me with a stick. But in the end, she just ordered a table full of food, told me to eat, and said everything would be okay in the end.

That day, Phi Jin dropped me off at the condo. After getting some food in my stomach, I lay down to sleep. But nightmares pulled me back awake — so I reached for sleeping pills once again.

When I opened my eyes next, Prang was sitting in the room, looking at me with tears in her eyes and said that she had run out of fish sauce.

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. .

I was jolted out of my memories when the doorbell rang again.

“This time, what’s finished, Prang?”

Prang rang my doorbell again after I had given her fish sauce and sugar.

“If you want something, just come in and take it yourself.”

I made way for her to slip inside. This time, Prang wasn’t wearing black like when I woke up and saw her. She had taken a shower and smelled sweet, wearing shorts and a loose tank top with the words “You’re my bitch” printed in green.

“Well...” She sighed once before saying,

“I don’t want to be alone.”

“Where’s your girlfriend?”

“I don’t have a girlfriend.”

“P'Ploy?”

“That’s an ex, and an ex we used to fight with, no commitments.”

Suddenly, I let out a dry laugh, and she gave a faint smile.

“You can still laugh, so it means you’re okay, right?”

Her voice was serious, accompanied by a worried look.

“Can I not tell you?”

“You don’t have to tell me, but can you just hug me? Can you hug me, Jay?”

“Can I really do that?”

I didn’t know what was happening, I only knew my heart was breaking open the moment Prang spread her arms, and I walked into her embrace.

Her arms wrapped tightly around me, the warmth from her soft body radiating into mine. My eyes burned as I buried my face into her shoulder. The woman who asked me for a hug was now gently stroking my back, as if to comfort me.

And it wasn’t me hugging her—it was Prang who was holding me, enveloping me as my body trembled with silent sobs, finally releasing all the feelings I had kept buried alone for days.

“Showing up like this—don’t tell me you’ve secretly hidden a cockroach in my room again.”

“Are you crazy?”

“Creeping around in my room while I sleep… how can I trust a snake like you?”

A lighthearted laugh rang out.

“Want something to eat?”

“I already ate a bit.”

"Jay."

“Huh?”

“When’s the last time you washed your hair?”

"...!!!?"

I pulled back and stepped away.

“Smells bad, huh?”

"...!!!?"

My feet carried me several steps further from her with my expression of disbelief.

“Why are you walking away? Come here,”

Prang followed and grabbed my wrist.

“I’m going to wash your hair.”

I hesitated and tried to walk away—I didn’t want Prang to touch my hair, which hadn’t seen water in days… I was stressed, okay?

In the end, I walked out of the bathroom with freshly washed, fragrant hair wrapped in a towel—courtesy of Prang. Warm air blew gently over it while soft fingers combed through the strands.

Prang moved about the room, tidying things up—cleaning the dishes and organizing the stuff I’d left scattered around when I first arrived at the condo. I told her not to, but she sharply ordered me to shut up and just sit still.

“I’ll do what I want,” she said.

“But this is my room.”

“So what?”

“Geez,”

I muttered. I probably should’ve kept my mouth shut, but seriously—this is not a normal situation. Does she think she can just boss me around?

Ten minutes later, everything in the room was in its proper place. The dishes were clean and neatly stacked, and the person who had just told me to sit down was now walking over.

“It's late.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m sleepy.”

“You can go back to your room and sleep if you want.”

Prang paused.

“I don’t want to be alone.”

I raised an eyebrow.

“I said I don’t want to be alone.”

“Then… you can sleep in my room if you want.”

“Are you going to sleep now?”

“I guess I’ll sleep now.”

Prang nodded slowly, then went to turn off the lights. But her brow lifted slightly in surprise when I didn’t follow her into the bedroom.

“You’re not coming?”

“I’ll sleep out here.”

The reading room was lit with a dim lamp as I stepped in.

“You don’t like sleeping on the sofa.”

“Times change. People change.”

I looked away to avoid her gaze when I realized she was watching me, scanning my expression. But she said nothing—just gave a slight nod and walked off into the bedroom.

Once the door shut, I sank into the soft couch. Thoughts ran through my head again, replaying everything. But before I could fall asleep, I heard the bedroom door creak open—and then the source of the sound was standing in front of me in the dim light, staring.

“What?”

“I don’t want to be alone. Move away.”

While I was still confused by her behavior, the blanket covering me was pulled back—and the person standing there simply climbed in beside me.

She didn’t wait—just pushed in and squeezed herself next to me, making me shuffle closer to the armrest to make space for both of us.

“Prang, the sofa’s really small.”

“Well, you’re the one who decided to sleep out here. What am I supposed to do?”

She said, pulling the blanket up to cover the both of us as her back pressed against the front of my body.

“Can you move over a little more?” Prang nudged even closer.

“I told you already—the sofa’s small.”

“Yeah, but can you sleep like this or not?”

“Why are you doing this, Prang?”

She went quiet for a long while. Then her soft voice finally broke the silence.

“I don’t know... I just know that, lying this close...”

She paused again, and my stomach twisted with all kinds of imagined answers.

“...Good thing you washed your hair.”

“Just go sleep in your own room, Prang.” She chuckled, curled up in front of me.

“Don’t stay this skinny for too long, Jay,”

She murmured as she pressed in even more.

“I liked it better when you were strong, sarcastic, and always pissing me off.”

I lifted my arm and wrapped it around her waist, pulling her in gently. My face nestled into the back of her neck.

“Just admit you’re afraid I’ll be prettier than you when I’m skinny.”

She let out a warm, humming laugh—the kind of laugh I always loved hearing.

“Maybe.”

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# Chapitre 13: THE ACTRESS

It felt like a warm morning suddenly appearing in the middle of winter in Minnesota, USA. I woke up to silence, with only a soft blanket wrapped around me. But the delicious smell filling the room made me get up and walk out. There were a few freshly cooked dishes on the table.

"You're awake?"

Her long hair, which used to fall to her mid-back, was tied up in a ponytail. She still had on the white tank top from last night, cut low enough to reveal her bra. She was moving around, preparing things for me. Her fair legs peeked out from shorts that were almost too short, stepping here and there.

"Why are you just standing there? Are you going to eat now or take a shower first?"

Last night, I woke up twice from nightmares. But each time I opened my eyes in fear, Prang was there beside me. So it didn't feel as bad as it usually does.

And because she's here, my heart doesn't feel quite so cold.

"When did you learn how to cook?"

A childlike smile lit up Prang's face, her eyes sparkling.

"Just now. From YouTube."

"And where did you get these ingredients?"

"My manager came in this morning. I asked him to buy them."

"Smells good,"

I replied with a faint smile. "I'll shower first, then come eat."

She nodded excitedly.

And me? I'll be okay. Everything will work out in the end - even if I've been feeling down lately.

I didn't spend long in the bathroom before heading to the dining table, where I saw the same person waiting for me.

Prang served me rice, then rested her chin in her hand and stared at me, making me feel nervous... I'm a good actress. I can do this.

Steam rose from the hot soup - a mix of vegetables and soft pork bones served in a ceramic bowl. As I lifted the spoon to my mouth, I paused and glanced at the cook once again.

"Have you tasted it yourself yet?"

"I did, but when you cook and taste it yourself, you can't really tell how it tastes."

I swallowed nervously and opened my mouth to finally taste the soup. But just then, the doorbell rang and interrupted the moment. I quickly put the spoon down.

Who could be here this early?

I walked to the door and peeked through the peephole.

***CRACK!***

I opened the door just a crack - just enough to poke my head out and talk to the guest, my older brother.

"Phi Jin? Why are you here so early?"

"I have something important to talk about,"

Said the young man in a clean polo shirt, standing with his arms crossed. His expression was like he was silently asking why I hadn't stepped aside to let him in yet.

"As for now, I am not available."

There was no way I was letting Phi Jin see Prang.

"Either you open the door now, or I'll use the key card to get in myself."

Ugh. I really shouldn't have given him that key card.

"Why didn't you call first?"

"The police sent a summons to the house the other day. You need to go give a statement. So, can I come in now or not?"

I stepped back and let the door swing open. Phi Jin walked in. He didn't even react when he saw Prang in the room.

But I sure did. That tank top of hers had armholes so big you could see way too much.

"There's a shirt in my room you can change into,"

I whispered to our actress, and she nodded obediently.

"Have you eaten yet, Phi Jin?"

"I had coffee."

"Then eat with us first. We can talk after."

He nodded and sat down, and I served him rice.

But before we could start eating, my phone started ringing.

"Hello?"

"Jay, I'm downstairs. Can I come up?"

"Okay."

. .

So, I ended up having three people at the breakfast table that morning even though one of them ran in shouting and hugged me so tight I nearly got squished into his chest.

"What happened? I was so worried about you!"

"I know... but can you stop hugging me and eat first?"

"Oh, if you can talk back like that, I guess you're still doing fine."

"Fine? Don't be ridiculous,"

I muttered, still hesitating to pick up my spoon. Every battle needs a sacrifice, and I was just waiting to see who would fall first.

"And her - how did she end up staying here?"

The question came with a glare that made me want to roll my eyes. Je looked at me, then at Prang, back and forth, like trying to connect dots. Prang, meanwhile, just kept a blank, innocent face.

"Let's just eat. I'm starving," I said.

Je smirked knowingly before picking up a spoon and taking a sip of the clear soup - and immediately choked on it.

I handed him a tissue while Phi Jin passed over a glass of water.

Meanwhile, the light in Prang's once-sparkling eyes began to dim.

"Is it that bad?"

Her hopeful eyes showed she was really wishing for a different answer one she was never going to get.

"It tastes like water used to wash water hyacinths. Where did you even buy these ingredients, Jay?"

I saw the disappointment on Prang's face and instantly felt guilty. She had gotten up early just to cook for me. But Je's words crushed her effort completely.

"You're exaggerating, Je. No way water hyacinths smell this good."

I scooped up some of the hot soup again. Honestly, Je was exaggerating no way it tasted like dirty water. It wasn't that bad.

But I'm a good actress.

"It's edible, Je. If the cook practices a little more, this could actually become a decent vegetable soup with soft pork bones."

"But-"

I kicked Je's shin under the table to signal him to shut up.

Next, I tried the stir-fried broccoli with shrimp.

Salty.

The smoked salmon salad seemed like the safest bet - especially since I saw a bottle of store-bought salad dressing on the table.

"Eat, Phi Jin."

.

.

After that meal, Prang went back to her room, still wearing my shirt, her face clearly upset.

But I had more pressing matters to deal with than following her right now.

"You need to give a statement at the police station,"

Phi Jin said, his voice calm but firm.

"Someone from the wrap party said they saw you leave with him that night."

Phi Jin's eyes locked on mine, like he was trying to read my emotions.

"I came because of this," Je-Ang added.

"I've already cancelled some of your upcoming work just in case you're not ready. But some brands... they're starting to pull out. They don't want their products linked to controversy. Your name being involved in this case makes them nervous."

What would *Kobori* say if he saw his wife looking this stressed?

"What exactly should I tell the police, Phi Jin?" Phi Jin turned to Je-Ang.

"Can I talk to Jay in private for a moment?"

Je-Ang nodded and excused himself.

The day Phi Jin brought me back from the resort, he told me to go back to my normal life. He said no one would know I spent the night with P'O, and that no one should know - because it would ruin my reputation.

Society would judge me harshly, and things would only get more complicated from there.

But today, things didn't go according to plan.

The autopsy revealed a dent on P'O's head. The police now suspect possible murder and cover-up - not just a drug overdose.

And we had completely forgotten that someone might have seen me leave with that horrible man during the wrap party.

Now I might become a suspect. Even so-

"They don't have any solid evidence proving you were at the hotel,"

Phi Jin said confidently.

After we finished planning how I should answer the police's questions, Phi Jin left.

. .

Once I was alone again, the room felt quiet and heavy.

I turned on the big TV in the middle of the room just to fill the silence.

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TV Interview Audio (playing):

*"We can't say too much - it might affect the case."*

*"Someone said Jay left with P'O that night. Did you know about that, Pin?"*

*"Well, Jay's manager wasn't around that day, and she had no ride home. I offered her a lift, but I had something urgent to take care of, so I asked P'O to drop her off instead. His place is on the way to her condo anyway."*

*"So you were aware of their relationship then?"*

*"From my point of view, I don't want to involve anyone else. The person has passed away. I think everything should end there. Please... let's not dig it up any further. Let's respect the dead."*

*"But Jay didn't attend P'O's funeral, right?"*

*"She was probably busy..."*

*"And what do you think about P'O's death?"*

*"The family isn't pressing any charges," Pin said.*

*"But the police suspect a skull fracture."*

*"That part will need to be investigated further. But the family has no concerns - we don't have enemies. It could've been an accident."*

*"Is the reason the family isn't suspicious because P'O had a history of drug use?"*

*"Yes, he did, but he had supposedly quit a while ago. I didn't know he might've still been using. That's all for now - I'll have to excuse myself."*

. .

P'Pin and other close celebrity friends were interviewed again and again all about my supposed relationship with the son of the studio owner's family.

Every detail of my life, since birth, was dug up and spread across media outlets daily:

*Who I am.*

*What level of education I have.*

*How I got into the entertainment industry.*

*Who I've been rumored to date.*

Most of the public opinion was negative.

People online swarmed in, demanding I come forward and hold a press conference. My story became a scapegoat for strangers' inner rage. Some joined the hate train for the thrill of it.

The insults and curses were endless.

And all of this... when no one even knew for sure whether I was at the scene of the incident.

If the truth ever got out - that I'd been in bed with P'O - I can't imagine just how deep humanity's darkness would go.

Before, I didn't care about these things. But over time, they started to really affect me. Some words cut deep into my heart. No matter where I go or what I do, it feels like I'm standing alone in a dry, empty field surrounded by vultures.

They tear me apart and laugh with satisfaction. I've never done anything to hurt them-never, truly.

Like today, someone gave me a strange look when I left my condo in the afternoon to run errands and buy some food. I've been stared at before, but not like this.

I came back to my room and cried-cried and cried. And I kept thinking: they don't know anything. They just don't understand. Everything I'm going through is temporary. I just have to get through it. But how long will this "temporary" last?

At least it's not all bad. I still have my family, my sister, my friends, and someone who's about to walk through my door.

I turned away so she wouldn't see me wiping my tears.

"Do you normally just walk into other people's rooms like this?"

"I knocked, but no one answered,"

Prang said. She had come back to my room that evening, looking stunning and carrying bags of food in both hands.

"That's still not a reason to just enter someone's room."

She walked closer, looked at me, and placed the bags on the floor.

"Hey,"

She said, wrapping her warm arms around my neck and pulling me into a hug.

"I brought so much food. I'm not cooking for you again if you keep crying like this."

"Your eyebrows look great today," I said.

"I learned from YouTube."

"You got interviewed too, right? About me?"

"The media wants to know everything," she replied.

"But this time, they want to know about me."

"People always want to know about you, Jay. They even want to know what brand of bubble tea you drink."

She raised the cup she was holding, shook it a little, and waved it in front of me.

"Je-Ang even told me not to let you drink this after 8 p.m."

Then a soft laugh passed between the two of us.

"I also bought crispy pork and bacon," she whispered.

That night, Prang stayed with me on the big sofa. After showering in her own room, she came back wearing a bright red football jersey. She brought along the t-shirt she had borrowed earlier.

"Here, I'm returning your shirt."

That's all she said. And she didn't leave my room until the morning light broke through.

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The next morning, I took a deep breath and slowly let it out as I stood in front of the large mirror. I wore a white blouse with elegant details, neatly tucked into black trousers.

My long hair was tied back to make me look more professional and confident. High heels gave me a more graceful posture, and my light makeup helped me appear gentle and pure.

Today, I was stepping into a major scene of my life's drama.

Phi Jin called to say he was on his way to pick me up. Being on time was something he always took seriously.

We sat quietly in the car until he finally spoke:

"Are you scared?"

"Not that much."

"You've gone over everything we need to do, right?"

I just nodded. Then, suddenly, cheerful music started playing-it felt like a sign that everything was going to be okay.

. .

"We have a witness who says that on the night the victim disappeared, you, Ms. Jeerapat, left the place with him."

The man speaking sat in front of me with a file open and a pen in his hand. His eyes were focused and serious.

"Yes," I replied.

Since someone saw me leaving with him, I admitted it-I really did go out with that man that night.

"Do you remember what time you left with him that night?"

I shook my head.

"I don't remember, but I believe the CCTV in the pub can help you, officer."

There were two men in the room. One sat directly across from me, and the other was recording the interview.

"Besides you and the deceased, was anyone else in the car that night?"

"Actually, my personal manager had to work that night," I explained.

"So my friend Pin invited me to ride back with her."

"Are you saying that you, the deceased, and his wife were all in the car together?"

"Yes. But not long after we left, Pin's phone rang-her assistant called her about something urgent. So Mr.O, the deceased, turned the car around and drove her back to the pub. After we dropped her off, I was left in the car with Mr.O alone. But after a while, I asked to get out midway because my brother came to pick me up."

Phi Jin had advised me to only admit part of the story. I was supposed to tell the police that I got out halfway because my brother came for me.

"You asked to get out in the middle of the trip?"

The middle-aged man with thick lips kept firing questions as his hand quickly jotted something down in his notebook.

"Yes. Lately, there have been some bad rumors about me, as you probably know," I paused briefly.

"That's why I asked my brother to pick me up along the way. I didn't want to stir up more gossip involving Oh."

"Where exactly did you part ways with the deceased?"

.

'*They'll ask where your brother picked you up, and what time...'*

.

I pretended to think.

"Probably near SSS," I said.

...Just say it was around SSS. Phi Jin already had his people check the area. It's a spot between the restaurant, the crime scene, and the condo-no CCTV coverage. They'll never find out that I was at the hotel with him that night.

.

"Do you remember the exact time?"

I shook my head.

"Did you stop or park anywhere before that?"

"No," I answered, firmly.

Phi Jin's younger sister had a shelf full of acting awards. I had to believe it: that I wasn't at the hotel that night, that Phi Jin picked me up, that he had handled everything.

I had to stay confident. I had to do exactly as he told me. The two of us would get through this-together.

"Do you usually spend time or go places with the deceased?"

"No. We weren't that close. He was just someone who hired me."

There were many more questions, but I gave my statement exactly as I had rehearsed. No mistakes. Nothing slipped. Everything went just as we had planned.

But at the very end of the interview, something unexpected happened.

"We found fingerprints at the scene that don't belong to the deceased. We'll need to take yours, Ms. Jeerapat, to verify."

*Fingerprints!? But Phi Jin had said...*

My brows furrowed slightly, but I quickly turned to the officer with a calm, neutral expression.

"Yes."

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# Chapitre 14 : STARS

That evening, we returned to my condo to talk and try to figure out the case.

"Maybe those fingerprints weren't actually mine,"

I said, though deep down, I couldn't lie to myself-I was worried.

"I don't want to take any chances,"

Phi Jin said, sitting quietly and thinking.

"I barely touched anything when I got up off the floor, except for..."

My eyelids fluttered as something came to mind.

"His wallet. Did you handle the wallet too?"

"Good guess."

Phi Jin and I immediately turned toward the sound of a familiar voice in the now-darkened study.

"The police found fingerprints on the wallet that don't belong to P'O."

The owner of the voice slowly stepped out from behind the sofa. Her face was glowing, and her hair was a bit messy, like she had been lying on it.

"Prang?!"

"Yep, it's me."

"How did you get in here?"

"I walked in," she shrugged. "Like I always do."

"But this is my place."

"I never said it wasn't,"

She replied with an amused look.

"Now stop with the nonsense and listen to what I have to say about, Jay."

"You break into someone's room and then tell me to shut up?"

From the corner of my eye, I saw Phi Jin shaking his head with a small smile.

"The police found fingerprints on the wallet that was dropped at the scene. What I want to know is-did you touch that wallet?"

"I wasn't even at the hotel that night... And how do you even know about the wallet and those fingerprints?"

"Come sit with us, Prang,"

Phi Jin cut in. Even in this serious moment, I noticed the slight smile tugging at the corner of his lips.

"Talking to Phi Jin is definitely easier and more professional," Prang said with a grin.

She walked right past me, as if I wasn't even worth speaking to.

"Any other spots where fingerprints were found?" Phi Jin asked quickly.

"No. Just on the wallet," she replied.

"How do you even know about this? It hasn't been reported in the news yet."

"I asked my dad, of course."

She shook her head and gave me a gaze telling me how I didn't know about something like this.

"My dad's the Deputy Commissioner-General of Police."

How could I forget that? Out of nowhere, Prang had just shown up when I returned home-and her attitude was completely different from before.

"So you knew everything from the start?"

"I knew as much as the police did. When the news broke that you were involved in the case, I called my dad. It took a while before he went to check the case for me."

"What do the police know so far?"

The only man in the room asked.

"The police assume that P'O didn't go to the hotel alone that night because a lot of the evidence suggests he brought someone with him. There was an opened bottle of sedative in the backseat of the car. And at the end of the bed, a camera had been set up-like someone was planning to record a video."

Prang looked at me and spoke cautiously.

"But the police couldn't find the memory card, just the empty camera. As for other evidence, all they found were fingerprints on the wallet. There were no hairs or anything that could provide DNA evidence. If someone else really was there that night, they've already destroyed the evidence."

"Why do they think the evidence was destroyed?"

"Isn't it strange that the only fingerprints from P'O were on his personal belongings? Not even the doorknob had his prints. That's unusual." She looked at Phi Jin as if trying to read him before continuing.

"The police contacted the hotel to request CCTV footage, but the hotel claimed the cameras had been out of order for two days before the incident. They couldn't provide any footage from the night it happened. Don't you think that's too much of a coincidence, P'Jin?"

He listened silently and said nothing.

"The police know something's off. They're not going to stop investigating easily."

"It doesn't matter what they know-what matters is whether they have solid evidence."

"Yes. So far, the police have no solid evidence. Everything's just circumstantial. That's why they can't conclude the case. Until a witness came forward saying they saw you with P'O. That's why you were called in for questioning."

Prang stared at me intensely.

"You'll become the prime suspect immediately if the fingerprint results confirm you touched that wallet."

"So all those times you came to my room-was that because you were investigating the case for your dad, Prang?"

I looked at her, my eyes slightly trembling.

"Can we not start a fight right now, Jay? Do I really look like the bad girl?"

There was tension in her voice.

"You once put a cockroach in my shirt pocket and laughed."

I stared at her, asserting my defensive space, my eyes and posture ready for battle.

"What the hell are you even talking about, Jay?"

She shook her head and rolled her eyes. "Let's end the war, girls. I'm heading home,"

Phi Jin stood up, clearly out of patience.

"If the fingerprint results come out..."

He moved closer and whispered something in my ear-words that only I could hear.

After Phi Jin left the room, I turned to look at Prang. But before we could start a war of words, the doorbell rang.

And the person standing behind the door surprised me immensely.

"Did you knock on the wrong room?"

A dimple appeared on her cheek instantly.

"I meant to knock on this one. May I come in?"

A sigh escaped into the shared air before I moved to let her in. But she wouldn't step through.

"Jay, you have to say I'm allowed to come in first."

"Are you a vampire or something, P'Ploy?"

She gave a slight smile. So I turned and called out to the person inside.

"Prang."

And Prang immediately walked over to stand beside me.

"This woman here refused to come in until I invited her. So I just wanted to double-check with you that she's human like us, not some kind of zombie,"

I said with a sarcastic smile.

"I figured you'd be here, Prang. You're playing without inviting me?" she said teasingly.

"Jay, that woman is not human. Don't invite her in,"

Prang said bluntly, then pushed the door shut just like that. But the mischievous older woman was faster-she stopped the door from closing by wedging a shopping bag with a box inside between the door and frame.

"Settle it yourselves. I'm going to take a call,"

The daughter of a high-ranking police officer said, leaving me at the door with the older woman.

"So are you letting me in or not?" she asked.

I didn't understand what was so amusing to her. Why did she always look at me like that-with eyes full of affection and amusement whenever I lashed out? I was starting to genuinely hate P'Ploy's dimples.

They always appeared at the worst moments, making her look like she was above all the drama, like she didn't care one bit about anyone else's emotions. She didn't even react when I glared at her.

She simply took off her own shoes, placed them on the shelf, and swapped them for a pair of shiny metallic silver heels she had just pulled out from the box in her shopping bag. Then she walked casually around my room like it was hers.

"Prang!" I called out to the troublemaker again.

"I'm on the phone, Jay,"

She said, raising a hand to shush me before turning back to her call.

"No, Kiki. I'm not taking any more work this month. If you accept a job, go do it yourself. No, I have enough money. I'm busy right now. Cancel anything you can... What? Botox? I already postponed the appointment with the doctor-I'm not going in tomorrow. Hm? Once this is over, I'll go back to work like usual."

I walked over and stared at Prang, pointing straight at P'Ploy. She followed my finger with an exasperated expression.

"Okay, I have to go. I can't talk right now. Yes, yes, understood. Thank you."

As soon as she hung up, I shot her a glare.

"Why is that woman walking around my room in heels?"

She sighed dramatically.

"She's just excited... Didn't you see the shopping bag? Those are brand new."

Prang collapsed onto the sofa in the center of the room, like she'd used up all her energy.

"Your room's not going to get dirty. The shoes are spotless."

"Nice place, Jay. I really love your kitchen area. Did you decorate it yourself, or was it the previous tenant?"

"I want to know how you even got up to this floor," I asked. Anyone who comes up here needs a keycard, right?

That signature dimpled smile made its appearance again.

"I have friends on every floor," P'Ploy said with a breezy tone.

"I can go wherever, whenever."

She walked gracefully over and sat down next to Prang.

"Is your room missing someone to cook for you, Jay? I'm a really good cook, you know."

Ughhh. As if my life wasn't complicated enough already.

"Can I just have a quiet night to myself tonight? Would you mind going back for now? I have a headache."

. .

And with that, both of them finally made their exits in opposite directions. I'm sure it was in opposite directions because I walked them both to the door.

I waited to see P'Ploy take the elevator back to her own floor-or maybe she stopped to visit one of her friends, who knows. As for the girl next door, she just returned to her room like usual.

Later that night, when I was supposed to be winding down for bed, I started to feel restless. I wanted Prang to come barging into my room with her usual blank face, claiming she needed to borrow chili or fish sauce, or that she was returning something.

Anything would've been fine. But she didn't come. She stayed silent. And eventually, I couldn't take it anymore.

.

I brought myself to stand in front of Prang's room. Just stood there. Then I started to think-this really isn't fair. That girl knows the code to my room and comes and goes like it's a public space. Meanwhile, I've never even stepped foot into hers.

Realizing that, I leaned forward and started pressing numbers on the keypad. But I only had to press once before the door unlocked. That easy?

Interesting. I grinned.

"What do you think you're doing?"

I flinched and stepped back. Prang was standing right behind the door, scanning me from head to toe.

"Trying to hack my door code, are you?"

"Did you just open it from the inside?"

The room's rightful owner burst out laughing like what I said was the funniest thing ever.

"Yeah, I opened it. You thought you cracked the code, didn't you?"

"Tell me your door code," I demanded.

She raised an eyebrow, clearly questioning my reason.

"If you're going to waltz in and out of my room like it's yours, then you should at least give me your code in return."

"No."

Prang made a move to close the door, but I blocked it and stepped forward with what I hoped was an intimidating posture. I was taller than her, after all-maybe that counted for something.

"If any part of your body touches mine, even just a little," she said calmly, "I'll break that body part."

Hahaha... Prang Pannapat, this girl used to be my ex. She's the daughter of a high-ranking police officer, cute face, soft and firm body, and graceful manners.

Only her eyes ever gave away her inner cobra. She used to be a swimmer, loved extreme sports, and trained in martial arts-karate, self-defense, you name it. I wouldn't be surprised if she graduated from the Shaolin Temple.

Which was exactly why I had to stand there and seriously consider: Would she actually break my arm if I ignored that warning?

I steeled myself and began inching forward slowly. But that little woman stood firm at the doorway, not backing down even a single step.

A sweet smile was carefully placed on my face.

"Strong, unshakable Prang. I know I can't match your strength... I only have gentleness to offer you."

As soon as I finished speaking, I darted in and planted a quick kiss on Prang's forehead-the daughter of a high-ranking police officer-before immediately springing back to see her reaction.

Her eyes were practically on fire.

"I'm going to rip your mouth off, Jay!"

She lunged forward, fast. I backed up until I hit the wall behind me. That small right hand of hers shot up-

"No harming the money-maker! Remember?!"

I quickly shouted, hoping to remind her.

She looked clearly irritated, but she didn't lower her hand. That hesitation-I took it as a good sign. So I slowly leaned down again...

And this time, I gently brushed my lips against her soft cheek, making a small but undeniably awkward sound.

Prang's mouth fell open in shock. She stumbled back and hit her door-which promptly closed behind her.

That reaction, that startled little movement, made me feel... bigger. Braver. Because Prang Pannapat the Strong was faltering before the gentleness of Jeerapat.

I began to slowly advance on her again, channeling the energy of a playful psychopath-and honestly, I was on the verge of bursting out laughing when I saw the flicker of fear on Prang's face as her back pressed against the door.

This stunningly beautiful woman had clearly hit some kind of inner wall, frozen in place while I leaned in close enough that our breaths mingled-face to face, eyes locked, lips beginning to move.

"If you were a guy, your balls would've been crushed by now."

Her voice was soft, gentle... How could that possibly be threatening? If anything, it only stirred up more trembling emotion in my chest.

I moved even closer-so close the tips of our noses almost brushed.

"Last chance. Tell me your door code," I said in a soft, calm tone.

"If I tell you, will you back off?"

"I don't believe you,"

I whispered, letting my voice drift low, dreamy... And I probably would've drifted away in that feeling if it hadn't been for what happened next.

Both her hands suddenly shot up and grabbed my boobs, squeezing firmly as she added in a mocking tone:

*"Squeak squeak."*

I immediately jumped back.

"If they were any bigger, I'd call them *'plop plop*' in Thai,"

She added, lifting her eyebrows in challenge.

"Oh yeah? Let's hear what yours sound like."

The moment I said that, Prang backed off quickly, turned on her heel, and stormed into her room-slamming the door shut behind her.

"I'm changing the code!"

Yes! I shouted that back before walking back to my room with a big grin.

Yes, I knew I said that.

But that doesn't mean I have to change the code right now, does it?

Yes! I know it's unfair, alright? And I will change it. Just... not right now. I'm too tied up with this damn case to bother with some silly door code nonsense.

So I decided to quietly retreat to the library room and enjoy some peaceful alone time.

But something had changed.

In the middle of what was once just a room with a sofa and a coffee table, there was now a picnic mattress laid out, two pillows, and a thick beige blanket spread neatly across the floor.

How is this okay, Prannapat? Doing all this in someone else's room without asking?

A faint smile tugged at my lips just as the door creaked open-no need to guess who it was.

She walked in with a scowl, wearing a red Shohoku basketball tank top straight out of the anime Slam Dunk, with a body pillow tucked casually under one arm.

"What are you doing in here?" I asked.

My ex pointed at the setup on the floor.

"That's mine. So of course I'm coming to sleep where my stuff is."

Oh my god.

There are actually people like this in the world?

"Did you even ask the owner of the room first?"

"If I asked, would you have said yes?"

"No "

"Exactly. So why bother asking? Turn off the lights, I'm sleepy."

She settled her very attractive self down on the mattress like she owned the place.

"Prang!"

"Touch me again and this time, I will kick you in the nuts for real."

I sighed and turned my back to hide my smile.

"I don't have one."

. .

The lights were dimmed, leaving just a faint glow. Prang lay on the comfy mattress on the floor, while I was still stretched out on the sofa, facing the backrest.

"Come sleep down here, Jay. It's so cramped up there, You can't even move."

"I like tight spaces."

"You can't sleep like that all night. Come on down."

I remain silent.

"I'll tell you the code to my room if you try sleeping down here. If it's not okay, we can always go back up."

It might have seemed a bit unladylike if I'd jumped right down, so I held back. But then Prang got up-I heard her leave the room. That startled me, and I quickly sat up, regretting for a second that I'd acted so aloof.

Not even three minutes passed before the door opened again. I quickly lay back down in my original position. Then I heard a "beep-beep" sound from the floor area.

A 4-digit code was spoken aloud. Then she added,

"That's my room code. And this-this setup-good enough for you?"

I turned my face from the back of the sofa to look at the floor. Eight pillows had been arranged around the mattress like a soldier's bunker, leaving just enough narrow space in the middle for two people to sleep close together. There was a gap at the foot for us to get in and out.

I stayed quiet, looking at her sitting there on the floor, waiting. The dim light highlighted her smooth, fair skin. I loved that delicate figure, her soft lips, and the spark of mischief in her eyes.

I loved her small chest under that Shohoku team shirt. I loved both her fierce edge and her warmth. And I loved her even more for being here with me now-when I wasn't loved by anyone else.

"Will this do, Jay?"

Of course it will. Why wouldn't it?

I got up and walked over to sit beside her. I reached behind to unhook my bra.

"What are you doing?" Prang looked shocked.

I smirked, my nose flaring, and slid my arms out of the bra straps.

"I am.....,"

I said, as I pulled a light-colored designer bra out through my shirt collar and held it up in front of my roommate.

"I'm going to sleep."

With a quick flick, the small bra sailed through the air and landed dangling from the bookshelf.

Her eyes widened.

"Seriously, Jay? Are you for real?"

I leaned back, grinning smugly.

"You're not sleeping alone, you know. Have some decency for your roommate. Put your bra back on. Now."

"You act like you've never seen one before,"

I said flatly, meeting her eyes without a hint of embarrassment.

"Alright then."

Prang swept her thick, soft hair aside with a flick of her fingers, her deep brown eyes gleaming with defiance. Then her small hands began to movedigging around in a way that made my heart skip.

I held my breath, half-wondering if something unexpected might slip out through the armhole of her tank top. But in the end, a black lacy bra slowly slid past my face before she casually dropped it beside the mattress, her expression full of playful challenge.

But... I wasn't even looking at her face anymore.

I was too focused on the slight bulge pressing against the letters "H" and "K" on the word SHOHOKU on her chest. The glimpse of smooth, fair skin peeking through the gap in her sleeve held me captive.

Stimulate my imagination.

"Have you ever stayed over at someone else's place and done this kind of thing?"

"Done what?"

She lay down and pulled the blanket over both of us.

"Never mind. I don't want to know."

Some things are more comforting not to know.

At our feet stood a large, crystal-clear mirror stretching from floor to ceiling. Behind the glass was a dazzling city view.

The tiny, flickering lights below still moved even in the dead of night. Meanwhile, two stars-her eyes-were fixed on me, glowing, as we lay on our sides facing each other in the bunker of safety that Prang had created.

It felt like time stood still.

I was lost in a trance, staring at the reflection in her eyes, studying the perfect curves of her flawless features. I had once wondered what kind of brain hid behind that high, broad forehead. What kind of mind shaped her thoughts-and created her to be exactly this way?

"Jay."

Her fingertip touched my wrist, then slowly slid down to hold the back of my hand, fingers intertwining, firm and gentle.

"I'm not here because I want to investigate some stupid case."

There are so many beautiful women I've come across in my line of work.

Infatuation-well, that comes easily.

But love-when does that begin?

And once you love someone, do you respect them too?

Are you truly happy to see them grow, to move forward on their own path? Or do you just want to possess them, to hold them back and keep them close?

"I want to know something."

"What?"

"The numbers in your door code-where did they come from?"

She let out a soft, amused laugh.

"My shoe size. Europe, U.S., U.K., take your pick."

"Goddamn it!"

All this time-three years-and I've been using my mom's birthday as my own door code?

What I feel for Prang is everything. She is beautiful and free. I never expected that we had to fully belong to each other.

She has her own life, and I have mine. I only wish for a space between us that feels just right.

And I will always be proud of this woman, whether she walks beside me or not.

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🍁🍁🍁🍁🍁 ***sunyan***

# Chapitre 15: THE CURSE

My dreams at night were still confusing and nightmarish. This time, the daughter of a police officer appeared in them too, making things even more chaotic.

In that strange dream, P' Opo drugged me. I woke up to find myself tied to a bedpost. A woman with curly hair, wearing metallic high heels, walked into the room holding a whip. She cracked it in the air beside me to scare me, then suddenly jumped on top of me, grabbed my chin, and leaned down with eyes like a seductive cat.

Then out of nowhere, a wild-looking girl in a Slam Dunk T-shirt and short shorts kicked the door open and yelled, "Jay, I'm going to kick you in the nuts!!"

It was a nightmare-I told you already.

There was a large mirror at the foot of the bed, half-covered by a curtain to block out some of the light. Probably someone who woke up earlier had done that. She wasn't in the bunker anymore, but the smell of food in the air made it easy to guess where she was.

Is Prang trying to cook something from YouTube again? Oh... I'm about to cry-but instead, a smile creeps up on my lips.

I pulled Prang's body pillow close. Her soft scent still lingered on the fabric. I hugged it for a while before finally getting up and walking to the kitchen.

But the person I saw wasn't Prang.

"P'Ploy?"

The woman with curly hair from my dream was scooping some sauce from a pot to pour over the food. A deep dimple appeared as she smiled at me sweetly and said,

"I cooked rice for you."

The food on the table looked delicious. I mean, the food.

"Where's Prang?" I asked.

"Aww, are you ignoring me already? I came all the way here to cook for you and you're not even a little happy to see me?"

"You should be glad I'm not calling the police. You can't just enter someone's room uninvited." I walked over to inspect the food more closely. "Also, no shoes in this room. Just so you know," I added, eyeing her metallic stilettos.

"They're new. I could even wear them in bed," she said, winking like she somehow knew what I dreamed last night.

"I want to know where Prang is," I said firmly.

"She went back to her room to change. As for you..." she made a circle with her finger near her chest, "you might want to put on a bra first. I can't focus on cooking."

I sighed and rolled my eyes, then headed to the study, grabbed the bra I took off last night, and went back to the bedroom to get dressed.

About thirty minutes later, I came back to the kitchen-and finally saw Prang.

I don't know. I really don't. There's something strange between us. Her eyes looked so sweet when they met mine.

It's like I'm under a curse.

As our eyes met, it was like I'd been cursed-suddenly nervous, my heartbeat out of rhythm. And without meaning to, I smiled at her as I walked closer.

"I'm still right here, you know," said P'Ploy.

Her words felt like a gentle tap that broke the curse. My senses returned, and I could feel everything again. No-wait-it wasn't gone. My heart was still racing. The pink-colored curse was still floating in the air, like pollen. Only I and the one who cast it could feel its effect.

"What happened last night, you two?" came a sudden voice.

I turned around quickly.

"Jeez, you scared me! Don't just appear out of nowhere like that!"

"Appear out of nowhere?"

The voice snapped back with sharp sarcasm.

"I've been standing here for a while. I saw you smiling and blushing from the moment you stepped out of your room all the way to the dining tableand you didn't even look at me once. What were you staring at, huh? Tell me."

I shot a warning glare at Jay to get her to shut up. But it didn't work. No matter how much I tried to act tough, in this situation, I was clearly the one at a disadvantage.

"How did you even get up here?"

I asked, trying to cover my embarrassment with irritation.

"Easy," she said, pointing at Prang.

"You weren't answering your phone, so I called Prang and asked her to let me in."

I wanted to glare at Prang too, but I just couldn't do it. I couldn't intimidate her. I was still under the spell. Damn it! Why does looking into her eyes make me feel so shy?

"This room is fun," said P'Ploy.

"I think I'll start dropping by more often."

Prang just shook her head with a soft smile, then ended the conversation by inviting everyone to eat.

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The sun and the moon took turns shining day after day.

Meanwhile, Prang kept staying over regularly. I started having fewer nightmares. The images from that night-or the dreams where I saw P'O dead on the bed-began to fade. Instead, I started seeing the image of a stunning woman: soft, long-haired, with deep eyes.

I was getting used to sleeping on the wide floor, no longer needing to curl up in a corner like before. Still, I had grown fond of the bunker-our little hideout made from feather pillows. I didn't want to move back to the big mattress just yet.

The floor in the library felt small, warm, and cozy. We got to be close to each other there. That was enough.

As for the news about me?

"Scandal" would be putting it lightly. Things got worse each day because I refused to appear in the media or give interviews to any outlets. Only Je Ang handled the press and answered questions on my behalf.

This hurt my career badly. I was dropped from almost every job. The media that once supported me and praised me turned against me. They dug up every little thing just to get views and shares-feeding the public's outrage. Drama sells. No one wants to go against the tide to defend me. Right?

That's why staying in the condo all day felt much safer than facing those judgmental eyes outside.

To be honest, ever since I became "Jay Jeerapat" - the one everyone knows - I've never had this much free time. I've never had the chance to just sit down and play board games with Prang and P'Ploy on their days off.

I had so much time I even started inventing new recipes and teaching Prang how to cook. I'd sit and watch football with her, even though I didn't understand the game. Sometimes, we'd take turns giving each other face massages before bed. We had fun together in that room.

I loved the scent of her expensive perfume whenever she walked near. It became a sign-Prang is back in the room. And more than the perfume, I loved seeing her in her collection of sporty pajamas and short shorts when we were hanging out in the bunker.

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"Wanna go shopping?"

One morning, that pale-skinned, long-haired daughter of a policeman asked me.

"I'm fine right here,"

I answered.

I didn't want to face those eyes. The stares from everyone watching and judging.

"You can't keep hiding like this forever, Jay," Prang said.

"Let's go out, get some fresh air, change the scenery. How about a spa or a beauty salon?"

"The air outside is full of PM 2.5 dust," I replied.

"Then let's just swim in the condo pool. Or hit the gym. You're starting to get puffy, Jay."

I lifted my shirt, revealing my bra.

"Where exactly am I puffy?"

Prang rolled her eyes and reached over to pull my shirt back down.

"Your cheeks are sagging."

"Then I'll get a thread lift."

"Didn't you say you wanted to be strong and healthy?"

"...."

"You're weak, and not healthy. You've got asthma."

I thought she was giving up-she walked away when I went silent. But no, she came back from the bedroom holding my swimsuit.

"Pick a color. Then go change. I'm going back to my place to grab my stuff."

I ignored her and pulled out my phone, scrolling through fashion websites. Prang frowned.

"Don't make me dress you myself, Jay."

I slowly shifted my eyes to look at her, keeping my face expressionless.

"You know I will," she warned.

"I don't want to go swimming," I replied.

"If you're in better health, your asthma won't act up as much. And right now, there aren't many people at the pool. We can go to the west-side one. It's usually empty."

"Life has to move on, Jay. Let's do the best we can-where we are. I'm right here with you."

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It felt like Prang was slowly sweeping away all the dark clouds in my mind and replacing them with her warmth and light in the here and now. She never asked what really happened to me that night. Never asked about things unrelated to the case.

We were closer than we had been even when we were dating. If she didn't have work or errands or need to go back to her place for clothes, she'd spend all her time in my room.

She didn't always cling to me physically, but she never really left my sight. I had a regular guest now-a shoe-obsessed woman with great cooking skills who kept dropping by.

Ken still called now and then to check on me. Meanwhile, all the men, women, and socialites who used to chase after me had disappeared.

Which, according to Phi Jin, was a good thing. He dropped by once or twice a week to update me on the case and the people he'd sent to investigate.

"It's good those people are gone. I never liked them," he said.

Prang immediately added, "You should trust your sister."

"I mean Jay doesn't need to date anyone at all,"

Phi Jin said with a calm smile.

I never asked how things ended between Phi Jin and Prang. All I knew was they didn't seem to hold any resentment. Whenever they were in my room together, they acted naturally.

Sometimes, Phi Jin even smiled fondly at us when we bickered over something silly.

"I've got five days off. Wanna go to the Maldives? Sea plane across the islands. Clear skies, crystal water, private beaches... and bikinis."

Prang's slender fingers held the corner of a stainless steel fork as she twirled spaghetti around it, lifting the strands before slipping them gently into her soft lips.

"I'm tied up in a legal case. Leaving the country now probably wouldn't look good."

"The flavor's better this time. I think it's an improvement from before... here, try it,"

She said, a trace of red sauce still clinging to the corner of her mouth as she twirled another bite and offered it to me.

"Maybe Phuket or Krabi is doable,"

I said as I opened my mouth to take the bite she offered.

"So? Want to go to Phuket?"

"What about the spaghetti? How is it?"

I reached out and gently wiped the sauce from the corner of her mouth with my fingertip.

"It's good. A bit more practice and you could open your own restaurant."

"You're exaggerating,"

She said, pretending to scold me, but her cheeks turned a deep rosy pink as she smiled wide-so wide it even reached her eyes.

"Tell me the truth."

I stayed silent, just smiling at her.

Maybe I looked too long-her stubborn, sparkling eyes began to cast a spell on me again. A strange pink mist seemed to fill the air. My brain stopped thinking, but my heart started pounding faster. My body moved closer to her-closer, until...

"I want to eat food you make like this all the time."

I understand that these feelings are mine... but why? Why can't I control my own heart?

Her eyes trembled as our heads leaned closer. Her lips parted slightly. The tips of our noses touched. But something made Prang pull back at the last moment-as if she wanted to kiss me but stopped herself.

My heart sank when she closed her eyes tightly, pressed her lips together, and pulled away.

"Going to Phuket sounds nice. I'll book the tickets now,"

She said with a smile that tried to cover everything. She avoided my gaze and looked down at her phone to make the booking.

And me? I felt like I was under a spell again. This time, it was a heavy cloud of awkwardness spreading between us. My confidence crumbled, and the air between us turned tense-from that meal all the way to us lying in the bunker, backs turned to each other.

After that day, it felt like there was a distance between Prang and me. We both pretended nothing had happened. But something had-something I couldn't quite name. It was like an invisible glass wall between us. I couldn't see it, but I couldn't get through it either.

It felt like Prang came here for me, yet I couldn't get close to her beyond that thin wall. I didn't understand what she wanted. Maybe it was kindness or goodwill from someone she once cared about. Maybe it wasn't even that. But whatever it was, it wasn't what I had hoped for.

Right now, I feel torn apart by everything going on. Prang came back and put me back together with what I thought was love. But she might just break me again when she leaves.

I'm scared. I imagine the day this room no longer smells like her. I fear the same feeling I had three years ago returning.

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"Got everything? Are we forgetting anything?"

I shook my head, looking at the two or three suitcases in the back of the car.

"I need to stop by home to pick up my ID card,"

I said. I had forgotten it there on the day Phi Jin returned my bag and brought me to the condo.

"Okay, then let's stop by your house first before heading to the airport."

Our Phuket trip, which we had planned in advance, wasn't canceled-despite the unspoken tension between us. Outside, the sky was clear and bright, with no sign of rain.

When I got home, I found that aside from the housekeeper and two workers, no one else was there. I had no idea where Mom had gone, and as usual, my older brother was probably busy with work or something of his.

I gathered my ID card and some personal items from my bedroom. Prang was waiting downstairs. We got in the car together, started the engine, and the big gate opened by remote control.

We were just about to head to Phuket-just two to four hours away-when another car pulled in, blocking the driveway.

Two or three men in full khaki uniforms stepped out of their four-wheeled vehicle and approached me. They introduced themselves before stating the reason they were here.

"Miss Jeerapat, your fingerprints match the ones found on the wallet of the deceased at the crime scene. We need to ask you to come with us for questioning."

Prang looked pale-paler than me, even-as the officers surrounded me and escorted me into the back seat of a police car with sirens. I turned to look at her through the rearview mirror as the car drove away, farther and farther from her.

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# Chapitre 16: TRUST

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"I wasn't at the scene."

"Then can you explain how your fingerprints ended up on the victim's wallet?"

"They must have gotten on it while we were in the car. I've already told you-I was in the car with him that night,"

I said, pretending to recall.

"I picked it up before my brother came to get me. P'O left his wallet on the center console, and when the car braked, it slid over to my side. So I picked it up and handed it to him."

It was just another script-and I was an award-winning actress. I had to pull it off.

"Miss Jeerapat, are you aware that your fingerprints are the only ones found at the crime scene?"

I was being interrogated. I had to answer clearly and explain exactly where the wallet had been, how it could have fallen, and more. They kept circling back with different questions, but I stuck to my story.

"I deny all accusations. As for anything else, I'll give my statement in court. If you have further questions, please speak with my lawyer."

I started to walk out-but a man stepped in my way.

"Sorry, but we can't let you go yet. We need to keep you for further questioning."

"You have no right to do that."

Why hasn't Phi Jin shown up yet?

"The police are within their rights to follow procedures."

"I'd like to post bail."

"This case is huge. It's all over the national news. I can't release you yet, not until-"

"Inspector, there's an urgent call,"

One officer said as he entered the room, holding a phone.

"Tell them I'll call back later."

"But sir, I really think you should take this call."

The inspector looked annoyed but left the room. He was gone only a short while before returning, clearly frustrated.

"You have some powerful connections, Ms. Jeerapat,"

He said with a long sigh, as if he was holding back his irritation.

"I'm letting you go today. But once we have solid evidence, we'll meet again-in court. You'd better be ready to prove your innocence."

"You should find real evidence that shows I was actually there,"

I replied calmly.

The inspector's displeased face disappeared behind me as I walked out.

Outside, the media from every outlet had gathered, packed tightly together. As soon as one of them saw me, chaos erupted instantly.

I was surrounded by dozens of people, microphones, and cameras. Noise, questions, stares, and flashing lenses hit me from every direction. It felt like I was being attacked from all sides.

Then, a hand pulled me close, and an arm wrapped around me, guiding me steadily toward the exit.

"Hey."

My brother gave me a faint smile.

"Please make way, everyone. Let my sister through," he said calmly.

"She can't give interviews right now-it could affect the case."

I looked into his eyes as another man stepped up beside me, raising his arm to shield me from the crowd of reporters.

"If you have any more questions. Ask me anything tomorrow. I'll answer myself then. But for now, please step aside," my brother said.

I used to think I was used to the camera flashes-but not today. These flashes felt like they were stabbing into me, exposing and humiliating me.

I took a deep breath to gather strength, held my head high, and walked toward the car, flanked by the two men I loved most. Our lawyer followed closely behind.

Once the car door closed, the white Bentley sped off immediately.

"I want to go back to my condo," I said.

"Let's stop by the house first. I'll take you back after," my brother replied.

"The reporters already know the fingerprint matched yours," Je Ang finally spoke up.

"What did the police say?"

My brother asked, eyes fixed on the road.

"They said the prints matched. I denied everything, just like we discussed. But they didn't believe me. They wanted to detain me."

"My heart nearly stopped when I found out you were being arrested!" Je Aung exclaimed.

"They didn't arrest me-just called me in for questioning. But later, it looked like they were going to hold me."

"Exactly! So what did you do to get the police to release you??"

"Yeah,"

Phi Jin turned to look at me with a surprised expression.

"I'm here just in case something happens. They haven't filed the case in court yet, but even if they do, we can still fight it in court," h

He said, frowning.

"I haven't done anything yet."

"But when the police were about to take me into custody, they suddenly got a phone call. Then, they let me go so easily. They even said I had powerful connections. I thought it was you who pulled some strings."

"Heh,"

My brother let out a low chuckle and smiled slightly.

"It wasn't ne. We really do have powerful connections."

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I went home, and we sat down to talk and plan everything to make sure I could clear my name completely. Once everything was sorted, Je asked to leave, and it was Phi Jin who drove me home himself.

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The familiar square-shaped elevator was rising steadily. When it stopped on the 48th floor, the door opened. I walked down the hallway and stopped in front of a large door. It opened after I scanned my fingerprint.

The deputy police chief's daughter was sitting in front of the Smart TV, holding her hands together. The news was reporting:

*"Famous model Jay has been detained for questioning after becoming a suspect in the murder of Mr. Arun Kobkitsataporn."*

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As I was wondering whether news or electrons travel faster these days, the woman on the TV turned around and stared at me with loving eyes, not even blinking. Her slender body stood up, walked quickly over, and wrapped her arms tightly around my neck.

"Why did you come back so late?"

I still remembered how pale and anxious Prang looked earlier that morning. Now, that same face was leaning against my neck, her warm breath brushing my skin.

"I was arrested by the police,"

I said, pressing my face into her silky hair while hugging her tightly.

"Dad said they released you a while ago."

"Prang, was it because of you that the police let me go?"

"I didn't have anyone to travel with. You couldn't ditch me before the flight."

I held her even tighter.

"What did you do to make your dad help me?"

"I told my dad that if you were locked up, I'd feel like an orphan."

We both laughed, and then I gently pulled away from her.

"I'm serious, Prang."

"I have my own ways. But from now on, you have to prove that you're innocent. My dad won't be able to help if they have solid evidence against you."

I nodded. Her slender fingers reached out and tucked a strand of my hair behind my ear. "Are you hungry?"

I nodded again.

"Spaghetti, okay? It's the only thing I've managed to cook well."

A faint smile appeared on my face, followed by another nod.

I didn't want to think anymore about why Prang was here. I was tired-tired of all the confusion, the push-and-pull between us, tired of guarding my heart while everyone else seemed to have already judged me.

But Prang... she was one of the few people who actually asked me if I had eaten. So I needed to give this my best shot-even if, in the end, she might walk away.

"Can we book another trip to Phuket? Tomorrow?"

I asked, halfway through the spaghetti on my plate.

"Mm."

That was all she said.

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The next day, I packed my things and escaped the scandalous headlines, arriving on an island with a luxurious villa and a private white-sand beach.

It felt like stepping into another world-leaving all the chaos behind and soaking in a private pool with a view of the endless horizon and layered shades of the sea.

A stunning woman in a pink bikini raised her camera to take a photo of me. Her bright smile behind the lens caught my eye, pulling my gaze away from her perfect curves.

Prang stepped into the pool, her body soaked. Strands of her hair clung to her skin, highlighting her soft, glowing pinkish skin. I felt drawn to her, wanting to be close.

My heart fluttered when our smooth skin brushed against each other, but all I could do was hide how I felt.

We swam together every day, walked along the beach, went into town, took photos, hunted for good food, laughed at the same silly jokes, shared drinks, and did some typical water activities.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" I asked, puzzled.

The woman beside me gave a sarcastic smile and shook her head in frustration.

"You're still the same."

The way she said "still the same" sounded more like criticism than a compliment. I frowned behind my sunglasses at her comment.

"The same?"

"A flirt," she said with a relaxed tone that still carried a hint of emotion.

"What did I do?"

The evening breeze blew across the beach. Gentle waves lapped at the shore, the salty scent of the sea filled the air. Tourists in bikinis lounged, walked, or passed by.

The beautiful woman lying next to me had fine sand stuck to her skin. Her naturally fair skin was beginning to tan from the sun.

The honey-colored tan made her slender, athletic body even more attractive and mysterious.

"Ever since we got here, you've been wearing those dark sunglasses from morning till night."

She stared out at the beach with a resigned expression.

"Tell me-if it's not to hide your lustful eyes from ogling those barely dressed girls, then why are you wearing sunglasses even at night?"

I let out a slow sigh and shook my head. Prang knew me well-though not completely.

So I took off my sunglasses.

"Look at me."

She turned her eyes from the beach back to me, confident she had figured me out.

"Why?"

I held her gaze for a moment, letting the golden sunlight reflect in my eyes, then slowly lowered my gaze. I looked at her nose, her soft lips, her rosy cheeks, the delicate hair on her neck, her smooth shoulders, and the smile resting just above her bikini top.

My eyes lingered at the curve of her chest beneath the sheer white lace cover-up, then slowly traveled down to her hips and her thighs dusted with sand, peeking from under the edge of her shorts.

"Stop looking at me like that,"

She said, lifting her hand to block my gaze.

I chuckled softly.

"You asked what I've been looking at these past few days through my sunglasses. I just showed you."

"Put the glasses back on,"

She said, lowering her hand and turning back toward the sea.

"I told you-put them on."

"No point now that I've been caught."

Her body language showed she was flustered, though she tried to hide it behind a playful scowl.

"Prang... give me your hand,"

I said as I held mine out, palm down.

"What is it?"

She asked, frowning slightly as she nervously held out her palm, unsure of what I was about to reveal.

"Don't pull your hand away."

She kept flinching, almost taking her hand back every time I was about to open mine.

"Don't mess around, Jay. Are you trying to prank me or something? What's in your hand?"

Her anxious expression made me smile gently.

"Sometimes, you're afraid that what I give you might hurt,"

I said, still holding my fist closed.

"And I'm just as scared-that you won't trust me and will pull away."

She blinked slowly, uncertainly.

"Prang, can I try one more time?"

She looked into my eyes, and I saw the fear mixed with courage in hers.

Her hand, once hesitant, now stayed steady.

So I slowly opened my fingers-revealing nothing but empty space between our hands. Her face showed a flicker of surprise for just a second, before I gently reached out and held her hand firmly.

I saw a faint smile form on her slightly blushing cheeks. And her answer was to softly curl her fingers around mine in return.

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That sunset... was the most beautiful I had seen in three years.

We spent our time here as if there was nothing to worry about. Some evenings, we went out to enjoy the lights of the town. On other nights, we stayed in, just the two of us, watching movies. We disconnected from social media and soaked in every moment.

"Oh wow, the lead actress is so hot! I love her hair color."

The lights in the living room of our rental were dimmed. We laid out a blanket on the floor and watched a movie about a half-Atlantian hero on a quest with a red-haired sea princess to find a trident called the *"Kreesul."*

"Her boobs are amazing too."

A piece of microwave popcorn flew from her hand and bounced off my cheek just as she finished her sentence.

Prang turned to look at me, while I, with a bag of popcorn resting on my chest, pretended not to notice anything.

"It's pretty good. I wanted you to try some," I said casually.

"By throwing it at my face?" she replied, rolling her eyes at me.

"Here," I laughed and tossed another piece of popcorn at her.

"You're so messy,"

She muttered, brushing the crumbs off herself before lying back down.

"Give me some."

So I handed her the bag of popcorn.

"I don't want to get my hands dirty."

"Yeah? So?"

"I just don't want to get my hands dirty, okay?"

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It was our last night in Phuket. After a full day of activities, we agreed to just relax in the room and watch a movie. The living room opened up to a glass door with a view of the sea and pool. Around us were a pizza tray, bottles of flavored water, and some snacks.

The moon hung bright in the dark sky-just like someone lying beside me. I pulled the popcorn bag back and rested it on my body as she shifted closer, our arms touching, and gave me a look that clearly meant: feed me.

There was a quiet kind of happiness in the way my fingertips brushed against her soft lips, again and again. What stirred something deeper in me, though, was the sense that it was Prang herself who was intentionally letting her lips-or maybe even her tongue-brush lightly against my fingers. And both of us pretended not to notice what was happening.

The heat rising in my chest made me find an excuse to step away when the popcorn finally ran out.

"I'm going to wash my hands," I said.

She looked at me silently. God, it felt so good-and I wanted to kiss her so badly I could scream. But I had to pull away.

Because once, I had been on the cover of *Kulasatri Sri Siam* magazine. And yes-I am a lady.... I am a lady...I am a lady!

I walked into the bathroom and decided to take a shower, hoping the water would cool down whatever it was that had started to burn inside me.

After washing up, I applied lotion to my skin. Then I put on a thin straptop-just one delicate strap over the shoulder-and paired it with shorts as pajamas.

When I came back out, the movie was almost over. Prang gave me a small pout as she glanced over at me.

"You left me alone with a bunch of half-naked men fighting each other."

"I went to shower,"

I said, sitting beside her before leaning back down again.

"Going to sleep already?"

She asked-and from the way her eyes dropped to my chest, I figured she noticed I wasn't wearing a bra.

"Not yet. I just wanted to shower before watching more. It's not even 9 p.m."

Prang stayed until the movie ended, then got up to shower too. I picked a new movie and lay back, watching while waiting for her to return.

I couldn't tell if the movie was boring, if the room was just too comfortable, or if I was truly exhausted. But the images on screen started to blur and drift away. I shifted around to find a more comfortable position-and sleep slowly crept in to claim me.

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Then came a soft, gentle touch.

A soft, lingering touch brushed the skin behind my ear, gently pulling me out of sleep. My eyelids slowly fluttered open.

My fingers moved to grip the thin mat I was lying on, just as I realized someone was gathering up my hair and kissing the back of my neck, then trailing down to the back of my upper arm. I was lying on my side, facedown on the floor.

The thin strap of my shirt slipped from my shoulder to my upper arm, nudged down by the tip of a nose-making way for lips to trace along my skin. And even though my body welcomed the sensation, I didn't let her know how I felt.

"Do you even realize what you're doing?"

"I'm drunk. Why don't you tell me?" s

She replied with a soft, teasing laugh.

Her fingers slowly traced along my side, lingering near my ribs. She leaned back, resting her left hand under her head, and looked at me playfully.

"You're crossing a line."

A shiver ran through me when her fingernails lightly scratched down my back.

"You used to like this, right, Jay? When I scratched your back like this?"

I turned over onto my back, shifting my gaze from the rippling moonlight on the floor to her glowing cheeks.

Prang was still smiling-that sly, warm smile. She smelled freshly showered, and it teased my nose. Her eyes glowed golden in the light from the TV. She brushed a lock of hair from my face.

"Did I get my visa?"

Her voice was soft and barely audible as her fingertips touched my neck, trailing slowly down the center of my body. She stopped around my waist. I wasn't sure if she meant to, but her wrist brushed just beneath my chest as her fingers moved downward.

My breathing betrayed what I was feeling.

"Answer me, Jay,"

She said while lifting my shirt slightly, her hand caressing just under my ribs.

"Can I cross the line, Jay?"

Her nose nudged me to lift my head as her lips found my neck again, planting gentle kisses, biting softly here and there. It didn't feel like she was asking for permission.

"Do you still hate me, Prang?" I pulled her up.

"Have you stopped hating me yet?"

Her pink-tinged face turned slowly toward me.

"I don't know," she whispered.

"...."

"I just know I want you... so badly,"

She said as her thumb brushed my lips.

"I hate myself... for still wanting to love you. It hurts that I still believe, even when my mind tells me not to trust you."

Her nose nearly touched mine.

"And most of all, it aches..." she whispered close to me,

"because I'm afraid you'll disappear again... afraid you still hate me because of Jin."

"I thought you hesitated because you were disgusted by the case... by me."

She gently stroked my cheek with her thumb and shook her head slowly.

"I'm just afraid you'll cheat on me again,"

She said with eyes that had already given in.

"It really hurt, Jay."

I was the one who leaned in this time, giving her a kiss. Her slender neck was wrapped in my arms. My heart ached. Our lips met deeply-tongues and caramel-sweet breaths mingling-while her hands and fingers claimed every inch of me.

The heat spread from my chest to my stomach. I exhaled heavily when her lips left mine to move lower. Prang claimed her victory in crossing the boundary by pressing her lips against my breast, biting gently through the fabric until even the thin strap left a mark.

The soft strap of my camisole was slid down to my waist along with the collar of my shirt, leaving my skin exposed. A wet, velvety touch teased gently at the tip of my breast, sending shivers through me. My body arched slightly, silently pleading for more-but she held back.

"Since when did you learn to play hard to get?"

I closed my eyes, exhaling slowly, wishing her tongue would go further, touch me more.

"Tell me clearly. What do you want?" she said with a smirk.

"Prang, please... don't tease me like this,"

I whispered, breathless-right before that soft, sensitive spot finally received her full attention.

Heat bloomed across my skin. My legs responded instinctively to the wave of sensation rushing through me. Every part of me awakened, ready to receive what was coming next.

"Prang... I need to tell you something,"

I murmured, just as her lips gently grazed my skin, leaving warm marks in their wake.

"Speak," she said softly.

"Mmm..." I moaned faintly as my outerwear was pulled down.

"Wait-after this..."

Her warm, textured mouth trailed closer to the edge of my underwear, her touch roaming around my thighs, the soft creases of my body, until a fingertip brushed somewhere sensitive. The feeling made me gasp aloud.

"Say it, Jay. I'm listening," she whispered.

Even though there was still fabric between us, I let out another shaky breath as her chin brushed against the sensitive spot at the base of my body.

"Prang..."

"Hmm?" she murmured, her nose nuzzling closer.

My thin underwear was being slowly pulled down-nearly exposing what I had always kept hidden.

"I've never slept with Puen," I finally said.

"....."

Silence.

Prang lifted her head from what she was doing. My breath was still heavy, full of expectation-wondering what might've happened if she'd kept going, if that last barrier between us had come off completely.

"What do you mean?"

She asked. The mood shifted. A tension grew between us, her eyes locking onto mine with confusion and intensity.

Was it just me feeling suddenly awkward, embarrassed, and unsure of what to do? We had come to a sudden stop-my bare chest still tingling from her mouth, her chin still so close to that one sensitive place, and my legs still open, waiting for her touch.

"It was a misunderstanding... What happened in the past. I never slept with Puin."

I saw so many emotions flicker across her face-anger, confusion, disbeliefall while she remained between my thighs, unmoving.

"Tell me everything. Now."

No. I shouldn't have said anything. Not now. Oh God, why did I say it now?

I bit my lip and looked at her, torn between shame, frustration, and regret. I felt exposed-in every sense of the word.

"Are we seriously going to have this conversation like this?"

Prang looked at me. Her soft cheeks had turned a deeper shade of red-and so had mine. She shifted and sat up, finally giving me a chance to scramble and pull my clothes back on.

Yes....I feel like crying now. 😅

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# Chapitre 17: Big News on a Clear Day

Prang and I were having a silent argument. Since I told her about my past last night, she got really upset—so much so that she called Je Ang in the middle of the night and demanded she come to the condo the next day, without explaining why. Honestly, I was partly to blame too, for keeping things from her.

We flew out early that morning, both in a foul mood. We didn’t speak at all. We each just did what we knew we had to do, silently.

Why didn’t I try to talk to her or apologize? Because I was still upset about last night. I knew she must have lost her temper after hearing what I said. I understood.

But understanding and emotions don’t always go hand in hand. So I stayed quiet in my own corner, and she stayed in hers. That was that.

When we got back to the condo, Prang went straight to her room without a word. She disappeared. A short while later, Je Ang arrived—and just then, my door flew open.

"Do you need something from me, Prang?" she asked.

Her voice suddenly caught in her throat. She saw the fury on Prang’s face— the sharp brows drawn tightly, her eyes blazing as if ready to burn down anything in her path.

**“Thonglaw Boonlert!!”** Prang shouted.

Je Ang’s face went pale with shock as Prang stormed in and, on the way through the kitchen, grabbed a stainless steel pot lid.

“Waaahh!! Jay, what’s going on?!”

A flamboyant guy ran behind me in fear.

“Is your name Thonglaw?”

I asked my question just as Prang marched toward us with a fierce expression. Her eyes were locked only on Je Ang.

"Ahhhhh!! Can you please stop her first? Don’t ask me anything right now!" said the man hiding behind me.

“Thonglaw,”

Prang said in a cold, steady voice. Her face was calm, but her eyes burned with fury. She held a pot lid like a weapon—she looked terrifying when she was angry.

“Is it true you told us to break up?”

“Prang, put the lid down,” Je Ang said.

“Shut up!”

She snapped, her fierce eyes warning Je Ang not to talk.

“Help me out, please!”

Cried the man behind me, curling his large frame tightly behind me.

“Answer her, Je!”

Prang shouted, trying to move around me to get to Je Ang. But Je Ang clung to me for protection, and we ended up struggling awkwardly in the hallway.

“Let’s talk calmly, Prang! I am scared nowww!” Je Ang cried.

“Put the lid down. I’m worried it’ll get dented,”

I said, trying to pull it from her hands. But it was useless. Even though she’s smaller than me, Prang’s reflexes and strength have always been better.

“Move, let me get to Je Ang!”

She ordered me, her eyes firm and determined.

“What are you going to do? That’s all in the past. We’ve talked about it and we understand each other now… right?” I asked, unsure.

“If you hit her, the pot lid will just get ruined.”

“The past can’t be changed, but anger can still be expressed. Someone has to pay!!!”

At the end of the sentence, she jumped.

Prang pushed past me so hard I stumbled backward. She found an opening and started swinging the pot lid at Je Ang relentlessly.

I heard the flamboyant guy scream loudly as Prang tried to hit Je Ang on the head. I did my best to block her, but we were struggling so hard that I started running out of breath.

“Stop—” I gasped, sucking in air deeply, my face turning red.

When Prang and Je Ang saw my condition, they paused. Prang walked off to get my inhaler while Je Ang supported me and helped me sit down on the sofa.

The chaos calmed down—for now—though Prang was still shooting daggers at Je Ang with her eyes.

“Are you feeling better?” she asked.

I nodded, looking around nervously, afraid they’d start fighting again.

“So… did the pot lid get dented?” I asked.

Prang rolled her eyes and replied,

“No.”

“Good.”

“You’re not even worried if my skull got dented?” Je Ang muttered.

“Je, maybe staying quiet would be smart right now,” I warned.

“I’m sorry, Prang,” Je Ang said softly, eyes downcast.

“I’m not forgiving you,” Prang replied coldly.

“Then what do you want me to do? Did you tell her how I helped you both meet, how I was the one who brought you together?” Je Ang pleaded.

"That still doesn’t make up for the time and feelings we’ve lost,"

Said the person I almost got intimate with last night.

"Jay, please help me out here."

I sat between the two of them. One looked like they were about to kill someone with a kitchen tool at any moment, while the other looked timid and was trying to use me as a shield.

"Can we stop this already? I had enough stress as it is,"

I sighed at the drama.

"I owe Prang one favor, okay?"

"Fine," Prang gave in reluctantly, and peace returned once again.

"So Je, can you go now? I want to sleep."

"I can’t go yet. I have some gossip to tell," suddenly she looked serious. "Is it important?"

Angsumalin nodded confidently before beginning.

"Do you remember the new girl, Marisa?"

I nodded.

"Well, yesterday I scolded her for being late. Some of the event organizers had complained. But she talked back, so I ended up bringing up how she skipped work during the stock event last month, which I had to clean up for her."

"And?"

"Remember the wrap party for *Leh Rai* that I missed? And you had to ride back with Mr. O?"

"Who could forget that?"

"Oh, come on, don’t make that face, Jay."

Prang just listened quietly, but her hand rested lightly on my thigh.

"Keep going, sis."

"So, it was Tum and Marisa. Tum got angry and said I didn’t understand anything. Marisa didn’t mean to skip work, but Khun Pin called her, asking for help. She begged Marisa to skip work and wait at her house. She even promised that if Marisa came, she’d be the lead actress in the next project. So Marisa ditched work and waited at the house since early evening."

"Pin told Marisa to skip work?"

"Yes. And you know how Khun O is—a playboy, always with different women. People have been gossiping about him and Marisa for ages. Pin wants a divorce, but Khun O refuses,"

He leaned in like she was whispering a secret.

"Well, he’s rich, right? He got to where he is today because of his wife. All the investments, the house, the car—it’s all Pin’s money. He’s not going to leave that easily."

"But if Pin wants a divorce and O is cheating, why doesn’t she just file for divorce? She’d definitely win."

"That part, I don’t know for sure. Maybe she’s afraid of the scandal."

"Are you sure it’s true?" I started to feel unsure.

"Who do you think I am? I’ve been around. I have good connections in this industry. I don't just spread rumors. I check my facts, Jay."

"So what happened next?" Prang urged her to go on.

"Don’t you think it’s all a bit suspicious? Pin wants a divorce, Khun O won’t agree. Then the night everything happened, Pin told Marisa to skip work and pulled me away from you. Or… am I just overthinking it?"

"I’m going to talk to her," I said.

Could it be that Pin knew P'O was planning to take me to the hotel? Is that even possible?

"Pin and Khun O even argued at work. Kade knows all about it—she works closely with O, always by his side."

"You mean the quiet nerdy girl from the crew?"

"Yes, that’s her. She may seem quiet, but she knows everything that goes on. If something goes missing, ask her—she’ll know where it is."

"What do you think, Prang?"

I turned to the girl next to me, who was biting her lip with a serious expression.

"Could Pin be involved? I don’t know about the murder, but asking Marisa to skip work—was that really just a coincidence?"

"That night, when Pin told me you weren’t there, how did she act?"

"She didn’t act strange or anything. She just said she thought you had gone to deal with Marisa skipping work. Then she asked me to leave with her. But she didn’t say she was the one who told Marisa to go wait at her house."

"Maybe Pin did ask her but didn’t want you to know it was her idea."

I listened in silence.

"I don’t know, Jay. This whole thing feels too connected in strange ways. I’m going to talk to my dad."

I grabbed her hand.

"Please, Prang, don’t tell anyone yet."

"Jay, P’O was murdered. If there’s anything that could lead to the real killer, the police will dig deeper. And it might help clear your name. Right now, you’re the only suspect, you know that? They might not have found a motive yet, but the one piece of evidence they have... it points to you."

"If the police can’t find solid proof that you were actually there, you’ll be off the hook. Nothing’s certain yet, Jay, and I don’t want outsiders to know. The more people dig, the messier this gets. The rumors about you are already bad enough." Je-Ang said.

"But if that night, Pin really separated Je from you on purpose so you’d end up going with P'O, and the police believe that Jin picked you up halfway… Pin also had problems with her husband. That could be seen as a motive. Wouldn’t it be a good thing if the police kept investigating?"

"Prang… Phi Jin never came to pick me up that night. I was drugged. I don’t even know what really happened."

At that moment, the entire room fell silent.

Prang reached over, wrapped her arm around my neck, and pulled herself closer. Her head rested gently on my shoulder.

"You don’t look that surprised… You already had a feeling, didn’t you, Prang?"

She didn’t say anything. No sound came from the one leaning against me.

"Prang, but I didn’t—"

"Don’t speak. Don’t say it,"

Prang cut in, just as Jae reached out and gave my hand a gentle squeeze.

"Everyone… I’m not—"

Prang reached over and covered my mouth. "Jay, really… we don’t need to talk about it."

I pulled her hand away from my face.

"Prang."

"Listen. I see how you wake up in the middle of the night from nightmares. That’s already hard enough. You can’t even sleep in a bed anymore. You’re thinner. Your eyes are always dark, like you haven’t rested at all. Jay, we’ve come so far from that night already. I don’t want you to go back and dig through those memories again."

I pulled her face toward mine and kissed her. Then again. And again. I kissed her soft red lips repeatedly until I was finally satisfied, then gently pulled away.

"When will you stop saying that? I wasn’t raped."

"What do you mean?"

Prang’s eyes widened in shock. So did Je’s.

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*"From the test results, I think Jay wasn’t physically assaulted."*

After escaping the hotel that night, I forced myself to ignore the disgust I felt toward my own body. I resisted the urge to wash anything off.

Instead, I dragged myself—disoriented and barely functioning—to stand in front of my aunt’s house. A doctor.

I didn’t even know what time it was. I just knew it was still dark out.

I was confused, scared, and had no idea where else to go.

Auntie told me to calm down as I kept muttering that I wanted a physical examination. She brought me to the hospital, ran every possible test, and gave me the proper medication as per the protocol.

"Are you sure, Auntie?" I asked.

"Science tells me so. And if you’re not staying to wait for the lab results, I’ll send them to you later," she said.

"Auntie, please don’t tell anyone I came here to get checked."

"Do your mom and Jin know?"

"....."

I shook my head.

"If something’s wrong, you can tell me, Jay."

"Nothing’s wrong. I just… I just want this to stay buried. That’s enough for me."

I said goodbye to my aunt—my father’s younger sister—and left for a resort upcountry without telling anyone. Not until the news of P’O’s death—and the fact that someone had seen me leaving with him—was what made me come back.

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"He was probably dead before he could do anything. Someone must’ve entered the room while I was unconscious."

"Why do you think someone went in while you were unconscious?"

I clamped my mouth shut, realizing too late that I’d said something I shouldn’t have. I didn’t want anyone to know that he had gone in to destroy the evidence.

"Oh god… what is all this? Someone's trying to frame you?"

Je Yung let out a worried groan.

"Who do you think did it?"

I shook my head.

"Then why did you come back in that state? Shaking, terrified… You scared me to death." Prang said.

"That night, I woke up in the hotel’s parking lot. And then everything got worse when I realized what he had wanted to do. The fear, the disgust—it’s burned into my memory. I’d been drugged, and when I woke up again, I was on the bed with him. Everything felt so wrong. I thought he’d already done something to me… even though the tests later confirmed nothing had happened."

I remembered the red marks—on my neck, on my chest.

Prang pulled me into a hug.

"Um… are you two going to kiss again? If so, I’ll head home now. But wait, how did you even know my real name?" Je-Ang asked.

That was enough to make everyone laugh.

Je-Ang stayed a little while longer before heading home. Prang had some work to do in the evening.

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Once I was alone in the room, I called Phi Pin to talk about what Je-Ang had mentioned about P’Pin. After that, I called Prang. She said she’d be coming back to the condo, so I went to bed early.

Later that night, I woke up to someone gently waking me—with soft kisses trailing across my skin. Her fingers lightly scratched down my back, sending shivers through me. Her freshly showered scent and soft hair made me crave her even more.

“Mmm… what are you doing?”

She turned me onto my back, nuzzling into my neck, tilting my chin up.

“What do you think this looks like?”

She murmured, still kissing my face gently.

I slid my hands into her silky hair and slowly pulled her face up.

“Prang, stop for a second.”

But instead, she removed my hands and pinned them above my head, trailing kisses down my arm. I let out a long sigh.

“Prang… I have my period.”

She paused, lifting her head to meet my eyes. We looked at each other in the dark, then burst out laughing. She rested her head against my neck.

“You didn’t have it last night.”

“It just started this afternoon.”

“Damn it.”

I wrapped my arms around her waist and flipped us so I was on top.

“You can’t make a move, but I can.”

Prang laughed and pulled me up into a kiss before whispering against my lips,

“I couldn’t handle it either. Mine just started this morning.”

I flopped down beside her.

“Ugh, the gods must hate me.”

“What gods?”

"....."

I didn’t answer—just laughed, making her curious.

"Jay."

"Yes."

Her fingers gently ran through my hair.

“I’m sorry,” she said softly.

“For what?” I asked.

“For everything… everything in the past.”

I reached for her hand and held it, then pressed a kiss to her fingers.

“Can we just let it go? All of it?”

That night, I was intoxicated by her kisses. We playfully explored each other with soft touches, noses brushing against skin, warm and tender. Beneath the blankets, her touch on my upper body was gentle, lingering.

I loved the way she touched me just as much as I loved touching her. It was torture not being able to go all the way—but in that moment, it was enough. So much that I couldn’t help but bury the tip of my nose into the softness of her skin, overwhelmed with how much I wanted her.

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"***Hello and welcome back to Channel Four News. It's time to dig into the truth. Today, we’ll talk about a rather serious topic – the death of Mr. O Arun Kobkitsathaporn, a well-known TV drama producer. I'm Gus, here to bring you all the facts.***

*There are some details about this case that I’d like to share with you. Let's start from the beginning.*

*Here's what happened: Mr. O went missing on the 6/xx/xxxx. His wife, Pin, reported him missing to the police on the 8th. Then, on the 9th, his body was found in a well-known hotel. In the room, they found Viagra and injectable drugs.*

*At first glance, it looked like he died from a drug overdose. But that’s not the whole story. There were some suspicious details. The autopsy showed that his skull had a dent – possibly from being hit with a hard object.*

*So, in simple terms, it’s possible he was struck on the head and then died from a heart attack caused by a drug overdose.*

*Also, a camera was found in the room, as if something was going to be recorded, but the memory card was missing. His phone was also gone.*

*So, was someone else there with him? I don’t know. I’m just sharing the facts as they are, without giving any personal opinions.*

*After the autopsy results came out, the police continued their investigation. They discovered that Mr. O had checked into the hotel under his own name on the 5/xx/xxxx, but he didn’t actually stay that night.*

*This raised suspicion that it might be a murder, but no suspect has been found yet, since there was no evidence left behind. Everything still appears like he died from a drug overdose.*

*The investigation team asked the hotel for CCTV footage. But the hotel owner, Mr. Chatch Lertphornnan, said there was none—the security cameras had been broken for two days before the incident. Quite the coincidence, isn’t it?*

*Also, none of the hotel staff could say exactly when Mr. O arrived that night or whether he brought anyone with him.*

*Now, while the police were still collecting evidence to find out the truth, there was a new development. A witness came forward and said that on the night Mr. O disappeared, he was seen with actress Jeerapat—who had been rumored to be romantically involved with him. She was reportedly seen leaving with Mr. O that night.*

*This revelation made the story go viral across the country.*

*Ms. Jay Jeerapat told the police that it was true she went out with Mr. O that night, but she said she got out of the car halfway because her brother came to pick her up. However, the police later found her fingerprints on Mr. O’s wallet, which was at the scene.*

*She then explained again, saying she only touched the wallet because it had fallen when the car braked, and she picked it up for him.*

*Based on this explanation, the police had to release Ms. Jay while both sides continue gathering evidence to prove their case.*

*But here’s the latest twist—do you know who is the major shareholder of the hotel where this happened? Take a guess! Tick tock... Okay, time's up—I’ll tell you.*

*Listen carefully: one of the main shareholders of the hotel is Mr. Jin Wiboonthanakit. Sound familiar? Of course it does—he’s the older brother of Ms. Jeerapat, the actress who’s now a key suspect in this case.*

*Now, let’s piece this together. In short:*

*Ms. J went out with Mr. O.*

*Mr. O was found dead, with a dent in his skull. The incident happened in a hotel owned by Ms. J’s brother.*

*Ms. J claims she wasn’t there. Police found no solid evidence—no hair, no trace—except her fingerprints on Mr. O’s wallet.*

*And the hotel’s CCTV just happened to be broken that day.* If you look closely, there are definitely a lot of suspicious details.

*This has been Gus—bringing you the hard truths.*

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A big story on a clear day. I always thought it would come out, sooner or later.

And when it does, society’s judgment may come crashing down harder than ever.

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# Chapitre 18: JIN

The TV in my room was showing news footage of Jin being interviewed after leaving the interrogation room. Reporters were crowding around, shouting questions.

*"Mr. Jin, what do you say about being the major shareholder of the hotel?"*

*"Why hasn't Ms. Jay come forward to speak?"*

*"Where has Ms. Jay gone?"*

*"What do you say about the missing security footage from the night of the incident?"*

*"Mr. Jin, please don't leave yet-just a quick interview!"*

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And many other questions.

The television was turned off, and the four of us gathered around.

"Right now, Jay's reputation is badly damaged. The public opinion is almost entirely negative. Her jobs have been canceled, even international ones with tickets already booked. All her billboards have been taken down. So what are we going to do next?" asked Je Ang.

Jin sat in silence, looking tense.

"So did you told the police you didn't know anything about the missing hotel security footage... but we all know that's not true,"

Prang said, analyzing the situation.

"True or not, if they can't find the footage, they can't do anything to Jay," Said Phi Jin with a cold, expressionless look.

"Jay is the number one suspect because all the evidence points to her alone. When the court date comes, she'll have to prove her innocence somehow."

"If the evidence isn't solid enough, they can't arrest Jay. This fight is going to drag on for a while," Phi Jin insisted again.

"But I think... maybe it's time we seriously talked about what really happened that night," Prang said.

After Prang spoke, Phi Jin turned to look at me, as if asking for confirmation. I nodded in response.

He then reached for his personal laptop, opened the web browser, entered his password, and pulled up the security camera footage from the hotel that night for everyone to see.

The footage showed everything-from when I argued with P'O in the parking lot to the moment I ran out of the hotel.

"....Luckily, I was there that night. After seeing the footage, I was sure it was Jay. So I went down to the room and cleaned up everything... I thought no one would ever know Jay had come to the hotel. But I didn't expect he would steal the money and leave fingerprints behind.

"Jay didn't have any money back then," someone said.

"Okay," Prang let out a long sigh.

"No wonder the police couldn't find anything. And after Jay ran off that night, where did she go?"

"She got a medical check-up and panicked, so she ran off to the countryside."

Prang lifted her right arm and wrapped it around my shoulder, pulling me close.

"I looked for you at the condo every single day. I asked around, but no one could tell me where you went."

"Ahem,"

Je cut in, breaking the private moment Prang and I were sharing.

"Why don't we just give this footage to the police? It's obvious Jay was drugged-how could she have killed anyone?"

"Because we still don't have solid proof that Jay didn't do it. No one really knows what happened in that room-unless the killer confesses,"

I said, turning to meet Phi Jin's eyes.

"This clip would just become evidence that Jay was at the scene," Phi Jin added.

"It could make things worse, especially since she was alone in the room with the victim."

"What about the memory card?"

Prang asked, biting her lip thoughtfully.

"If you were the one who cleaned up all the evidence, did you take it too?"

"I don't have it," he replied.

"But Phi Jin took something else," I explained.

"I got his phone," Phi Jin said.

Prang turned to look at me, and I nodded.

"So what did you find on Khun O's phone?"

Je asked eagerly, her eyes lighting up.

"Nothing yet. I couldn't unlock it-it's password-protected."

"Then why didn't you give it to the police?" Je-Ang asked.

"I found it in a spot that looked like it was set up to record something. The battery had probably died after being left on. There's a good chance it recorded what happened in the room. But I don't know yet if what's on it will help us or hurt us. I need to check it myself first to see exactly what it captured. If we still can't confirm Jay was even there, I'm not handing it over and risking them tracking Jay down."

"Phi Jin is afraid the police might see something we don't want them to know-like the fact that I was assaulted," I added.

"Where's Khun O's phone now?" Je-Ang asked.

"It's in a safe place," Phi Jin replied. "Have you tried guessing the password?" Prang asked, turning to look at me.

"Phi Jin and I have tried many times,"

I said, shrugging and shaking my head.

"What about a shop or a hacker?"

"We tried that too. Still couldn't unlock it without risking data loss."

"Maybe P'Pin knows the password," Prang suggested.

"Who's going to ask her?" I shot back.

"And from what you told us before-if P'Pin really knew something, we probably wouldn't want her to find out we're holding on to the evidence." "But I don't think P'Pin knows the password. They've been living separately for a while now," Je added.

***Rrrrrrrr!***

Just then, Prang's phone rang. She excused herself to take the call.

"I've got to go now-I have work,"

Prang said, grabbing her bag and turning to me.

"Call me if anything comes up."

We gathered back together after the glamorous actress had left the room.

So in the end, we agreed this matter still had to be kept secret-at least until we could be certain of who was in the footage.

Phi Jin and Je Ang stayed in the room for a while longer before they finally left. Meanwhile, I took some time to rest, spending my day aimlessly learning from books and video clips.

Then I came across an old fashion photoshoot that Prang and I had done together six years ago. It brought back memories of those days. Faint traces of feelings I had tried hard to bury slowly rose to the surface.

Familiar tastes, favorite scents, and the loving gaze I once knew were returning-unfiltered this time-merging with my thoughts without the need to suppress them like before.

Prang, the hot-headed woman with soft, thin eyebrows-she had taken me to her home two or three times when we were together. She was the eldest sibling, with a younger sister and a younger brother named Puin and Puen.

Her father was a high-ranking police officer, and her mother ran a wellknown boxing gym and fitness center in the heart of the city.

I wasn't very close to her family. At that time, my life revolved around work. It was my golden era-at least, that's how Je Ang would describe it.

Our relationship had to be kept secret. Aside from Prang's family, only Je Ang knew about us.

Although my family never had an issue with me liking women, I never introduced Prang to them. The truth was, Phi Jin had once had a crush on her, and I didn't know how to tell him. I just kept avoiding the topic, putting it off instead of dealing with it like an adult should have.

You could say I half-moved into her condo. We had our own lives. I stayed in my place, and she in hers. We worked hard and fulfilled our responsibilities. But on days when we missed each other, we would meet up. We respected each other's space and never crossed the line.

Once, I let myself into Prang's apartment using my key. I was completely exhausted, and she wasn't home yet. Without asking, I went straight to the bathtub, sank into the warm water-and accidentally fell asleep just like that.

Prang came home around 2 a.m. and screamed so loud it could've shaken the walls. There I was, naked, fast asleep, and pale as a ghost in her bathtub.

Her scream woke me up in a panic. She immediately scolded me, saying I was a reckless idiot who didn't take care of myself. She was furious, saying this wasn't the first time I'd done something like this without thinking of others.

She'd been terrified, thinking I might have had an accident-or worse, that I was dead.

I had only planned to nap for an hour.

*"It's just two hours, Prang. Come on. I was going to sleep here anyway."*

*"And you have to be up early tomorrow."*

*"Je Ang's picking me up at five-thirty."*

She didn't respond. Instead, she pulled a towel around me, dried me off without another word, and then stormed into the bedroom, her face tight with frustration. She ignored my calls and texts for six days until I finally had a free moment to visit her in person.

We always fought about one thing: me taking on too much work. The real issue, beneath not spending enough time together, was that Prang hated seeing me get sick. She said I was burning myself out. But I was hooked on working. I loved it-and I couldn't stop.

*"I 'm not trying to control you, Jay. But can you please take better care of yourself, just a little?"*

She said this with tears in her eyes, clearly upset with me.

*"Please have some sympathy for me. Don't make the person I love suffer or leave too soon."*

At that time, Prang was a stunning and healthy woman who always carried my emergency asthma inhaler with her.

*"My condition isn't that serious."*

*"Do you remember the last time you forgot your inhaler and we had to rush around trying to find one because we were scared you'd have a sudden attack?"*

*"And did I have an asthma attack that day?" I shot back.*

It wasn't a big deal. I just didn't want anyone to be troubled because of me.

"*And what if you did have a serious attack that day and didn't have your inhaler?" She glared at me.*

*"You have given me CPR then!" I said.*

*"Can you stop joking around, Jay?"*

*"I'll bring my own meds from now on. You don't need to carry them-it's just extra stuff."*

*"It's my bag. I'll carry whatever I want. Worry about your own bag," she snapped.*

I frowned.

*"Stop being so stubborn, Jay."*

Her version of calling me stubborn always came when I wasn't taking care of myself-when I was being defiant and ignoring everyone's concern. It always came with love and worry hidden underneath.

What I failed to realize back then was that maybe I wasn't taking our relationship seriously enough. I knew I loved her, but I didn't fully understand what it meant to care for her, to protect her.

I didn't value the time I had with her. I never thought there could come a day when we'd be apart.

I loved her, but I didn't take care of her.

*"Keep your lousy love to yourself."*

That sentence on the day we broke up pierced straight through me.

I was as foolish as she said I was.

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As I sat there lost in thoughts about our past, I looked at the clock-it was already 9 PM.

Why wasn't Prang back yet?

I tried calling her several times, but she didn't pick up. I'd browsed through every collection on the shopping website, and still, the leading lady hadn't shown up.

And then, I accidentally fell asleep.

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My body reacted before my mind had fully awakened.

I was being touched again-or, to be more accurate in Thai, I was being molested.

"Are you really asleep?"

A teasing whisper brushed my ear.

"I'm asleep."

"Since when do people kiss back in their sleep?"

Prang always came with that tempting scent and an intoxicating touch.

"When someone's unconscious, they'll do anything."

She let out a pleased little laugh as her body pressed down against mine. Her nose brushed gently against my cheek. I was starting to feel weak for lying still, letting her touch or press wherever she pleased.

"And what if I'm fully awake?"

She trailed her nose upward, lips moving in close, threatening to kiss-but I turned my face away.

She only laughed again, then kissed along my jaw instead.

"I have a commercial shoot today. I tried to behave so I could come home early,"

She said, her nose tracing the line of my face, inching toward my lips again.

"Are you really not going to let me kiss you?"

I bit my lip to hold back a smile, lifting my chin to dodge her lips just as they got close.

"Go back to your room," I said.

"I've been thinking about you all day."

Her nose brushed under my chin for a moment before her lips found mine and our eyes met.

God, no matter how hard I tried to hold it back, I couldn't hide my smile.

"My period's not over yet."

Prang grinned.

"So what?" she said as her fingers slowly slipped under my shirt.

"There are plenty of other places to explore."

I sat up and took off her baseball jacket. A strand of her hair got caught and I tucked it behind her ear before she leaned in and kissed me.

"Ugh, how many more days do we have to keep doing it like this? When will your period end, Jay?"

She asked, her voice husky with a touch of frustration, as I took off my shirt, leaving my upper body bare.

"It's six days. You count."

Just a touch from me and her body was already reacting.

"Hold on, we need to stop."

Her smooth arms wrapped around my neck as she rested her forehead against mine. But soon enough, her lips were back on my neck and ear.

"I thought you said we should stop,"

I said, one hand in her silky hair, the other caressing her chest.

"Just a little more..."

Her breath grew hotter and heavier. Even though she said "just a little," her mouth never left my skin.

"Prang..."

"Just a little more."

And I kept letting her have that "little more" until I could barely think straight.

"Prang, we really have to stop," I finally moaned.

"Just a little more, please."

I cupped her face and gently lifted it from whatever she was doing, then laid her flat on the bed.

"If you're going to keep going... then just take me already."

"Can I really?"

At first, her eyes were serious. But once she realized I was being sarcastic, she looked down and rested her head against my chest, letting out a soft laugh. The heat between us began to ease.

"Prang..."

"Hmm?"

"I wasn't a good girlfriend back then, was I?"

"No, you weren't. You were a flirt."

Her lips began playfully nibbling at my skin, like she was punishing me. "You always made me worry. You were stubborn, took on too much work, and barely had time to see me."

I smiled. "But we get to see each other more now. Isn't that better?"

"How can it be better if you're not happy?"

Her golden gaze pierced into me.

"I just want to see you doing what you love, being your bright, bold self. And wherever you want me to be in your life, I'll be there - just there, and that's enough."

It was a beautiful answer.

But why did it leave me feeling so unsatisfied?

I didn't know.

There was only a faint irritation circling around me, clouding my thoughts, until I slowly pulled away from the woman lying so close beside me.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. Just a little tired."

"We've already been apart for three years, Jay. That's long enough. I don't want us to be mad at each other - not even for a single minute."

"I don't know..."

She looked at me quietly, and all I could do was look away.

"I just want to be loved."

God, what kind of melodrama am I pulling now? And these tears - why are they even here?

"I don't want to just be tolerated, waiting around in whatever leftover space you've got for me."

A small, surprised laugh escaped her.

"Is this the new Jay? Because the Jay from three years ago wasn't this sensitive."

"Prang, you started dating someone else just two weeks after we broke up. You moved on with your life so easily, while I stayed here - not a single day passed that I didn't think about *us*. And now you're telling me it's okay if we don't see each other as often. How am I supposed to feel? Are you so happy that your girlfriend isn't a selfish person?"

I couldn't hold the tears back anymore.

"Because right now, it just feels like... it's totally okay if I'm no longer in your life."

I turned my back to her and lay there, arms crossed, for real this time.

It *had* to be the PMS. It *had* to be.

This kind of emotional, tearful meltdown - it just wasn't me. It never happened before.

Prang's expression froze in shock. There was a long pause, heavy and awkward, before she finally spoke.

"How do you know that I didn't feel anything after we broke up? How do you know that I just moved on so easily?"

"But you cut me out of your life like it was nothing."

"And you disappeared just as easily."

"Why are you crying? I'm the one who should be upset,"

I said, wiping the tears off her cheeks.

"Why can't I cry?" she snapped.

"Do you even know how much I feel? How much I want to be near you? You're so damn clueless, Jay. Always have been. And now you're crying at me, saying I don't care? Stop acting like a child and think about my feelings for once."

"....."

"You disappeared - what was I supposed to do? I couldn't beg you to come back without hurting myself even more. So yeah, I just had to accept that maybe this was all we'd ever be."

"Why are you yelling at me?" I cried, voice breaking.

"Then why did you say I don't care? Why talk like that?"

"Don't cry, Prang."

This time, I cupped her face, gently brushing away the tears with both hands.

"You don't cry either."

Her soft fingertips wiped mine away too.

I pulled her into my arms, holding her tightly against me.

Two arms wrapped around each other, refusing to let go.

Two bodies tangled in raw, quiet closeness.

That night, we fell asleep skin to skin, bare from the waist up - completely unaware that by morning, a major scandal would explode across the internet.

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# Chapitre 19: THE CURRENT

***Rrrrrrr!***

***Rrrrrrr!***

***Rrrrrrr!***

"Your phone,"

Mumbled the sleepy voice of the person I was cuddling with-Prang.

"Mmm... ignore it,"

I muttered, burying my face into the soft warmth beside me, trying to escape the annoying sound of the smartphone while my hand reached for that comforting softness.

"Jay, your phone's ringing,"

The sleepy voice now tinged with a hint of whining.

"Ugh, who's calling this early?"

I grumbled, reaching for the noisy phone and tossing it outside the bunker.

***Rrrrrrr!***

***Rrrrrrr!***

But that annoying phone kept ringing louder, almost like it was protesting.

Then the person next to me smacked my butt, forcing me to get up and deal with the stupid thing.

"Hello? Je, why are you calling so early? If it's not something urgent, let's talk later,"

I said, then hung up and tossed the square device onto the sofa before she could even reply.

***Rrrrrrr!***

***Rrrrrrr!***

"Ugh, Je-Ang again! Why do you keep calling me?"

I picked up the phone and walked back to cuddle with my ex-girlfriend-who had somehow turned into my current girlfriend, and hopefully, the only one I'd ever need from now on.

[Jay, did you see the news yet?]

"What news now, Sis? There's so much going on, I don't even know which one to panic about first."

[It's about Pin.]

"Pin?" I lifted my head off of Prang's chest.

"What about her?"

[I sent you the link. Check your chat.]

"Okay, got it. Talk later."

Right after the call ended, I opened the chat on my phone. The message JeAng sent was a news link from a popular gossip page, *E-Prik*. The headline was short but loud:

***"Scandalous Clip - Daughter of a Drama Production Owner."***

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"What's going on?"

Prang was awake now. She sat up, looped her arm around my neck, rested her chin on my shoulder, and started kissing my neck until it turned red.

"Dunno. Je-Ang sent me something and said it's about P'Pin."

"Is the blood gone yet?"

She teased, pushing me down and starting to nuzzle into me again.

"How could it be over? I said it would be six days."

"I was just asking, Jay."

I let Prang keep burying her face in me while my eyes stayed glued to my phone screen. I clicked the link to a gossip page called E-Prik.

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*"Hi everyone,*

*I've been debating whether to post this story or not. But maybe it's time some parts of it come to light.*

*Right now, CJ is getting slammed on social media-especially by you guysover rumors that he's been having an affair with a drama producer. Then the producer, Mr.O, died, and now CJ is a suspect.*

*A lot of you probably saw it already-last night, someone leaked a clip of a woman who looks a lot like the producer's wife getting intimate with her personal assistant. Thankfully, the explicit parts were edited out, so it didn't get too scandalous.*

*But this morning, another clip got leaked. You guys can watch it and decide for yourselves. I'm not gonna say much-don't want to get sued, and I sure can't afford to pay damages."*

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I finished reading and clicked on the video clip attached in the same folder. As the video time started ticking, Prang stopped kissing my body and turned to watch the screen with me.

On the screen, a dark-skinned man appeared with a woman, who was said to be his wife, in a room. The camera angle made it look like it had been secretly placed.

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*"I'm not getting a divorce,Pin"*

*"O, what's the point of doing this? Just divorce me, and we can end things peacefully."*

*"Why should I divorce you just so you can enjoy being with a maid? I'm fine living like this."*

*"We don't even want to be together. Let me go. Let's just move on with our lives."*

*"Who said I don't want to be here, Pin? I'm not divorcing you. If you want to be with someone else, go ahead. I don't care. I've got my own life too. But when it comes to business and money, don't cause problems."*

The elegant-looking woman opened her bag and threw several photos onto the table.

*"Everyone knows you're sleeping around, O. If you don't agree to the divorce peacefully, I'll take this to court. These photos are just part of the evidence."*

The man in the video picked up one of the suggestive photos of him with another woman, looked at it, slammed the table, and leaned forward. *"Pin. I knew this day would come. I've been expecting it. You think you're the only one with evidence, Pin?"*

His tall frame moved toward her in a threatening manner.

*"Don't think I don't know about you cheating with that useless guy."*

He walked closer as P'Pin stood her ground, fists clenched.

*"Go ahead and file for divorce. Maybe you'll win, maybe you'll get what you want. But the whole country will get to see the secret video of Khun Pin - the daughter of a major drama production company."*

He leaned in, whispering coldly:

*"The video of you moaning in bed while Sek kept going without stopping."*

Her eyes widened in shock. She raised her arm high and swung her hand to slap P'O, but he caught it in time and shoved her, making her stumble and hit the table behind her.

*"You're blackmailing me? You secretly recorded me?! You bastard!!" she screamed.*

P'O smirked, his eyes filled with contempt, as he pulled out his smartphone and sent the clip to her through chat without saying a word.

"Don't think I'm just making threats,"

P'Pin picked up his phone and looked at it for just a moment. His whole body shook with intense emotions - anger, bitterness, and deep resentment clearly showing on his flushed face.

*"Just think about it,"*

He said sarcastically, spreading his arms.

*"Do you want to live with me as husband and wife peacefully? Or get divorced and have the clip go viral everywhere?"*

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"What's going on?" Prang hugged me tightly from behind.

"P'Pin is having an affair with her assistant."

After the clip and news spread, public opinion started to split into two or three sides. Sympathy began to shift toward me. Pages that once mocked me changed their tone.

Positive parts of my biography were shared. Forums and social media analyzed the case in depth - trying to figure out what had happened, when, and how.

People online began digging deeper, like detectives. They tried to piece together timelines: when did P'Pin and his assistant P'Sek start their affair?

Captions from the social media accounts of P'Pin, P'O, and P'Sek were collected and used to build speculative stories.

As for me, I started to be seen as a victim. The hashtag #Jeerapat trended number one on social media.

However, most of the comments people are making don't reflect the deeper reality of the situation at all.

P'Pin and his assistant P'Sek were called in for further police questioning.

Prang told me the police suspected love affair-related conflict.

From what I've seen in the news, both of them admitted the video clip was real, but they denied having any involvement in the murder.

However, the Facebook page *"E-Prik"* keeps stirring things up. They claimed that an insider from the drama production confirmed that P'O tried to flirt with me, but I didn't respond.

The rumors that I was his mistress or having an affair with him aren't true. The page even posted more accusations about P'O's bad behavior and laid out a timeline of P'Pin's relationships-almost like they were trying to fight for justice on my behalf.

Isn't it kind of funny? Just yesterday, people were calling me shameless, a homewrecker, a murderer, a promiscuous woman who steals other people's husbands. They used every hurtful name they could think of.

But today, since public opinion has shifted, I've suddenly gone back to being Jeerapat-the sweet, innocent leading lady who was just misunderstood.

The news outlets and gossip pages that dragged me through the mud yesterday, spreading baseless stories to provoke readers, are now turning around to show sympathy for me, the "real heroine."

Everyone seems to have forgotten what they said and did. No one's apologized or taken responsibility for the cruel things they said that cut me to the core. That's all it took-just like that.

As for Prang:

"Is your period over yet?"

"How was work today?"

Same old questions-so? Is your period done today, Jay?

"Do you ever think about anything else, Prang?"

"I'm not usually like this. It's because of you, Jay. You make me this way."

"But I hadn't done anything."

"Getting dressed in spaghetti straps every night, sleeping next to me, teasing me-how am I supposed able to endure it, Jay?

"Why are you whispering?"

"There are lots of people on filming set."

I really saw that she was pouting when she leaned against the wall, looking at me with the phone next to her ear while twisting back and forth.

"I never saw the floor like this before."

"So, did your period end? You answered before, and I am going to work now,"

She asked hurriedly.

I paused for a moment before saying,

"Come back quickly... I'll take a shower and wait."

"Don't you want to shower together?"

The tone of the person on the other end changed from annoyed to softer, making me think of her sweet face and the faint smile on her fair cheeks. I guessed her eyes were probably shining like gold.

"....."

"Are you quiet?"

"Can you go to work yet?"

I pretended to ask in a teasing tone.

I didn't want to work anymore. My period was over, and Prang wanted to go back to her room.

I'm old enough; why should I feel shy about this teasing?

We fell silent, then she laughed, and I laughed too, while the other one was still pouting and rolling her eyes dramatically.

"But wait, Prang, someone is about to die here from jealousy."

*I miss you.*

"Me too."

"What do you mean, 'me too'?"

"I mean the same thing."

"Say it. What do you mean?"

"Je-Ang is still here."

"Turn on the speaker."

"Why should I turn it on?"

"I want to talk to Je."

I felt a bit uneasy, but I pressed the button to turn on the speaker so Prang could talk to the *widow of Kobori, Je-Ang.*

"It's on."

"Are you still there?"

The voice from my expensive phone's speaker was loud and clear.

"Je-Ang, could you please walk away for a bit? Jay don't dare say she miss me because you're sitting right there."

I gaped, blinking at Je-Ang, then immediately turned off the speaker on my phone.

"Seriously, Prang? I'm asking seriously."

A giggle escaped from the smartphone I held to my ear.

"See you this evening, okay?"

"Okay."

That was it. We hung up, but not even 10 seconds later, my phone rang again. The caller was none other than...

"What now?"

**"I still haven't heard 'I miss you'."**

I sighed and turned to look at the man beside me. He leaned in close, pressing against me while putting his ear to the other side of the phone to listen to the conversation, all the while making a punch-worthy face.

"I miss you,"

I said in a very soft voice. And Je-Ang, was still being dramatic, gesturing exaggeratedly as if to say,

"Oh my goooood, I can't handle this!"

But the moment I hung up, the sarcastic voice of my personal manager snapped through the air.

"Oh please! Look at that glowing face. Honeymoon phase, huh?"

"Stop teasing and just tell me what you want."

"Stop smiling like that first, so I can get to the point."

I tried to act serious to cover it up, but no matter how much I hid it, the smile still crept onto my face.

"Here's the thing - aren't you curious how those video clips got leaked?

"What clips?"

"The clips of Khun Pin."

"You know how they got leaked?"

"I thought you knew. That's why I'm asking."

"How would I know, Je?"

"Have you talked to Nong Jin yet? What did he say?"

"No one knows who leaked them. P'O is already dead. These clips should have disappeared or at least kept buried."

"Exactly. The one who's been hit the hardest seems to be Khun Pin. Now he's under intense investigation, both his boss and his lover. Pin's father has been pulling a lot of strings. Money and power are massive forces. I'm scared the real culprit will get away."

"Do you think P'Pin was involved in this? About P'O's case?"

"It's possible. But the police have no evidence at all. They'll have to dig up more or wait for the criminal to confess."

"But could someone like P'Pin really do something like that? Killing someone?"

"Well, remember the saying: '*Never trust a human being. Their hearts are deeper and more twisted than winding vines*.'"

I rolled my eyes at the overly poetic tone of someone who didn't know when to quit.

"Well, you're not wrong. Even a personal manager who's been trusted for years can betray you by plotting to make you break up with your girlfriend."

"Oof, that was a harsh dig."

I laughed, and he seemed a bit sulky. So I took some snacks from the fridge to make it up to him. Once he had something sweet and cold, he seemed to forget I'd upset him at all.

Je-Ang stopped by my room briefly before heading out, leaving me alone again. That's when my battle plan for beauty truly began.

I busied myself tidying up the room, then played a workout video focusing on toning abs, calves, arms, and other parts of the body. After that, I showered, scrubbed my skin, steamed my hair, and treated my skin. Even the tiny hairs on my shins were meticulously removed until my legs were silky smooth.

A sheet mask was carefully placed on my face as I basked in the joy of selfcare. Then came the onslaught of luxury makeup products, layered onto my skin as though I were about to present myself before an emperor tonight.

By early evening, Prang messaged to say she was on her way back. I got up and set out the Chinese food I had ordered, then dressed in a sweet yet subtly sexy outfit that showed just the right amount of skin. Perfume was dabbed on every pulse point, ready for our after-dinner time together.

I sat in the room waiting for my lover, a smile spreading across my face as I realized that all the bad things were about to pass. Everything was about to get better. It was getting better.

Then the door opened. A stunning woman in a light, flowing dress walked in. Her hair moved softly, gracefully, like the gentle motion of her body. But her face was lined with tension.

**"Jay, we need to get out of here. Now."**

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# Chapitre 20: RUNAWAY

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"The police are coming."

"What? Why?"

I grabbed my phone and quickly stuffed the essentials into my bag.

"Did you get everything?"

"No, I forgot something."

Her hand pulled me along toward the elevator as Prang's face tightened with worry.

"They've issued an arrest warrant for you, Jay. Right now, they're on their way to the condo. They might even be on their way up already."

"I am not the criminal. They don't have any evidence. How could they issue a warrant?"

Her slender white finger pressed the floor number. The elevator doors closed, and she turned to face me.

"Dad said someone sent a clip taken from the crime scene to the police." "A clip?" I shook my head, confused.

"I haven't seen it yet, but Dad said it was a video taken in the room before P'O died. You were lying on the bed. I didn't ask about the other details yet, but now they have proof that you were there that night."

"Oh... that lost memory card."

Prang nodded.

"Your fingerprints were found on his wallet. Then there's the issue of P'Jin possibly hiding evidence, your false statement about Jin picking you up halfway, and your denial of being at the scene-everything points to you."

"What? That should just mean they summon me for questioning, not issue a warrant!" I was furious.

"They found out you booked a flight to Germany. The flight's in two days. They think you're going to flee, so they're trying to detain you first."

"That's crazy! That ticket was booked a month ago for work-and that event's already been canceled."

"Then why didn't you cancel the ticket?"

"I didn't handle that part. The person who hired me arranged everything."

"This is getting more and more complicated."

"I must know about this!"

"Let's talk about it in the car."

The elevator door opened. We were about to step out of the small square space when Prang suddenly pushed me back inside and quickly hit the 'close' button repeatedly.

"Police!!"

Her face was calm, but her eyes showed panic as she pressed the button for the next floor.

"Prang, we need a keycard. The elevator won't go to other floors without it!"

"They're probably heading to your room. We need to hide somewhere else."

I used my keycard and pressed another floor number.

"Let's go hide at the Sky Pool first. Then we can come back down."

Prang nodded as the elevator carried us higher and higher until we reached the common floor with the gym and the soft mats area. We looked for a hidden corner and went to hide there.

"Did the video clip show the moment he spit it out?"

"No, just the part where he was walking around the room, trying to find the right angle with his phone to film another view. You can hear some sound."

"Can you see my face clearly?"

"Dad said anyone who sees it would know right away it's Jeerapat."

"So that means all of my efforts were for nothing."

"More importantly, the police already know about the phone-and that it's missing. But I still don't believe you're the culprit. There's no clear motive. And now suddenly this video clip appears from that room. That means someone took evidence from the scene. It's unlikely to be someone like you, who would lose from this. There could be a third party involved."

"They're suspicious of me too, aren't they?"

Prang grabbed my hand and pulled me back toward the elevator.

"They're suspicious of everyone. The evidence was destroyed. Even Jin looks like he might be involved. As for you, the police still aren't sure if you're guilty. They're considering whether you worked with your brother or if there's someone else behind it. Your brother is also being seriously questioned because of previous conflicts. But you're the most suspicious right now since you were with P'O. Once they have enough evidence, they'll probably take the case to the prosecutor."

"Where are we going?"

She led me back down toward the exit, and I had to brake hard again when I saw a police officer still standing out front.

"We're running, obviously," she whispered.

"If we just walk out, he'll definitely recognize us. What should we do?" She looked me over and smirked.

"You're dressed so pretty today. Waiting for someone back at your room?"

"Is this really the time?"

"You're so beautiful, it's easy to notice you."

Oh my goddd, my girl-the daughter of a police officer, no less.

"Can you not flirt right now?"

"I've got it!"

After Prang whispered her plan, she walked straight over to the police officer to distract him, while I slipped out from my hiding spot near the elevator to hide somewhere else.

"Officer?"

"Yes?"

The man in uniform looked excited-clearly flustered at being approached by a beautiful actress.

"Um, I have an item in my car. It's really heavy. I was wondering if you could help me carry it up to my room?"

"Uh..."

"It's just one item. My car's parked right over there. It won't take long."

"Well, I..."

I could tell he was hesitating, but this was the daughter of the Deputy Commissioner of Police making a request.

"But if it's inconvenient, never mind,"

Prang said, putting on a sorrowful expression-one that I could tell was completely *acted*.

"...Alright, then."

She smiled and led the officer to the car. Not long after, they both returned carrying a single item together got out of the car.

The item Prang was carrying didn't seem nearly as heavy as she had claimed.

The officer's footsteps grew louder as he passed the spot where I was hiding and stepped into the elevator. Just as the doors were about to close, a voice crackled through his radio:

*"The suspect isn't upstairs. Keep a close watch on the ground floor."*

But by then, it was too late-he couldn't do anything. The elevator doors had already shut.

That was my cue. I slipped out of hiding and crept along the side path, heading toward Prang's car-the very spot she had deliberately chosen so I could sneak inside and hide.

I didn't have to wait long before Prang came back down, looking completely normal. She walked over and got into the driver's seat.

"Damn it, why did the cops have to come for you *today*, of all days?"

"Why *not* today?"

"I ordered a whole spread of food. By the time we get back, it's definitely going to spoil."

"Jay, is now really the time to worry about food?"

"Then why do we have to run away, Prang?"

She shifted the gear into Drive, and the car slowly rolled out of the parking space. At the same time, I reclined my seat and pulled a cloth over myselfjust in case we unexpectedly ran into someone at the exit.

"Do you want to go sleep in jail or something?"

"We can get bail and fight this."

"This is a high-profile case. The public's watching. The police want a win.

They're dying to arrest you, Jay. They won't let you out on bail that easily. And I won't let you spend even one night in jail."

"And running away is your solution? You don't think that'll make things worse?"

We argued the entire way until the car rolled out onto the main road. Once we were out of the condo area, I adjusted my seat back to an upright position.

"This isn't running away. It's called pulling back to regroup. We'll come back when it's time."

While Prang was driving-taking us who-knows-where-I called Phi Jin and told him everything Prang had just told me.

"If that's really the case, then there's nothing left to hide anymore."

"They're actively looking to arrest you, Jay."

That was how I summed it up and told Phi Jin directly. His response?

*"Then just get out of there. Go take a break somewhere for a day or two, then come back."*

This was completely irrational. My brother and my girlfriend-had they both lost their minds?

***Rrrrrr!***

Then came the ringing of the car's Bluetooth-connected phone. The name that flashed on the screen made my stomach twist with dread. But Prang answered immediately.

"Hello, Dad?"

"Prang, are you with your girlfriend right now?"

"Why are you asking?"

"Are you helping her run away?"

His voice was firm, laced with a faint trace of emotion.

"I didn't help him run away, Dad."

"Prang! Answer me directly."

"What's going on here?"

"The police just called to tell me that Jay isn't at the condo. If it wasn't you who helped her, then who was it?"

"Dad, I really didn't help Jay escape."

"Is she sitting next to you?"

"Please, Dad..."

"Answer me!"

"Yes, she's next to me. But I didn't help her run away. We just went out for a drive, so we weren't in the room."

"You're making trouble for yourself-and for your girlfriend. Take her to turn herself in. Let the law handle it. I'll see what I can do to help."

"Jay didn't do anything wrong, Dad. Let me explain everything to you.

Someone will bring more evidence from the scene to the police in an hour."

This is why Phi Jin told me to run first, then come back after he had sent the new evidence to the police and cleared everything up.

"What evidence?"

"It's CCTV footage from the hotel. Here's what happened..."

I leaned back against the leather seat, listening to Prang tell the story of the day the four of us talked at my condo.

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***"Did you keep it here, P'Jin?"***

The hotel's CCTV footage from Days 2 - 4 days they claimed all the cameras were broken-had been kept in a secure place. Only the footage from the actual time of the incident had been cut out and stored here.

I had seen these clips many times before. The first clip was from the parking lot, when P'O drove in and parked. At that point, I was still conscious and tried to resist him, before he drugged me and I passed out.

The next clip showed what happened afterward. P'O carried me into the hotel while I was unconscious. He walked through the lobby as if nothing was wrong and didn't speak to anyone.

Two staff members at the check-in counter saw him, but neither intervened as he carried me into the elevator.

After exiting the elevator, he walked down the hallway and opened the door to a room. Less than 20 minutes later, another person entered the hotel.

That person wore a face mask-like someone with allergies-and was dressed like a hotel staff member. They carried a bag and headed straight to the room where the incident happened.

This mysterious person knocked on the door. Not long after, it opened. They talked briefly, and then P'O invited the person inside. About half an hour later, that same person left the room alone, acting completely normal.

The rest of the footage showed only the closed door. P'Jin fast-forwarded the clip until early the next morning, when the door opened again-this time by me.

I stumbled out of the room in a hurry. I was shaky and had to use the wall for support as I tried to walk normally and avoid drawing attention. Still, the two staff members at the counter noticed me. After I passed by, they started whispering to each other.

When the clip reached this point, P'Jin pressed pause.

*"Did you see the person who went into the room? At first, I thought he was one of our hotel staff because the uniform looked very similar,"*

Phi Jin said as he rewound the clip to the moment the suspicious person appeared.

"But when I looked closely, I saw that he wasn't wearing the staff badge on his chest."

Phi Jin paused the video so everyone could take a good look.

*"That's when I went back to check the entry logs. It turns out this person parked outside the hotel and walked in on foot. I've confirmed he's not one of our staff."*

*"So, you're saying this was planned in advance, right, P'Jin?"*

"*Yes. First, the two of them clearly knew each other. There was some kind of agreement between them. That scumbag opened the door and let him in. Second-look at this."*

He zoomed in on the suspect's hand.

*"He was wearing gloves. I watched the clip multiple times, trying to piece everything together, and I believe this murder was premeditated."*

*"The hotel-like uniform, the face mask, and the gloves,"*

Prang added, analyzing the situation again. Phi Jin nodded in agreement.

*"That bastard planned to abduct Jay from the beginning. That's why he checked into the hotel a day earlier."*

*"But why didn't he take Jay to a house or a private place? Wouldn't that have been easier? Why bring her to a hotel and make things more complicated?"* someone asked.

*"Because his wife lives at his house,"*

Prang answered plainly.

*"From what we found in his background, it was actually lucky for P'O. He often brought women to this hotel-it's probably his regular spot."*

*"And what about the staff who saw everything?"*

*"Those two staff members saw him bringing women here regularly, so they weren't surprised. Some of the women seemed normal, some not so much."*

*"But the two staff members..."*

*"I asked them. They said they saw a beautiful woman with him, but she seemed drunk when he brought her in. She was covering her face, so they couldn't tell who she was and didn't pay much attention. One of them saw her from behind when she left, so I strictly told them not to say anything about it. If anyone talks, I'll fire them. It could damage the hotel's reputation."*

*"So they just kept quiet? And what about all the evidence?"*

*"On the day the body was found, the housekeeper smelled something foul coming from the room. The staff discussed whether they should open the room. Coincidentally, I was at the hotel at the time, so they called me. I came down to take a look and decided to have the room opened,"*

I recounted what Phi Jin had told me the day I came back.

*"When I opened the door, the body was already bloated. It was lying on the bed. It wasn't a pleasant sight. I was standing just at the doorway, about to order a staff member to call the police, but then I stepped on something first."*

I raised my hand, showing the delicate bracelet I was wearing.

*"I stepped on the bracelet that used to belong to Jay, so I got suspicious."*

"There was a time, about three years ago, when Jay disappeared from home and didn't really keep in touch,"

Phi Jin's gaze shifted instinctively to Prang.

"So Ma ordered me to make this bracelet especially for Jay."

"Ma ordered it?"

Phi Jin nodded.

*"Actually, there were two bracelets in total, and inside each one, a GPS tracker was embedded. When we met up, sometimes I would secretly swap out the bracelet with the other one to avoid the battery running out. But one charge lasts quite a long time."*

*"What!!"* I exclaimed in disbelief.

"Your bracelet is connected to this application,"

Phi Jin said, pulling out his phone to show me. On the screen was an app titled *"12 Online*" with a blinking green dot on the map.

*"If you're wearing one bracelet, the other will be deactivated."*

*"So that's why Phi Jin always knew where my condo was! I thought someone was hired to follow me."*

*"Phi and Ma just wanted to keep track of you occasionally. That way, when we needed to find you, we'd know where you're. But on the day it all happened, the bracelet was found at the scene, so we could only wait for you to call back."*

*"So you and Ma teamed up behind my back? How am I ever supposed to trust anything you give me again?"*

A mischievous smile spread across my older brother's face. Prang shook her head with a smile, while I myself looked just as stunned as I was.

*"If I want to use this app too, what I have to do?"*

The female lead said, laughing.

*"Prang,"* I said in a low voice.

*"I say we should pause the drama here and listen to the rest. That day, after I saw the bracelet, I ordered the room to be sealed off and told all the staff to stay silent, using the hotel's reputation as a reason. Then I had them send me the guest information-who the person was, when they arrived-while I went to check the security footage alone."*

Everyone sat in total silence, listening.

*"Luckily, I was there that day. And after seeing the footage, I knew for sure it was Jay. So I came back down to the room and cleaned everything upfingerprints, hair, even Jay's belongings and the water bottle in the car. I collected it all before letting the staff call the police about the body. I thought no one would know Jay had ever been there. But I messed up. I didn't think Jay would take the cash-that's what left her fingerprints behind."*

*"So where is all that evidence now?"*

*"I've still got it."*

*"So in the end, we still don't know exactly what happened in that room,"*

Je-Ang said,

"but that person definitely played a part in it."

*"Why didn't we give all this information to the police, Jin? It's obvious Jay was drugged. There's no way she could've killed anyone."*

*"We still don't have any evidence that Jay didn't do it. No one knows what really happened in that room unless the killer confesses. All we know is that someone went into the room. The police might even say that person helped Jay commit the murder. And most importantly, we still don't know who that person was,"*

I said, turning to look at Phi Jin.

*"But we can see in the video clip that Jay was dragged into the room. When she came out, she looked dazed and could barely walk. There were drugs found at the car too."*

*"This video will end up being used as evidence that Jay was at the crime scene," Phi Jin added.*

*"That just makes things worse, especially since she was alone in the room with that person. They can't even find the weapon used to hit the victim."*

*"Who knows when Jay actually woke up? Who can confirm that she wasn't cooperating with the person in the video? The only thing we can do now is find out who that other person is."*

It wasn't surprising that the person speaking was the daughter of a police officer.

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**"Let me talk to Jay,"**

Came the deep voice of my girlfriend's father, pulling me out of my thoughts and back to the present.

"This is Jay speaking, sir," I answered.

"You know your brother is going to be charged with hiding and destroying evidence, not cooperating, and obstructing the investigation, right?"

"Yes, Sir. My brother is ready to give his full statement and cooperate. After that, I'll go in to give my testimony too."

"*Sigh*... Alright. Take care of each other, and tell Prang not to make things worse."

"Yes, Dad. I won't do anything more. Thank you. I'll hang up now-I'm driving," she said to her father.

"Wait! Where are you two running off to?"

"We don't know yet. Just driving around for now."

"Prang, take Jay to our house."

"What?"

"No need to stay at a hotel and risk being seen. Get some proper rest, then get ready to come back and give your statements."

Because of that, Prang drove toward Khao Yai. Our destination was a house Prang's dad had bought in Pak Chong District for family and friends to use on camping trips.

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"I didn't know you had a house here."

"Dad just bought it an over a year ago."

It was already quite late by the time we arrived at the small house, surrounded by hills and trees. The warm outdoor lights had already been turned on, making the place feel alive and welcoming.

"I called the housekeeper earlier to let her know we were coming. She probably came to turn the lights on for us-otherwise, it would've been really dark."

As soon as we got out of the car parked in front of the house, a cool breeze brushed against our faces. The higher elevation made the air feel even chillier.

We brought the food we had picked up on the way inside. Our bags, clothes, and other essentials were placed in the living room.

Inside, the house was clean and tidy, just like Prang had said. It was fully equipped with everything we needed. Normally, a housekeeper came to clean once a week. Other than that, no one else stayed here.

"There goes our dinner plan,"

One of us said, a little disappointed.

"Well, we changed the plan and had dinner here instead."

I turned and smiled at the speaker as she walked over and sat down close to me.

"Are you hungry? Did you eat anything earlier this evening?"

She softly smiled and shook her head.

"I rushed back. I wanted to wait and eat together."

I stood up and gently took Prang's hand, leading her along. We set the table and began sharing bits and pieces of the food we had bought earlier.

Because I'm someone from the city, constantly surrounded by lights and activity, the dark and quiet atmosphere of this place felt eerie at first.

Everything was so silent that we could even hear the chirping of crickets. But if I looked at it as peacefulness instead of emptiness, it actually felt quite nice - the air was fresh, it was quiet, and it felt private.

"Jay,"

Prang said as we sat together on the long outdoor sofa on the wooden porch in front of the house.

"Yeah?"

"Don't go to jail. Not even for a day."

The stars twinkled in the night sky as if in competition, and a gentle breeze carried the clean mountain air.

Rolling hills stretched out before us. I leaned back, resting my head on the warmth of Prang's lap.

Her fingers gently combed through my hair, caressing softly.

"It's so quiet here, isn't it?"

"Actually, the housekeeper's home is just a short walk away." I rolled onto my back, gazing up at the face I was resting on.

"Living like this is nice too - no chaos from the outside world."

"Should we run away together?"

"Run away where?"

I began to let go, relaxing into the flow of her silly, aimless words.

"Somewhere only we know."

I laughed, and the beautiful woman with the golden sparkle in her eyes picked up her phone and tapped it. The gentle rhythm of drums from the song she had just mentioned began to play softly in the background.

From quiet stillness, the mood shifted into something warm, cool, and slightly fluttery - where smiles mingled with soft laughter, weaving through one another.

I raised a hand to touch her smooth cheek.

"Come a little closer."

Prang brushed her silky hair to one side, letting it fall, while her glowing face and soft smile leaned down ever so slightly, teasingly, as if to play with me. I only smiled faintly, looking at her, then spoke in a sweet voice. "Closer."

She bit her lip, holding back a smile, then leaned down further as I asked. But it still wasn't enough for our lips to meet.

My hand, knowing exactly what it was doing, slid up to gently touch the warm nape of my lover's neck, giving the lightest pull to ease her closer to me.

But Prang resisted with a smile, stiffening her neck so that our lips couldn't quite meet.

"Prang," I said, voice tinged with frustration - and she just chuckled softly, clearly pleased with herself.

I took a breath, then tilted my chin up, leaning in and using my body to draw her face down toward mine.

Our lips touched - soft, sweet.

But only for a moment. Then everything changed.

Cool night air wrapped around us, while our blood ran hot. The rough texture of the sofa met my bare feet as one of my legs shifted, lifted by the rush of emotion.

My hands cupped her face, fingers sliding through her hair. My lips pressed, pulled, exploring - our bodies speaking with an urgency that begged for no distance.

"Jay... wait,"

A faint voice slipped out just as I moved from kissing her lips to pressing kisses lower. My thighs straddled her lap, and both my hands slid under her shirt, fingers brushing against bare skin.

"Jay, stop for a moment."

"No."

But my hands kept moving, and the tip of my nose trailed along her skin, not slowing down - while Prang started to push back. She lifted me off her lap and flipped me to sit on the sofa, quickly stepping away, flustered and unsettled.

She stood there between my legs, breathing hard. Her cheeks were flushed deep red, and her hands pressed firmly on my shoulders to keep me from leaning in again.

And while I sat there, stunned by how bluntly she'd pushed me away, without even trying to soften it, the beautiful actress suddenly blurted out in a rush:

"I need a shower."

I raised an eyebrow, my eyes full of questions.

"I'm all sweaty. I was on set all day."

"That's it?" I asked, eyes wide.

"That's it," she said.

And before I could say another word, she released the pressure on my shoulders, turned, and slowly backed away-then suddenly spun around and bolted into the house.

*Take a shower? Now? When my body was burning up like this?*

I sat there, stunned, for only a split second-then sprang to my feet and dashed after that slender figure without hesitation.

Prang... you're asking too much!

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# Chapitre 21: SMARTPHONE

The soft body was gathered by me at the bedroom door. Prang tried to turn the doorknob and push the wooden door open to get inside, even though my two arms were holding her waist from behind.

"Jay."

Protests turned to moans as my nose buried itself in the nape of her neck. My lips created love bites, my body pressing against hers, pinning her front against the wall.

The lights weren't on, the air conditioning wasn't running. The room's temperature alone could provide comfort for both of us, but it couldn't extinguish the heat of our passion.

My hand quickly moved under her clothes, sliding over her breasts and cupping the soft mounds beneath her bra. My other hand moved lower, my fingertips teasing the delicate skin in her tiny panties.

"If your leg..."

My mouth whispered close to her ear. Her sweet voice moaned in response, accompanied by warm breaths. One hand weakly tried to stop me, while her other hand gripped the wall for support. Her cheek rested against the cool wall as my knee pushed her legs apart.

"Prang, open your legs for me..."

Even though moans escaped her lips, even though her body twisted weakly, even though the slippery liquid covered my fingers, she still wouldn't surrender. Her legs remained tightly clamped, refusing to open the way. "Jay... I want to shower... Ahhh!"

"Can you resist?"

I moved my finger to stimulate the clitoris more, loving the sounds of desire she released.

"Can you resist, my love?"

Her beautiful face tilted back, breath catching as my fingertips slowly slid across the warm wetness. Her legs weakened from the stimulation, easily spreading apart.

Her slender body trembled with desire, her skin radiating heat. I pressed kisses to her flushed cheeks before pulling back my fingers—just to lower myself and begin removing her clothes.

But before I could do anything, she twisted around to face me. Her face leaned in close, and she straddled my body firmly.

“Not taking that shower anymore?”

“You’ve done this much and still dare ask something so ridiculous?”

The soft light outside shone through. The room was dim. Both arms were pressed against the floor above my head. My body was stretched out and bowed. Soft, cool fingertips kneaded my waist. The hook of my bra was unhooked.

The hem of my shirt was lifted by a slender hand, stimulating the touch through my skin up to my bare chest. My back absorbed the cold, piercing skin from the expensive stone floor. The fragrance of a young woman's hair filled my senses.

A tingling sensation erupted, demanding. My face tilted up when the soft organ licked the skin under my chin, sucking and tasting my neck.

“Ahh…”

Her warm tongue and fingers played with the sensitive peaks of my chest, never relenting in her assertive rhythm.

I lay staring at the ceiling, lips parted as heavy breaths escaped me. My abdomen tensed rhythmically with each touch, sensations swirling and intensifying, rising like a wave.

My toes curled as the weight of her thick hair brushed against my skin, and warmth followed, trailing down slowly—leaving wet traces of her taste along my body.

Every touch stimulated my emotions.

She always knew exactly where to touch, what pressure would make my body tremble.

“Prang…”

My skirt was pushed up hastily to my waist. My underwear was pulled down in a rush, and once it slipped to the side, my legs were spread and pressed to the floor without hesitation.

No pause. No doubt.

It began with her face leaning in, her tongue repeating its motions again and again. Then she undressed fully, removing everything that remained below. Lifting one of my legs against her chest, she pressed her body down, forcing herself closer—filling me with pain, pleasure, and overwhelming need.

Every cell in my body quivered. It felt as though I were expanding, swelling to the brink—until, in a single moment, the pressure burst into a dazzling, uncontrollable release.

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It only took a few seconds to make me forget everything outside that door. My thoughts—and every cell in my body—shattered, before being pulled back together to become me again.

Prang had already taken me to heaven twice, even though my underwear (the sexy one I picked for today) was still clinging to my left leg. My clothes were still technically on, though not exactly in place.

The scent of desire still lingered at the tip of my nose. My body was burning with heat, sweat gathering at my hairline. I breathed deeply, pulling air into my lungs.

Her face rested in the crook of my neck. I held her, gently running my fingers through her hair. Soft moans and heavy breathing faded into silence.

All that remained was us—something familiar. Her, the one my heart never forgot.

“Let’s shower,” she said, standing and tugging my arm.

“Let me wash you.”

I stayed lying down, looking up at her glowing face.

“I just want to stay like this. I’m scared that if I move, I’ll wake up.”

“You’re already awake, love.”

“Some moments are so perfect, they make me afraid to lose them.”

Prang stood, smiling, and stepped back. Then she returned with her phone. A flash went off with a loud click.

She showed me the screen—my side profile lit up on it. I turned my face away from the flash, but I was still smiling. My cheeks were flushed like I’d just finished a workout. My dark brown hair spread across the floor like silk. Faint red marks trailed down my pale neck and shoulder. The photo ended there.

Then she leaned down again, nuzzling me, her lips brushing gently against my cheek again and again.

“Time might pass, but memories like this stay,”

She whispered, pressing a kiss to my chest.

“No one can take that from you, Jay.”

“And all the bad memories… you remember those too, don’t you, Prang?”

Her five fingers laced through mine, holding tight.

“Jay, I will be here, through everything—good or bad.”

“You won’t leave me again, right?”

“Not unless I get cheated on.”

She made me smile. And I was still smiling even when we were soaking together in the warm bath, her arms wrapped around me from behind.

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***Rrrrrrrr! Rrrrrrrr!***

I eventually stood up, wrapped a robe around my bare body, and stepped out to the balcony to breathe in the fresh morning air.

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“Hello?”

[You woke up late. If you miss this chance, all the men will be gone.] “Forget the men. Phi Jin... Why do you always call so early?”

[You can come back now. I am done my part.]

“Has the news come out yet?”

[The police are still keeping it quiet. They’re afraid the other suspect might catch on.]

“Oh, right. If it leaks, the first one who call me will be Je Ang. If I go back now, will I get arrested?”

[Prang’s dad already filed to have the warrant withdrawn. But you still have to testify. And technically, you’re still a suspect—until you can prove your innocence.]

“What charges did you face?”

There was a burst of laughter right after my question.

[I am being charged with helping my sister no matter who gets in the way.]

“That’s not even a real charge,” I sighed.

“I’m not saying I love you, by the way. That’d be too embarrassing.”

[Forget it. So, when are you coming back? Want me to pick you up? I know the way.]

“You’re still using that dumb navigation app, aren’t you?”

[Yes.]

"Huh.."

[I’m keeping the necklace with me all the time.]

[There’s one more thing.]

“What is it?”

[I had a hacker trace the person who leaked the video of that guy Sek and Mr.O's wife, Pin—the one that was exposed on the E-Prik page. And they found the source.]

I stayed silent, eyes resting on the slender figure of my lover still asleep in bed.

[Even though the system was designed to cover its tracks and make tracing difficult, the hacker still found out that both clips came from the same computer. And while our hacker was monitoring it, that same computer logged into the E-Prik page.]

“You’re saying the page admin released the clips themselves?”

[.....]

“Then how did they even get those clips?”

[That's right. So I had someone look for him. We should have an answer soon.]

"And the video clip of me in the hotel room—who sent it to the police?"

[That, I still don't know. But I think it was the same person who took the memory card.]

"Feels like having a brother who's a secret agent."

I heard a puff of air through the phone speaker.

"Ever since the GPS hidden in your necklace—seriously, are you working as a spy for some secret agency or something? Just tell me. I promise I won't tell anyone."

I teased my brother like that.

"I think you should watch fewer Western spy series."

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After finishing the call with Phi Jin, I walked back into the room.

The young woman's robed body was lying face-down on the wide bed. Her smooth white back down to her waist peeked out from beneath the blanket.

Her sweet, delicate face was relaxed in sleep, her lips slightly parted. Her shoulders rose and fell gently with each peaceful breath.

I gazed at her and kept thinking about how I should wake her today. Should I let her sleep in like the first day, let her dream her fantasies like on the second day, or should I just crawl in and cuddle that soft body?

Being here feels more like escaping on a honeymoon than running from the police. All that's here are smiles and a warm sense of peace.

“When are you coming back to bed?”

A husky, sleepy voice spoke up, even though she hadn’t opened her eyes. It made me smile as I pulled back the blanket from her feet.

The tips of my nails lightly grazed and scratched her soles—just enough to give her a ticklish sensation that she couldn’t take. She moved her feet away, but her closed-eyed face broke into a wide smile, showing her white teeth.

“When are you going to wake up?”

I grabbed her playful foot and held it, continuing to gently tease it.

“I miss you already.”

The woman in bed began to protest in a mix of laughter while trying to wriggle away, though her eyelids still wouldn’t open.

“Jay, it tickles.”

“Come on, wake up. Let’s go find something to eat.”

I pulled the blanket away and moved my hand from her feet, sliding it up her body. Her face-down form arched and twisted along with the touch of my hand.

Her face was beaming with a smile, but she still wouldn’t get up. So I let myself fall beside her and started kissing and nuzzling her shoulder.

“Are you going to wake up nicely or get ravished first?”

She turned her back to me with a shy smile but didn’t respond—instead, she pulled my hand close and hugged it to her chest. “Prang, what did I miss these past three years?”

“And you, Jay—what did I miss about you?”

We lay there, nestled close, sharing stories of the time we’d spent apart. Eventually, as morning turned into late morning, we got up, got ready, packed our things, and got into the car.

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*“You’re out now, right? I already sent the lawyer to wait.”*

*“Thank you.”*

*"You're sure you don’t want me to come with you?"*

*“It’s alright, I have Prang with me.”*

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That was the end of the phone conversation with Phi Jin during our ride back to Bangkok.

This afternoon, our main destination was the police station. I went in to give a full and truthful statement. I was still considered a suspect, since there

was no concrete proof of guilt or innocence.

But I was released—only to be greeted by a crowd of reporters still hounding Je Ang for interviews.

As soon as they saw me, they changed their target. Instead of Je Ang, they swarmed toward me, bombarding me with questions like always.

*“Are you here today because the police found new evidence?”*

“At this time, I can’t comment. Please let the process run its course. I’ll make a statement later.”

That was all I said before trying to leave the media crowd with Je Ang. But they continued blocking our way until both the lawyer and some officers had to come out and help clear the path.

In the middle of the chaos, a soft hand suddenly reached out and clasped mine. Prang had pushed her way through the crowd and grabbed me, pulling me along with her.

I heard murmurs of surprise ripple through the reporters.

*“Huh? Weren’t they not on good terms?”*

*“Prang! / Jay! / Is it true what our sources say—that Prang’s father helped Jay get out of the case? / Can you give us more details?”*

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“I thought you were waiting in the car,”

I whispered to the person beside me as we hurried away from the swarm of recording devices.

“I was waiting in the car. When you came out, I came to get you.”

“When I saw your face just now, I thought you were going to snap at the reporters.”

“I wanted to, but figured it would just be a waste of energy. Plus, I don’t want to give them more drama to write about.”

“How did Je Ang get here?”

“I called Je myself to tell him you’d be giving your statement. She came to wait because he didn’t want you to be interviewed alone.” Prang said.

“Love you, Je.”

I said, and as usual, Je-Ang curled her lip and rolled her eyes at me.

Prang didn’t let go of my hand until we reached the car and got in together —just the two of us.

“Hungry. Let’s get something to eat.”

“How about that grilled pork belly from the Korean place?”

“Good thing we drove separately. If Angsumalin finds out you took me there, she’ll probably throw a fit.”

“It won’t make us fat. I’ll take you to work it off later.”

“Indoors, right?”

I teased with a mischievous wink.

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We ran a few errands, did some shopping, and returned to the condo in the evening. After that, I got a phone call.

“Hello, Jay.”

“Hi, P’Pin.”

“The editing for our series is done, but there are a few scenes that need reshooting. Do you have time for me?”

“Which scenes need to be reshot?”

“The ones at the heroine’s family company. I’ll send you the details shortly.”

"Sure, P'Pin. Is anyone else scheduled to be in the scene with me?"

"Ploy, Prang, and Ken too. The rest are supporting actors."

"Got it. I am free all the time now. Just let me know the shooting date."

"Okay, thanks a lot. Let me check Ken and Prang's schedule first, and then I’ll call to confirm the date with you."

"Sure, no problem."

"That's all for now then."

"Wait, P'Pin. I'm sorry about P'O. We haven’t had a chance to talk since it happened."

"I was called in for questioning too. I heard everything from the police. I’m the one who should apologize for what my husband did to you."

I still couldn’t detect any hint of deceit in P'Pin’s voice.

"It’s not your fault, P'Pin. You don’t need to apologize for someone else’s actions."

"Still, I have to say I’m sorry."

"And… are you okay, P'Pin?"

Even if I'm not okay… I have to be.

After hanging up the phone, I walked into the library. A small safe, discreetly placed among the books on the shelf, was unlocked and opened. A black smartphone, which had its SIM card removed since the day it was first stored, lay still inside.

*A smartphone that wasn’t mine.*

*.*

# Chapitre 22: THE KILLER

The sky had been dark for hours when P'Pom shouted,

"Cut! That was great. Jay's scenes are all done."

That meant the work was finished. I went to change clothes and then sat at a quiet corner table, waiting for Prang, who still had more scenes to shoot.

The crew had rented this office building for the evening. We were working in a large room that had been divided into smaller private spaces using light-colored partitions.

Bigger roles had larger spaces or even their own private rooms with assigned chairs.

At this time, only the crew and the building staff were around to help us. I figured the regular office workers had already gone home.

The table I sat at must have belonged to someone-probably a woman, judging by the cute decorations scattered here and there. Women often bring a sense of brightness and life to their spaces.

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***Rrrrrrrr!***

"Hello?"

[What time did you finish filming? I'm just about done here. I'll stop by and pick you up.]

"I'm done too, but you should go home and get some rest, Je. I'll wait and go back with Prang-she'll probably be shooting for another hour."

[Of course. I don't matter to you anymore, do I?]

"We live in the same condo. No need for you to go out of your way and get tired."

[Hmph.]

"Love you."

Angsumalin replied in a playful, sulky voice before we ended the call.

While I was happily looking around at the things in the place, the team's loud laughter made me turn to look. It was probably another blooper scene, as usual.

Amid all that laughter, Prang was smiling brightly. Ken was playfully mimicking something. P'Ploy was yawning with her hand covering her mouth, and someone else had come in to fully help P'Pin, which caught my attention.

Since P'O had passed away, I hadn't seen P'Pin again until today, when P'Pin called the team in for a reshoot. And the person now confidently standing next to her was P'Sek, her personal assistant.

Their behavior and how they interacted with each other were more open now-not like before, when he was just a subordinate quietly following orders. Of course, other people's personal matters aren't my business, but I couldn't help thinking about the case.

The smartphone, still locked and unreadable, was in my bag. Phi Jin gave it to me after his attempt to unlock it failed.

I don't know why I brought it with me today. I didn't have a plan-nothing at all. I just took it out of the safe and dropped it into my bag before coming to the set. Maybe I could find a way to ask P'Pin after filming ends... or should I?

My thoughts wandered as I stared at a plain-looking phone, not knowing what secrets it might be hiding.

I pressed a small button on the side. The screen lit up with the face of a tall, dark-skinned man wearing black sunglasses. The background was a blurry view of some unknown place.

I tried entering the passcode using everything I knew about P'O-at least ten times-but just like before, I had to give up. Frustrated, I sat there staring at the screen, as if somehow, if I stared long enough, the phone would unlock by itself. *Sigh...*

"P'Jay."

I jumped. Damn it. Kade always had a way of sneaking up and scaring me. Her hard, cold eyes were fixed on my face like always. Her head tilted slightly, and that eerie little smile of Ked's never failed to creep me out.

"That," she said, eyes dropping to what I was holding, "isn't that P'O's phone?"

It was pure instinct-I quickly turned off the screen and crossed my arms to hide the phone.

But Kade grabbed my wrist tightly. I never expected such a skinny, narrowshouldered girl to be that strong. I couldn't even pull my hand back.

That creepy smile was still on her face, and her cold, sharp gaze was just as unnerving-but now there was something else in her eyes.

*Suspicion.*

"How did P'O's phone end up with you?"

"This is *my* phone."

"But I remember what P'O's phone looks like."

"I told you-it's mine."

She shook her head slowly.

"Do you dare to prove it's yours, P' Jay?"

"I don't need to prove anything."

Even though I was shocked, my acting skills were what kept me steady against those unsettling eyes.

"This is crucial evidence, you know. Do the police know about it yet?"

Those eyes hadn't blinked once since she grabbed my wrist. And I was starting to get really annoyed!

"That's enough, kid."

She was so tiny compared to me as I stood up to my full height. Her little chin tilted up to meet my eyes.

"Let go of my hand, Kade."

Her thin fingers slowly loosened. The curve of her lips twitched slightly, almost a smirk, but only for a split second before returning to that chilling coldness, while her eyes flickered subtly.

I held onto the phone tightly and grabbed my expensive bag, ready to walk away. But-

"I know the passcode."

That calm, flat voice froze my steps. I turned to look at her, hiding my shock and racing heart behind a composed face.

"What are you talking about?"

"Well... I walked by and saw you sitting there trying to unlock it for ages. And you sighed so many times. Isn't that because you couldn't turn it on?"

Her smile hinted at triumph.

"And if this is P' O's phone, I know the passcode."

"How could you possibly know the passcode?"

"I saw P'O pressing it often." That girl left me speechless.

She held out her hand, waiting.

"Hand it over."

"Kate, what are you doing? Come help adjust the lighting over here!"

A crew member shouted in our direction, and everyone nearby turned to look.

"Okay, I'll be there in a sec,"

She replied, then turned those calm, cold eyes back to me. Her open hand twitched, urging me to give her the phone.

"What do you say, P'Nineteen?"

I decided to place the smartphone in her thin hand. Then, in one swift motion, she entered a six-digit passcode. The screen unlocked while I stood there in stunned silence.

"Two-five-six-seven-eight-zero. Remember it,"

Kate said as she returned the phone to me. Her eerie smile remained as she turned and walked away silently, almost as if floating. But her voice echoed in my mind.

That girl knows everything going on in this film crew. And I believed her.

Je Ang once warned me-why didn't I take it seriously? That nerdy girl... I actually feel bad now for speaking so harshly to her earlier.

I sank down onto the chair, heart pounding, as my fingers started scrolling through the phone.

I tapped on the Photos app. Rows of clips and photos filled the screen. My finger paused over the most recent video, then tapped.

And my eyes widened.

*It's in here.*

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The camera angle from the phone captured the face of a tan-skinned man wearing only a towel, walking through a room in a hotel-one where my older brother is a major shareholder.

He moved the phone around to find the right angle, then set it down in a spot that captured the full view of the room.

In front of the TV, a video camera was mounted on a tripod, its red *Record* light blinking steadily. On the bed behind him, a girl was lying down**-it was me!**

Once he was satisfied with the angle, he returned to the bed, crawling toward me as I lay unconscious under the effect of a sedative. With both hands, he pulled the tucked-in shirt out from my skirt and slowly unbuttoned it, one by one, without hesitation.

Those vile fingers touched my face. His mouth leaned down, violating my neck and chest. His rough hands caressed downward from my bra to my stomach, and my skirt was lifted above my hips.

But just then, a knock at the door interrupted everything. He quickly pulled the blanket over my nearly naked body.

He cursed in frustration but got up to look through the peephole, then slightly opened the door.

*"Why the hell are you in such a rush?" he growled at the visitor.*

*"You already got what you wanted. Now it's time you give me my part of the deal," The other man said flatly.*

P'O cursed at him again.

*"Can't you wait until I'm done with this?"*

*"No," the man replied coldly.*

*"And why the hell are you wearing a mask? Take it off and talk to me like a man, Sek!"*

The man, dressed like a hotel staff member, pulled down his face mask, revealing himself. P' O spat another curse at him before opening the door wider to let him in, then shut it behind them.

"What's the damn hurry?"

P' Sek looked around the room, and then his gaze froze-on me.

*"Did you hurt her?" he asked.*

*"Don't get picky,"*

P' O said as he walked to the wardrobe and pulled out a shirt.

*"Take your stuff and get out. Oh-and thank my wife for helping, will you?"*

Just as P'O turned his back and reached into the shirt for something, P' Sekthe visitor-pulled a rectangular object from his own pocket.

A large block of ice was gripped firmly in both hands before being slammed with full force onto the back of P' O's head. The ice shattered into two pieces as the tan-skinned man collapsed to his knees and lost consciousness instantly.

After tossing the improvised weapon onto the floor, P' Sek picked up a small item from P' O's hand and tucked it into the pocket of his pants.

P' O's white towel had fallen beside him. Calmly, P' Sek dragged the unconscious man's naked body onto the bed, placing him beside me.

Wearing gloves, he pulled out a syringe and some tools from his bag. A thin rope was tied around P' O's arm, and the entire contents of the syringeillegal drugs-were injected directly into his bloodstream.

After making sure P' O's heart had stopped, P' Sek arranged his body and scattered evidence around the room to stage the scene to his satisfaction.

Then... the killer turned to face me.

He pulled the blanket off my body and stared for a moment-coldly, calculating-then tossed the blanket back down, covering both me and P' O together.

***Rrrrrrr!***

**"It's done, Pin. There's nothing to worry about now."**

After answering the phone, P'Sek looked at his watch. His face was covered with a mask. Then, the memory card from the video camera, which had been blinking red, disappeared from the room along with him that night.

Apart from the ice on the floor slowly melting, nothing else happened after that-until the video cut off.

It felt like a relief, as if it confirmed for sure that my body hadn't been violated. A rush of emotions overwhelmed me all at once.

I took a deep breath and tried to stay calm. Then I turned on the internet from my phone to share it with P'O's device so I could send the video clip. But just as both phones were trying to connect, a voice startled me.

"Jay, hey."

My heart sank. When I turned around, I saw him-the same man from the video-standing behind me.

Shock instantly showed on my face. I stepped back until my hip hit the work table.

"Huh?" I replied awkwardly, still trying to collect myself.

P'Sek looked at me closely, then his eyes moved to the phone in my hand.

"Did I scare you? I'm sorry," he said with a calm smile.

"I just came to let you know the pizza has arrived. If you're hungry, you can join the crew over there. P'Pin ordered a lot."

I looked where he pointed and saw some of the crew gathered around eating pizza slices, while some actors like Prang were still on set.

"Thanks, but I'm not hungry yet," I replied.

He nodded, his expression unreadable, then walked off to join the others.

Wanting more privacy, I left the area and headed toward the women's restroom, which was in another part of the building.

Inside the restroom, there was a young crew member I often saw around. She was washing her hands in front of the mirror. We greeted each other with a smile before I went into one of the stalls.

Once I locked the door, I pulled out both phones. The process of transferring the video clip from P'O's phone to Phi Jin's began-right there, in front of the toilet on the 9th floor of the XX company building.

And the video clip would probably reach Phi Jin in the next five minutes-if the supposedly "strong" internet signal didn't suddenly disappear. This is the capital city, not a mountaintop! Seriously?!

While the clip was still uploading-at a pace slower than a sloth crawling-I grew too anxious to just sit and wait. So, I picked up the phone and called Phi Jin.

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"Hello, Phi."

[What's up, little sis?]

"I've unlocked the phone," I said.

I wanted to hear some excitement in his voice-something to match my emotions right now. But no, he just stayed quiet for a second, then replied calmly.

[Is there anything in it we can use?]

"Yes. I'm sending it to you now. But there's no internet signal at all."

[Where are you right now?]

"I'm in the bathroom at XX company."

[Send me the clip as fast as you can.]

"I suspects this company might have intentionally made the restroom a dead zone-probably to stop employees from secretly scrolling Facebook while on the toilet. I'll go outside and look for a better signal first, okay?"

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I ended the call, unlocked the stall, and pushed the door open.

But my heart immediately sank, then leapt in fear-because right in front of me stood a tall, broad man, blocking the way.

Our eyes met for only a split second before I tried to slam the door shut again. But his thick arm and strong hand forced their way through. He pushed hard to open it.

We struggled-the door creaked and slammed-but it wasn't long before he lifted me off the ground and pulled me out of the stall. His huge hand clamped over my mouth, nearly covering my whole face. I kicked, flailed, and hit him with both hands, gasping for air.

My bag dropped to the floor. The bracelet Phi Jin gave me caught on something and snapped. His powerful arm locked tightly around me, then threw me against the wall. The force knocked the wind out of me.

One hand covered my mouth; his other thick arm pinned my neck, keeping me from moving.

"Don't scream," he whispered.

"I won't hurt you. Okay?"

I nodded hesitantly. Slowly, he removed his hand from my mouth. I gasped, trembling, face flushed, finally able to breathe again.

"Where's the phone?"

He demanded, his eyes scanning for what he wanted.

"Why did you kill him?" I asked, voice shaky.

The video is still uploading. I just need time.

"Give me the phone," he demanded.

"At least let me know why,"

I said, trying to stall for time, tears welling up in my eyes.

"Why do I have to go through all of this?"

His eyes flicked sharply, and without another word, he yanked P'O's phone from the pocket of my pants.

Right in front of me, he pressed the button to cancel the video upload. Then he loosened his grip and let me go, allowing me to stand freely.

*Damn it!*

"You're lucky I helped you," he said.

"That wasn't helping! You and P'Pin knew about what P'O did to me!"

"He threatened us,"

He said, rubbing his forehead with a frustrated hand.

"That sick bastard secretly recorded a video of me and Pin, then used it to stop her from filing for divorce. He blackmailed her-forced her to stay with someone she hates, to keep up appearances, to do things she didn't want to do. It was hell, Jay."

I glanced at the exit door... and at the phone still in P'Sek's hand.

"Mr. O had wanted you for a long time," he continued.

"But he couldn't get close because your manager was always with you. Then one day, he made an offer: if Pin helped him get you into the hotel, he'd give us back the blackmail clip."

I wasn't exactly surprised-just unsure when I had been drugged.

"I agreed to meet him that night to get the clip back," P'Sek said.

"But I never trusted someone like him to just stop there. He probably made backup copies... or had more dirt on us. So I stabbed him in the back."

"You planned to kill him from the beginning?" I asked, stunned.

He nodded in acknowledgment.

"When he told me the offer, the plan to drug you, I scoped out the hotel, found a uniform like the staff's, and made it look like he died accidentally. It should've ended there. At most, you would've just faced a scandal about an affair. But the mistake was-I hit him too hard. The police realized it was a murder... I didn't want to do it."

"You guys had problems. What do I have to do with it? My life got ruined because of this crazy mess."

"You were just unlucky. You just happened to be there."

"Just unlucky?"

I wanted to punch that smug nose of his.

"You planned to frame me from the start. You were going to use the scandal between me and that man to cover up the murder. A cheating scandal involving a married producer dying in the arms of a famous actor would've distracted from the real issue well. And even if the police knew it was a murder, it wouldn't have mattered-you had me as the scapegoat. You guys walk free while I fight the case. But none of that went according to your plan, did it?"

He shook his head.

"I didn't want it to end up like this."

"Didn't want it to? Then turn yourself in! Take responsibility for what you did! Instead, you sent the clip of me with P'O to the police. You were clearly trying to frame me!"

*Damn it. How am I going to get that phone back?*

"I'm sorry," he said.

At that moment, the exit door opened and another woman stepped in. Sek turned to look at the new arrival.

"What are you two doing in this roo-"

Pin stopped mid-sentence, her face assessing the situation, and then her eyes widened in shock.

I took advantage of Sek's distraction, pulled my leg back, and kicked as hard as I could straight between his legs. The big man collapsed, clutching his crotch instantly. I grabbed P'O's phone from his hand and dashed toward the exit, crashing into Pin, who was still frozen in place.

"Pin!! That's O's phone! Get that phone back!"

Even curled up in pain, Sek still managed to shout his desperate order.

And the disgusting sensation of my foot hitting Sek's crotch still made me cringe, even after I had already run out of the restroom.

I tried to run back to where the crew was, but Pin ran after me and yanked my arm. She pulled me into the stairwell doorway. We struggled, pulling each other back and forth, and both of us ended up falling.

The impact caused P'O's phone to fly from my hand, sliding down the steps and stopping at the landing of the next floor.

Both of us kicked and scrambled to get up, but Pin was faster. She dashed down and grabbed the smartphone first. I shook my head and threw myself at her, knocking her down. We wrestled over the phone again.

"You spoiled brat! That phone belongs to my husband!"

Her shove made me stumble down two steps, a sharp pain shooting through my ankle. Luckily, I grabbed the railing just in time.

She was about to run back up, but I managed to grab her legs and pulled her down. There were loud thuds, crashes, and the two of us screaming.

I almost couldn't stop her in time when she tried to smash the phone. My fist clenched, and I punched her in the face with full force.

"When was it...." I ask.

Pin staggered back from the punch.

"When did you drug me?"

I punched her again, this time purely out of rage.

Blood trickled from her nose. She collapsed in a daze, her chest rising and falling with heavy breaths. Then a faint whisper escaped her lips.

"The water bottle... in the car."

As soon as the words left her mouth, I raised my leg and kicked her hard in the torso-twice.

"That's still not enough for all the hell you've put me through."

***Bang!***

I jolted when the stairwell door slammed open, crashing against the wall. Sek stood there, eyes blazing with fury. His large frame charged forward, but I moved just in time as soon as I saw him.

"I am fine! Go after Jay!"

Pin's voice screamed after her lover.

I ran.

Ran like my life depended on it.

***Rrrrrrrr!***

Ran with the phone buzzing violently in my pocket, vibrating nonstop. I kicked off my heels mid-run, clutching the other smartphone tightly in my hand, and bolted down the stairs-step after step, floor after floor.

But each door I passed wouldn't open.

My heart pounded with terror as the sound of that man's heavy footsteps echoed closer and closer.

The letters "4FL" were printed boldly on the wall when I finally found a door that could be pushed open. But the floor was almost pitch black. The elevator was sealed off-completely unusable.

My left leg throbbed painfully, and my whole body shook, gasping for air. My chest tightened, panic growing, as the pounding footsteps drew even nearer in the stairwell behind me.

But what truly broke me was the asthma-my lifelong burden.

Breathing was becoming harder... and harder... with each passing second.

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# Chapitre 23: Where's the phone?

Darkness surrounded me. The *khon* stage partitions lined up like hiding spots. I lay curled up, gasping for air under someone’s usual desk when that man walked into the room.

I heard footsteps—soft, cautious—near the entrance. Then they moved closer... creeping toward me... searching for me.

The shadows from the table and chairs couldn’t hide the sound of my quickening breath. My chest felt heavy, my body too weak to run. I was lying on my back, curled up, completely drained. The pressure in my chest was crushing. I could barely breathe.

And he was getting closer.

The soft sound of fabric brushing... one step at a time... The danger in the air was loud to me now. And the fear in my heart screamed.

*Thud.*

The tip of a leather shoe stopped right in front of me. The wheeled chair that had hidden me was pushed aside. A tall figure loomed in the shadows. His lips curled into a smile. His dark eyes looked down at me.

“There you are,” he said, squatting down.

“Out of strength already?”

His big hands grabbed my arms and dragged me out from under the desk. Then he started feeling around my clothes, searching for something.

I lay there, trembling, gasping for air, trying to breathe deeply.

"Where’s the phone, Jay?"

He acted frantic as he searched me again. Then he looked around quickly and rushed to the desk he had just dragged me away from. He stormed around the room in frustration before stomping back angrily.

"I asked you—where’s the phone?!"

He shouted, kicking the partition wall hard in rage.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!*

"Where’s the phone?!"

"It's here."

In the brief moment of silence, a calm yet powerful voice spoke from behind the large man. Then everything happened in a flash—even though, to me, it felt like slow motion.

P’Sek turned toward the voice. The office phone on the table was suddenly grabbed with both hands and smashed hard against the side of the man’s face.

As he staggered from the blow, the newcomer swung a sharp kick right between his legs, dropping him to the floor. She grabbed him by the collar and yanked him forward—then drove her smooth, pale knee into his face again.

His head snapped back, and he passed out mid-air… And damn it, I even heard her skirt tear.

It was very dark when the woman rushed over and fumbled through her bag for a spray. She held it with both hands, gently supporting me, calling my name over and over. Then the mist was forced into my lungs.

I heard the sound of several people running toward us, just before the office lights flicked on.

I still remember the sight of P’Sek lying peacefully on his back, unconscious, with a bloody mouth and blood still trickling from his nose— right when she told Ken to lift me up and carry me out.

“Wait, Ken,”

I whispered weakly, pointing to the third desk from the entrance.

It was in there. I had already sent the clip and secretly dropped both phones into the trash bin when I first came in. Then I crawled away and hid in another corner.

The bin was opened, and the woman—whose skirt was torn all the way up to her hip—picked up the smartphones. That’s when I realized the clip hadn’t been sent anywhere. The internet signal was awful.

I muttered a curse under my breath as Ken carried me into the elevator (which was finally working), leaving the building staff and crew behind to deal with the criminal in the office.

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"How did you find me?"

I asked, lying on the soft backseat, under a cozy, scented blanket, with cool air from the car’s AC blowing gently. The driver was a beautiful woman with wavy hair.

“We had just finished filming. P’Pom wrapped the shoot. I couldn’t find you, so I was heading to the bathroom. Then I saw P’Sek walking briskly out,”

Said the woman, gently stroking my hair as she spoke.

“You kicked him in the groin, didn’t you?”

“No wonder,” Prang laughed.

“I saw P’Sek walk quickly into the fire escape door, but I didn’t think much of it, so I went to the bathroom. That’s when I found your bag and things on the floor. It seemed strange, so I tried calling you, but you didn’t pick up. Then I checked the fire escape—and ran into P’Pin.”

“Where’s P’Pin now?” I asked.

“Before we left, we had Kade and another crew member watch over her,”

Ken, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, turned to answer.

“Jay, did you punch P’Pin?” Prang asked.

“I kicked her too—right in the stomach.”

After that answer, the curly-haired girl driving me to the hospital finally laughed for the first time since we got in the car.

“You always make me happy. I wish I could cook for you more often.”

“Don’t let P’Ploy go in the room,” Prang whispered.

“Tell us more—what happened?”

“When I saw P’Pin, I knew something had happened. There was blood all over P’Pin’s shirt. It was so scary. So I called Ken and P’Ploy to get help. I also called my dad and ran down the stairs after them.”

“You’re such a tattletale—always calling your dad,” I teased, holding her hand.

“Shut up,” she said, planting a kiss on my forehead.

“How did you know to run downstairs?” Ken asked, curious.

“I’m smart.”

“Seriously,” he said with a smile and a shake of his head.

“When I showed up, P’Pin looked shocked and glanced downstairs. That’s when I decided to run down the stairs. On the fourth floor, the door was unlocked, so I decided to go in. It was dark and quiet—I almost turned back until I saw a shadow moving around." Prang said.

"And then what?"

"I snuck in to get a better look. When I got closer, I saw Jay lying there," She said, squeezing my hand.

"Then P'Sek yelled at Jay. I was so angry—who does he think he is, yelling at my girlfriend like that?"

Her face tensed as she spoke.

"So you threw your phone at him,"

I said, chuckling weakly, still not fully recovered.

"Well, he was asking for the phone," she shrugged.

"I was seriously worried, you know. Saw a woman going alone and thought I should be concerned. Turns out, when we arrived, P’Sek was a complete mess. He even passed out. Got some broken bones too,"

Ken said with a horrified look.

"Reminded me of the time Prang slapped me in that scene. My ears were still ringing."

"And who told you to go off-script and actually kiss Jay in that scene, huh, Ken?" Prang narrowed her eyes.

"Je Ang did," Ken replied.

"Je Ang again!?" Prang said.

"Back to the point—what exactly happened to P’Sek? I saw one of his teeth knocked out and just hanging there,"

Someone else in the car chimed in, still trying to piece things together.

"He got hit with a phone, kicked in the groin, and then punched in the face again," I said weakly.

"Damn, that’s brutal,"

Ken winced, but P’Ploy stayed silent.

"At that moment, I wasn’t thinking. I just saw him hurting Jay and lost control. I panicked when I saw Jay lying there, barely breathing."

Suddenly, my vision blurred with heat and tears welled up in my eyes before streaming down my temples.

"Don’t cry,"

The person next to me said gently, wiping my tears away with her fingertip.

"I love you."

Prang pressed her lips together, her eyes turning red before her own tears dropped onto my cheek.

"I love you more," she whispered.

"Prang, don’t cry."

"You’re the one who shouldn’t be crying, Jay."

"Ken, can you turn around for a second? I want to kiss my girlfriend." I said.

"Huh!?" Ken stared at us, stunned.

"Right now?"

"You wanna die, Ken?"

The person whose lap I was resting on shot him a cold stare and spoke in a calm but deadly tone.

"Turn around."

As soon as Ken turned to face the front of the car, her soft lips gently brushed against mine.

"That’s enough for now. Wait until you’ve caught your breath,"

She said, brushing my hair gently.

"When you kneed him in the face and your skirt tore—Prang, you were insanely sexy. It was wild."

She laughed.

"It was a costume from the set. I don’t even know if I’ll have to pay for it now."

"Let’s find something to cover you with when we get out. I don’t want you exposed."

"Mmm."

"That ex you used to say was all cool and mysterious—was she as badass as Prang, Jay?" Ken suddenly cut in.

"Same person,"

I replied to Ken, as our fingers intertwined. Prang and I looked at each other and burst out laughing—through our tears.

"Uh… does Ploy know about this?"

Ken glanced at us, then leaned toward my curly-haired older sister.

P'Ploy asked quietly.

"Know about what?"

The young man tilted his head toward the backseat, where Prang and I had shifted into a cuddled-up position.

"I mean… I thought you were just good friends."

The actor looked utterly confused, while P'Ploy just smiled knowingly and gave us a look through the rearview mirror.

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We arrived at the hospital not long after that. I was carried in and given oxygen, then admitted for at least one night for observation.

At the same time, Phi Jin got the video clip from P’O’s phone — it was taken right after Ken carried me into P’ Ploy’s car. He immediately sent it to Prang’s dad so they could start legal proceedings.

He also asked the police and the media to cut out the part where I was assaulted before releasing the video.

Once Phi Jinn found out I was attacked, he got very mad and rushed over to the hospital.

“At first, I didn’t know whether to go punch the guy first or come see you,” Phi Jin said.

“I heard his teeth got knocked out and his nose broke? That Prang’s doing?”

My Mom asked. If you saw my Mom from the outside, she basically looked like the female version of Phi Jin. Her eyes and nose were like copy-pasted.

Her question made Prang, who usually looks all sweet and quiet, hesitate to answer.

“Where’d you learn that from? Take Jay to train with you too! When Jay was little, Jay used to cry over everything. If anyone picked on her, she’d run to Jin and complain. She didn’t know how to fight back at all.”

“I wasn’t that much of a crybaby, Mom!” I protested.

While we were talking, we suddenly heard *Kobori’s girlfriend, Je-Ang,* scream as he confidently strode into the room.

“Jaaaaaaay!...*sobs* Are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere? Tell me if you’re in pain!”

He said, checking me all over — then suddenly noticed everyone else in the room.

“Oh! Hi, Mom! Sorry for yelling just now!”

Je Ang walked over and held my hand. His lips quivered, his eyebrows drooped, and his eyes welled up with tears.

“Je, I’m fine… but my asthma acting up again,” I said.

As soon as I said that, his lip trembled even more, and a big fat tear rolled down his cheek.

“I wasn’t even there for you…”

“Phi Jin, can you give Je Ang a hug for me, please?”

Then Phi Jin walked over and gave him a warm hug with a big smile on his face.

“Can we just stay like this forever?”

Angsumalin wrapped her arms around his waist and playfully rested her head on his shoulder.

That little moment helped lighten up the mood in the room.

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As for everything we left behind… Prang’s dad sent someone straight to the office right after she called and told him everything.

The staff and little Kade stayed behind to clear things up, and in the end, both P’Pin and P’Sek were taken into custody by the police.

The whole thing blew up into a huge scandal. Every single media outlet in Thailand swarmed the hospital, trying to get interviews, until hospital staff had to step in and ask them to leave so they wouldn’t disturb the other patients.

Over the next month, the once gloomy skies turned bright and clear again — like the storm had never happened. Every news outlet was covering the case and my story.

The tide completely shifted in my favor. Reality shows and programs were all fighting to book me as a guest.

Jeerapat’s fans — both the loyal ones and the ones who had left — came back together stronger than ever. The fan group grew even bigger. They flooded me with gifts, cards, messages, and tons of support.

My drama *Leh Rai* was was immediately aired by the original production company, and the ratings skyrocketed accordingly.

At the same time, P'Pin and P'Sek were in the middle of court proceedings. They confessed and were sentenced according to the legal process.

As for Phi Jin, since he refused to cooperate with the authorities, he was also charged. However, he was never found guilty of any crime, so he was given a suspended sentence.

Suddenly, I became the center of attention, a hot topic, and even more popular than before. Movies, dramas, commercials, and high-end brands all wanted to work with me during this time. Yet I chose to stay silent and didn’t appear on any shows at all.

“I am not accepting it.”

“Not accepting? I haven’t even seen it yet.”

— I nodded.

“All of this?”

— I nodded again.

“It’s worth a fortune, you know.”

“Can I take a break first, Je? Everything that’s happened lately...”

But Angsumalin still wouldn’t give up. He picked something up and placed it in front of me.

“Not even this job?”

“A photoshoot with Prang? Who hired us? Why are we being paired together?”

“They probably saw some kind of chemistry. How should I know? Don’t scratch, Jay—you’ll get a scar.”

Je-Ang swatted my hand away as I was scratching my arm, then started rubbing it for me.

“The more I get scratched, the itchier it gets, Je. So what’s the concept of the job?”

“It’s kind of a girls’ love theme. That kind of vibe. I haven’t really talked through the full details yet.”

I looked at Je-Ang thoughtfully.

“Has Prang agreed to it yet?”

“She probably already said yes.”

“Then why hasn’t she talked to me about it at all?”

“You two live together and haven’t talked—how would I know?”

“Alright. I’ll take the job.”

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After the photos and behind-the-scenes clips from the fashion shoot were released, the internet went wild. People made fan-edit videos of sweet moments between me and Prang—us walking together, holding hands, or hugging.

These were turned into music videos that spread all over YouTube. We became a "*shipped*" couple, a fantasy pairing.

And the person who was constantly going live and posting clips of me and Prang the most? None other than Je-Ang.

“I’m just building the hype,”

He laughed, clearly proud of himself.

Reporters started asking us about how close we seemed.

*“People are shipping you and Prang. How do you feel about that?”*

A microphone was pushed in front of me.

*“I think it’s cute. I don’t mind at all.”*

*“But you’re both women,” a flamboyant reporter from Channel 19 chimed in.*

*“It’s 2019 now,” I replied.*

*“I think the world is more open-minded. People’s thinking has evolved. Discriminating based on gender or refusing to accept differences and the fact that everyone, no matter their gender, deserves equal rights—that kind of thinking is outdated and backwards.”*

*“So… does that mean you wouldn’t mind falling in love with another woman?”*

The Channel 19 reporter asked again. I must have done something to him in a past life.

I turned to glare at the camera.

*“I have the right to love whoever I want to love.”*

Camera shutters went off in a frenzy, and questions kept flying at me as I walked away from the press and headed toward the woman who had just finished changing and returned her clothes to the staff.

I reached out, took her hand, and held it tightly as we walked out of the event together.

“Let’s go home and watch the news.”

“Did you say something weird in the interview?”

I shook my head, my eyes twinkling mischievously.

“Nope.”

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# Chapitre : EPILOGUE

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“He met that kid.”

“Who?”

He casually sipped his coffee and gave a slight smile as we sat in a café inside a shopping mall.

“The owner of the *‘E-Prik’* page.”

“Did you talk to that person?”

“Yes, we talked and she will coming here too,”

My brother said, glancing at his expensive watch.

“She should be here soon.”

“And she agreed to meet just like that?”

“She didn’t want to reveal herself, but we caught her, so she had no choice.” “But I still don’t understand why she shared the clip of P’Pin. Whose side is she on?”

“She told me she saw you getting attacked all alone. She thought it was unfair. She believes there’s more to the story and didn’t think you were the one at fault. She wants to help us.”

I shook my head in confusion.

“But where did she get the clip of P’Pin? It should’ve been with P’O.”

“She works—there! That’s her!”

My brother looked out the window, stood up, and walked out. I turned to look too, but my view was blocked by a chubby man and woman. I turned back to the table and looked at the menu, waiting for them to come in.

As I scanned the list of dishes for this meal, a familiar voice greeted me.

“Hello, P’Jay.”

A sweet smile and those haunting, steady eyes I remembered were staring right at me.

“Kate.”

I gave her a friendly smile. Ever since she helped unlock the password that day, the eerie feeling I used to have about her had faded quite a lot.

“Are you here to eat too?”

“Yes.”

“Who are you with?”

“Just myself.”

“Then why don’t you sit with me?”

I hadn’t had the chance to thank this girl since that day.

“Um…”

I pulled out a chair for her.

“If you’re alone, you can sit with me. Don’t be shy.”

The nerdy girl with the center-parted hair moved awkwardly as she slid into the chair. Her long, straight hair was tucked neatly behind her ear by her thin hand.

“Order whatever you like,”

I said, sliding the menu toward her.

“It’s my treat.”

That sparkle—even though it came from Kate’s usually cold eyes—I could tell it was happiness. Or maybe it was some other kind of feeling, something shiny and positive in nature.

As I watched her body language closely, I couldn’t help but wonder silently:

*Where did my brother go? Has he found the person he was supposed to meet yet?*

Why was he taking so long? Just as the thought crossed my mind, I saw my brother walking toward our table—but he was alone. The supposed owner of the "*E-Prik*" page was nowhere to be seen. “I thought you said she was here already, Phi Jin?”

I asked as soon as he got to the table.

“And where have you been all this time?”

“I was in the bathroom,”

He said as he pulled out a chair to sit down. He turned to Kate and smiled,

“Have you ordered yet?”

“And what about the person you were supposed to meet?”

Phi Jin looked confused and turned to Kate.

“Right here. She’s been sitting with you this whole time. I thought you were already talking.”

My eyes shifted to her face again. A girl in her early twenties, slim, neatly dressed in pastel clothes, and always giving me that cool, calm smile.

It was the first time I really looked at her—really paid attention. And then I noticed that beneath those steady, unreadable eyes was a spark: something bright, burning, and alive. Not the cold indifference or extreme neutrality she projected on the surface.

“…Whoa. You’re like *Newt Scamander’s suitcase*,” I mumbled.

“What?” Phi Jin frowned, clearly not catching what I’d just said.

“Nothing,” I replied.

“I just didn’t expect it to be Kate.”

The owner of the *E-Prik* page with millions of followers—the one who consistently pushed back against the negative news about me. The writing style of that page was nothing like the image Kate projected.

“This is her. She’s the one behind *E-Prik*. The one who helped put out all those fires for us. She’s a big fan of yours, too.”

I stared at her, stunned, while today’s unexpected star at the table smiled bashfully.

“Kade, are you my fan?”

“Yes,” she nodded and gave a polite smile.

“When I found out I’d be working on this production and would get to meet you, I was so happy I had to call my mom. She said I was acting like a crazy fangirl.”

It’s strange how, the moment we change the way we see someone, they’re never the same in our eyes again. That was exactly what was happening with the girl sitting across from me.

The creepy, unsettling feeling I once had about her had faded, replaced by something else—guilt, fondness, and a mix of other positive emotions I couldn’t quite explain.

“We should probably order food first,” I said.

“And while we wait, would you mind telling me a bit about yourself, Kade?”

That’s when I got to know a different side of her. Kade turned out to be a bright, interesting young woman—kind of clumsy and awkward in an endearing way.

She explained that the reason she often looked at me with that faraway gaze was because she admired me so much that she just couldn’t stop staring.

This seemingly ordinary girl had been following my work for years. Eventually, she got the chance to work on our production team. At the same time, she ran the *“E-Prik”* page on the side.

P’O had noticed her dedication and often let her help with important tasks. Kade was observant—she noticed everything that happened on set.

Who was secretly dating who, who was sneaking around with someone else, what everyone was really like—she saw it all.

“P’O and P’Pin argued a lot. But always quietly. One day I walked in to get a script and saw that P’O kept a bunch of video files on his work computer.

That computer was password-protected, but I went in and out of that room so often, I’d seen him type the password. I never opened the files, though.”

“So how did you know there were clips like that?” I asked.

“I didn’t!” Kade laughed.

“But during that time, the news about you was so unfair. I was working there—I knew what was really going on. And with the case and everything, I just wanted to help. So I went into P’O’s office and looked around, hoping

I’d find something—and I did. I saved the clip.”

I set my fork and spoon down and let out a long sigh.

“I don’t even know how to thank you, Kade.”

“Can I have your autograph? I want to show it off to my mom.”

“Sure, Kade. Come have a meal with us again sometime.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

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We talked and spent a bit more time in the restaurant until it was time to part ways.

“Kade,”

I walked closer and bent down to hug the awkward little nerd outside the restaurant.

Her thin body stiffened like stone — she didn’t even move or hug me back. But when I let her go, the silly girl swayed as if she was about to fall and reached out to grab my arm.

“Hold me, please. I’m going to fall.”

That made me laugh with affection.

“Can you hug me again, P’Jay? I didn’t have time to react and hug you back earlier.”

That little girl walked straight up to me, waiting for me to lean in and wrap my arms around her again.

“Thank you, Nong Kade.”

Her thin arms wrapped around my waist as she whispered,

“I know your phone password too, P’Jay.”

I immediately let go of her.

“I’m changing it tonight.”

The girl flashed a creepy smile with a mischievous glint in her eyes, then waved goodbye and walked off — floating away like she was drifting.

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Throughout this past month, I didn’t get any work at all. However, my free days for the next month were gradually being taken up by various jobs.

“Don’t overdo it, Jay. You're not taking as much work as before, remember?”

“Okay, just enough,”

That day the manager agreed without hesitation.

I really, truly intended to take things seriously and manage my time properly—balancing every aspect of life.

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On a rainy evening, Je Ang drove me back to my condo after we finished our body scrub and facial spa session. While riding in the elevator, it hit me that it was finally time I had to talk to Prang.

But as soon as I reached my room and opened the door, the rich aroma of food wafted out to greet me. What I saw was two women standing in front of the pantry—one feeding a bite of food to the other, both smiling with twinkling eyes.

***Bang!!***

The door slammed shut harder than intended, making both women turn around. One of them smirked with amusement, while the other frowned.

“What’s got you in a mood?” The one with the frown asked.

I didn’t answer. I simply walked past the kitchen area—and then felt another surge of irritation when I caught sight, from the corner of my eye, of a pair of glaring red high heels wrapping around those long feet of the woman showing off a dimple on her cheek.

“This place doesn’t allow shoes inside the room, you know.”

That expression—she looked more like she was trying to hold back a smile than showing any kind of guilt. I was irritated.

Not wanting to argue, I walked past the box of brand-new high heels that belonged to the woman in question and headed straight into the bedroom.

But it didn’t take long before someone followed me in.

“What’s wrong, Jay?”

She had that beautiful, sweet face. An open-back top. A single long earring dangling just at her jawline. She smelled so good I wanted to bury my face in her.

“Nothing. Just tired,”

I said, not wanting to come off as petty or overly dramatic. But walking in to find my girlfriend smiling and laughing alone with her ex? It was impossible not to feel annoyed.

I dropped my bag and flopped face-down onto the bed, trying to calm myself. I didn’t want to start a fight over something that might blow up into something bigger.

“Liar.”

The mattress dipped around me under the pressure of Prang’s knees and hands as she climbed onto the bed, straddling me and leaning down close.

“You’re sulking, aren’t you, Jay?”

“You should’ve known better than to bring her here. You knew it would bother me,”

I replied, turning over to face the woman now hovering above me.

“Then where’s the bad mood coming from? Your eyebrows are all scrunched up.”

Her lips pressed a kiss right between my brows. But my unruly hand instinctively pushed her shoulder away. Still, Prang grabbed hold of it, interlacing her fingers with mine and gently pressing our hands down beside us.

“I asked her to teach me how to cook. I wanted to surprise you. I’ve been learning all kinds of things for you.”

“Let go. I’m hungry,” I said curtly.

She looked at me—and kissed me between the eyebrows again.

She left me with just that kiss and no further words, then pulled herself up and tugged me along with her out of the room.

To be honest, besides Je-Ang and Phi Jin, P’Ploy had become a regular guest in our place. She often came knocking at our door, usually with a pair of brand-new shoes in hand.

Sometimes she’d come cook for us, other times she’d just strut in looking glamorous, flash us that knowing smile, and then walk right out.

Maybe she was bored. Maybe lonely. Maybe she just didn’t have anyone else to hang out with. Or, at worst, maybe she just liked messing with us. That’s what I figured, anyway.

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“Prang, move in with me.”

“I basically live here already,” she replied.

I’d finally gotten my bed back—ever since we returned from Khao Yai, Prang had been staying over every night. We’d already packed away the bunk bed from the study room.

“I mean officially. I want our relationship to be serious. Do you understand what I’m trying to say?”

“How serious are we talking?”

“Like... *marriage life*.”

I knew. I didn’t have a ring. There was nothing romantic about how I said it. I just walked in, sat cross-legged on the floor, and spoke to her while she was lying there watching some random *‘How To’* video on YouTube.

But that last sentence—*marriage lif*e—made her turn and look at me, for real, with a seriousness I hadn't seen before.

"Are you really the real Jeerapat?"

Her hands held my face.

"Who are you? Why are you possessing my girlfriend?"

I sighed wearily. "Prang, I'm serious."

"What's wrong? What happened?"

She closed whatever she was watching and put her phone down beside her.

"Let's stop being just girlfriend. I want a life partner. In the past, I was careless with you. I want to make things right—be together, spend time together, and take care of each other."

Prang looked at me silently.

"I want to introduce you to my family, have our families meet on special occasions. Not just dating and sleeping together, but something more serious than that."

"Aren't you afraid Jin will find out?"

*Of course I'm afraid. Why wouldn't I be?*

"He'll understand."

"Actually, Jin has known for a long time."

"Known what?"

"That we used to date. Jin was the one who told me about it because I wasn’t paying much attention to him. I felt guilty, so I admitted that I used to be with you. I did it all out of spite, but honestly, Jin must have already suspected something. Ever since I came in, you disappeared. And the way we act when we see each other—it wasn’t normal. Jin sensed it from the start."

The passage you’ve shared contains intimate and sexually suggestive content. Here's a faithful English translation, toned slightly to remain respectful and within appropriate guidelines, while preserving the emotional tone and nuance:

“I feel guilty toward Phi Jin. I should go apologize to him.”

“He understands.”

“So, what now? Do you want to be with me? I’m not a flirt anymore, you know.”

The one lying stretched out on the sofa sat up. She gave a small smile at the way I referred to myself.

“Have you really stopped being a flirt?”

I nodded.

“Come sit here.”

She patted her lap, and I didn’t hesitate. I moved to sit on her thighs right away.

“So what’s your answer? Do you want to live together?”

My arms wrapped around her neck, my body leaning close, my face nestled against hers.

“Come help me move my clothes tomorrow.”

“You’re not going to play hard to get a little?”

“Why bother? You already had me.”

My hands slipped under her shirt, softly caressing her chest. Her hands were no less active, creeping under the fabric and trailing her nails all over my back.

I curled up, ticklish, but my hands didn’t stop, slowly circling and teasing her chest. I liked the feeling of it under my fingertips.

My lips were busy trailing kisses down her neck, my body swaying rhythmically against hers—until her phone rang.

“Unknown number.”

“Don’t answer it.”

I pulled the phone from her hand and dropped it onto the sofa. My face leaned in for a heated kiss.

But the ringing didn’t stop. Finally, Prang picked it up.

“Hello? Mm-hmm.”

Her pale neck began to flush red as I bent down to kiss and suck on both sides. My hands reached behind to unclasp her bra, then pulled her hands and caress her breasts.

“You’re at the condo? Waiting downstairs? When did you get back?”

Her hands froze on massaging my breasts as she finished that sentence.

“Okay.”

I pulled down the neckline of Prang’s shirt, low enough to fully lick her nipple—but her hands pulled my face back up, and she said something that instantly killed the mood:

“Nong Puin is here.”

“Nong Puin? Wasn’t she abroad?”

“Just got back last night. She’s waiting downstairs now.”

I ran my hand through my hair in frustration while Prang clasped her bra back together and fixed her clothes. Then we went downstairs to greet Puin.

When I got downstairs, I saw that city girl sitting there. Her long hair reached the middle of her back. Her skin was radiant, full of collagen beneath the surface.

She looked more beautiful and mature. But if my instincts are right, I think Pun has been kind of dazed and out of it for years now. Has my girlfriend’s little sister still not sobered up?

“P’Jay,” she said.

I smiled at the sweet-eyed girl, who looked nothing like her older sister.

“You two? Are you back together?”

I nodded.

“Go upstairs and talk. Is this all your stuff?”

Other than the two square suitcases Puin dragged in, a small bag was slung over my shoulder, and Prang helped carry a few small grocery bags.

When we got back upstairs, we gathered in Prang’s room to talk. Puin asked to stay with her for a while, which worked out perfectly since Prang was about to move into my room.

After that, we had a heart-to-heart and cleared up all the past misunderstandings.

“So the news was right—you're actually close now?” Puin asked.

“We’re not close,” I laughed.

“We just slept together.”

“Well, what’s social media going to ‘ship’ now? You’ve made all the rumors come true!”

Before we could continue our conversation, there was a knock at Prang’s door — and the guest wasn’t a stranger.

“Prang moving into your room today, are you?”

P’Ploy asked as she stepped in, dimples appearing as she smiled.

But I sensed something odd. When P’Ploy saw Puin in the room, her soft lips parted slightly in surprise, before quickly shifting into what looked like a smile.

Her eyes sparkled with a strange glint. Meanwhile, Puin looked awkward, her eyes widening slightly at the sight of P’Ploy.

“Is this your new friend?”

P’Ploy asked with a sly smile. What was that about?

“This is Puin, Prang’s younger sister. Puin, this is P’Ploy,” I introduced them while quietly observing both of their reactions.

“Nice to meet you, Puin,” P’Ploy said warmly.

“Hello,”

Puin replied with a polite wai. But I couldn’t shake the feeling that something was off between the two.

“She looks a bit dazed,” P’Ploy added.

“Did you drink last night? I’ve got some hangover pills if you need them.”

Alright, I’m sure of it now. There’s definitely something going on—because Prang is starting to act suspicious too. She narrowed her eyes, clearly suspicious, then walked over to her younger sister.

“Puin, aren’t you tired? Go take a shower and rest in my room.”

Puin opened her mouth like she was about to say something, but then closed it, letting her sister lead her into the bedroom.

I turned to P’Ploy.

“There’s something going on, isn’t there? She’s still a kid… That’s your ex’s little sister, you know?”

She narrowed her eyes, an amused expression crossing her face.

“I haven’t done anything yet. But if I do… the four of us could become one big family.”

“If Prang kicks you in the nuts, don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

I walked over to the fridge, grabbed two ice-cold beers, and P’Ploy dropped herself onto the seat beside me. Her long legs crossed elegantly as she took one of the cans from my hand.

“Do you get drunk easily? I might be able to squeeze some info out of you.”

The woman with the sweet scent leaned back, completely relaxed. Her wavy hair spread over the couch, her red lips forming a soft smile. She looked experienced—and sexy.

“I can hold my liquor. Hard to get me drunk. But even if I am, I don’t just go messing around.”

Haha, oh my gosh, I hate those dimples.

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**---------THE END-------**

# Chapitre : SPECIAL 01

“Jay,” I felt movement in my arms.

“Jay, are you asleep?”

A pause.

“Jay, I think we need to talk.”

As soon as she said that, I had to open my eyes and look at my partner in the dark.

“What is it?”

“Never mind.”

“What is it?”

“You didn’t use to be like this.”

“Like what?”

“Are you sick or something?”

“No, I’m fine.”

I started to notice the worry in her voice, and it woke me up.

“Then why—”

I stayed quiet, waiting to hear more in the darkness.

“Prang, please tell me. What’s going on? I can handle it.”

Honestly, I just wanted to go back to sleep—I was so tired I could probably sleep standing up.

“Jay, do you think I’m pretty?”

“Of course.”

“And… So is it sexy?”

"...."

I stayed silent, confused. Did she really wake me up just to ask this?

Even though I couldn’t see Prang’s face clearly in the dark, my silence— caused by confusion—ended up shaking her confidence. She turned her back on me.

I shifted closer and wrapped my arms around her.

“If I say you’re insanely sexy, will you believe me?”

“If you’re just saying it to make me feel better, then don’t.”

If I tell the truth, she doesn’t believe me. But if I say nothing, she goes quiet and unleashes her deadly emotional aura.

“When was your last period?”

“I’m not moody because of PMS!”

She snapped and pushed my hand away from her waist.

If it’s not PMS, then why is she acting like this—grumpy and throwing moods at me in the middle of the night?

“They say wild animals act fierce and aggressive because they’re missing love.”

I leaned in to kiss her softly—starting from her shoulder, trailing down to the curve of her neck… and even then, I still hadn’t gotten bitten. So I moved in closer and brushed her ear gently.

“Go to sleep,” she said coldly and calmly.

“Unless you want to be mauled by a wild beast.”

This night’s going to be long… What did I even do wrong? Should I call my sister, Angsumalin for advice?

“Jay, I’ve got an interview on that celebrity talk show tomorrow morning. And in the evening, I need to go to practice and prep for the event.”

"....."

“You’re a guest performer at *Earth’s concert*, remember? So no messing around. Get some sleep—you’ll need your energy.”

Her voice cut through the silence like a command hardwired into my brain, like she had zipped it into me or installed it as a permanent program.

“Prang.” She didn’t respond.

“Prang.”

Still no response. Okay, fine—I’ll really go to sleep now.

“Whatever it is, we can talk about it tomorrow, alright?”

Silence. Not a word. “Can I hug the wild beast?”

Still silence.

“Just cuddling. No funny business.”

Even quieter than before. And I decided to take that as a “yes.” But the force field Prannapat was giving off felt dangerously intense.

I figured I’d need to put up a shield and approach slowly, carefully—just in case the beast decided to pounce. That way, I could make a quick escape.

But just as I was about to wrap my arms around her, I froze. Prang turned around. There was a cold, fiery flash in her eyes that stopped me in my tracks. I raised my hands in surrender. She turned her back again.

What on earth had caused my angel to transform into a demon queen? Married life is really not easy.

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I eventually fell asleep and woke up the next morning. Prang was still sleeping peacefully on the bed. I got up, put on some blush, filled in my brows, and got dressed to head off to work.

That day, I texted her a few times—but all I got back were short, dry replies like “Mm,” “Yeah,” “K,” or maybe a random low-effort sticker. The longest message I got was,

*“Are you coming back to eat at the room tonight?”*

I didn’t get home until almost 11 p.m. She was sitting on the couch watching makeup review videos. When she saw me, her cold expression didn’t change. But that night, I was too exhausted to try and cheer her up.

I simply walked over, kissed her on the cheek, then headed to the shower. Before getting into bed, I kissed her cheek again.

“I’m going to sleep now,”

I said, pulling the blanket over myself and resting my head on the pillow.

But just as I was about to fall asleep, Prang came into the room. She stood at the foot of the bed, still and silent, before asking a question that instantly made my heart sink again.

“Jay… do you think I’ve gained weight?”

As soon as I heard that, I quickly answered, afraid she'd get upset like the night before.

“No, you look great.”

“But I feel like I’ve gained weight.”

How should I answer this? Is this one of those trick questions?

“No, you haven’t.”

“I want to lose weight.”

“Then… maybe try exercising?”

I went with the flow, trying to play it safe.

“But it’s tiring.”

“Okay… then maybe watch what you eat or go for healthier food?”

“It doesn’t taste good.”

“Then don’t lose weight. You’re already beautiful and sexy like this.”

I deliberately used the word sexy—hoping it might heal a bit of whatever she was upset about last night.

“That day, I read something online,”

Prang said—but it didn’t seem like she really cared about my response. It was like she had a clear goal in mind and just needed an excuse to steer the conversation there.

“There’s a study that says stress makes people eat more.”

“…..”

“And sleeping without clothes helps reduce stress, which means it can help stop overeating.”

“Uh-huh…” I looked at her, confused.

And just like that, my pure and innocent mind went straight into the gutter the moment I saw Prang pull her pajama top over her head. Her bare, fair chest was suddenly right in front of me. Then, the tiny pajama shorts slipped halfway down her hips.

Oh no. I didn’t want to imagine what might come next—

“I starting my weight loss journey… tonight.”

Completely naked, with a blank expression, she slid under the blanket next to me, not caring at all about my gaping mouth or my trembling heart. *“Jay, I’ll come pick you up at 5 a.m. We have to catch the boat at 7 a.m,”* It was the sound of Je Ang once again, piercing my wild imagination.

I lay frozen on the bed, fists clenched. What is going on? I wanted her. I wanted Prang Prannapat right now. I kept repeating *“duty, duty, duty”* in my mind. But my body had other ideas.

“Jay, don’t touch me. I’m sensitive and can’t sleep if I’m bothered,” Prang said instantly when I shifted closer to her.

What was that? She stripped in front of me, and now she tells me not to touch her?

Not to mention the soft, new perfume teasing my nose. Who sprays perfume before bed? I don’t get it—humans are strange.

“Prang,”

I said, switching on the bedside lamp.

“Do you want me to sleep with you?”

She said nothing, but I could feel the intense energy between us calming down.

“Do you want me to take you right now?”

That’s when she turned to me with a sharp, angry glare and snapped,

“Just go to sleep, Jay.”

So I leaned in, cupped her face gently, and looked deep into her frustration —searching for the words she wouldn’t say, the feelings she kept hidden since yesterday. And then, I saw it—her vulnerability.

“You’re such a bad actress,” I teased with a smile.

“No wonder I end up winning all the awards. Why didn’t you just say from the start... that you wanted me to take you?”

“Jeerapat,”

She snapped, voice low and sharp—it made my heart race.

“You’re talking nonsense. Go to sleep. And don’t touch me.”

I sat up and took off my sleepwear. Every piece I had on was left beside the bed.

“Well, I want to be taken. So why don’t you take me instead?” “What kind of nonsense is this?” she said, almost smiling—almost.

“Come on, do it,” I said as I straddled her, pinning her beneath me.

“Jay, stop playing,”

She warned, but I leaned down toward the warmth of her neck, letting my lips and nose follow the trail of that delicate, intoxicating scent on her soft skin—ignoring her flustered protests.

“Someone once told me,” I whispered near her ear,

“when a girl gets mad, it’s because she wants you even more. When she says don’t call, it means you should. So...”

I pulled the blanket off her completely.

“…the more you tell me not to touch you and I will obey... again and again.”

In that split second I glanced over at the clock by the bed—it was already half past midnight—my body was suddenly flipped onto the mattress. My wrists were pinned down tightly.

“Didn’t you just say you wanted to be taken?”

She murmured, lowering her face close to mine. Her lips brushed mine in a light kiss, her nose trailing down the side of my neck with the gentlest touch, sending chills through me. Her breath ghosted along my skin, making me inhale sharply.

"*Jay, I’ll pick you up at 5 a.m. Don’t stay up late. Don’t stay up late. Don’t stay up late..."*

That voice—my overly responsible manager—echoed in my head like a broken alarm.

“Jay, what’s wrong?”

Prang raised her head to look at me.

“Your mind’s not even here.”

I stayed silent.

“I just... want you to keep going.”

She leaned in again, her lips brushing my body, taking gentle possession of me. And yet—

"*Don’t stay up late. Don’t stay up late. Don’t stay up late..."*

“Jay?” she looked down at me, concern filling her eyes.

“Am I... not attractive to you?”

She looked embarrassed, her confidence clearly shaken. Her voice trembled with a mix of frustration and vulnerability.

“Am I not sexy? We used to be together... but ever since you came back and got busy with work, we’ve barely had any intimacy. And now, even when we’re touching, your heart’s not really here, is it?”

I shook my head.

“You’re perfect, Prang.”

“Are you lying?”

I sat up and held my face in my hands.

“I’m just tired…”

“Or do you have... sexual dysfunction?”

She asked, confused and concerned.

“We could see a doctor, you know.”

“It’s not that,” I said softly.

“It’s because... Je Ang.”

“Je Ang…?”

Her flushed face turned to one of shock and nervous curiosity.

“Don’t tell me—”

“Stop right there, Prang! Let me finish! Don’t jump to conclusions.”

After I explained everything, Prang looked absolutely furious—like she’d just eaten something laced with liquid nitrogen.

“Even so,” she snapped,

“how could you won’t feel like touching me, Jay?”

“It’s not that I don’t want to,” I sighed.

“But my body’s just so tired... It makes me want to sleep more than anything else. Even if we don’t do anything, just having you next to me... that’s enough for me.”

“No, Jay. That’s not enough.”

“Prang, come on, you’re overreacting—”

“This needs to be fixed.”

Her eyes locked onto mine with unsettling intensity.

“Tomorrow, invite Je Ang to dinner at our place.”

Just hearing her say that made a chill run down my spine.

“Let’s sleep now. You have to wake up early,”

She added calmly, pulling me into her arms like I was her precious little bunny. She kissed my temple, then nestled her face against my neck. Her bare chest pressed against mine, her smooth legs brushed up against me, and that soft scent and warmth from her skin sent my senses spinning.

“I want to touch your boobs,” I muttered under my breath.

"No."

“Otherwise... I can’t sleep.”

“If you touch me, I won’t be able to sleep either.”

“You’ll have to take responsibility for this.”

“Yes, your personal manager will definitely be held responsible.”

“Let me touch just once.”

“No.”

“When I say 'no,' it means 'yes.'”

“That’s not true in every case.”

“I can’t tell when ‘no’ really means no or when it means yes.”

“In this case, it means no, Jay.”

“I let you touch me, and you let me touch you. Fair trade, Prang, so we can both sleep.”

“No.”

“That means yes.”

“This one means no.”

“You can touch me all night as you want, but I just want to touch you once… really.”

"Will you be able to sleep then, Jay?"

"Let me touch your boobs."

"Jay, please don’t make this harder. I’m trying to be a good girlfriend. You have to wake up early tomorrow. And if you touch my breasts even a little, I promise—you’re not going to sleep tonight. And stop moving so much. Do you know how much friction that causes?"

"But I’m suffering..."

"Endure it!"

“Ughhhhhh!” I screamed to let it out. "Close your eyes. You’ll fall asleep soon."

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*“Jeerapat, don’t stay up late... don’t stay up late, don’t stay up late, don’t stay up late, don’t stay up late...”*

The echo of Angsumalin’s deep voice kept haunting me, even in my dreams.

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# Chapitre : SPECIAL 02

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**8 PM**

The large door swung open after the digital lock released. Two young women were sitting at opposite ends of the couch, facing the TV. The show playing seemed more like background noise-both of them were more focused on their phones.

But the moment the door opened, both of their striking faces turned toward the sound. One was wearing a sporty pajama top and very short shorts. The other, with crossed legs, gave off a calm, mature charm that subtly filled the room.

Without showing much emotion, I nudged a box near the entrance with my toe to keep the door from closing all the way. I walked briskly toward them. My favorite bag was placed on the coffee table in front of the TV.

I climbed onto the lap of the girl in the red soccer shirt, wrapped my arms around her neck, and buried my face into her pleasantly scented shoulderignoring the older woman with dimples and my personal manager, who had just walked in behind me carrying some items.

"You should head home now. Just in case Prang wants to lull the baby to sleep."

"You too, Je."

Even though I didn't lift my head, I could feel her nod in response. Once the door shut, the thin shirt tucked into my skirt was pulled out. Her hand slipped in and unhooked my bra. Her nails gently trailed across my back.

My body reacted-caught between comfort, pleasure, and a tingling sensation.

"My phone's dead. Open the charger dock for me."

At those words, the touch on my back paused. She moved slightly, then unhooked her own bra before returning her hand to my back, continuing the slow, soothing caress.

As soon as she finished speaking, the touch on my back paused for a moment. Her body shifted slightly, and her slender hands reached around to unhook her own bra. Then she returned to gently caressing my back.

I lowered one arm and slipped my hand under her red shirt. The soft, round shape beneath my fingers felt smooth and warm. I pressed it gently against the soft "charging dock."

"Are you sick or something? You're being really clingy."

"I missed you," I whispered, eyes closed, nose nestled against her neck.

"We haven't seen each other in days."

"Jet lag?"

I shook my head.

"Is Je still taking good care of you?"

"She is."

"Then why do you seem more tired than usual?"

"She took me shopping all day. Bought lots of gifts for you."

The suitcase parked in the corner of the room was packed full of items brought back from Europe.

"I thought it was because of work."

I could sense her smiling, even though I still had my eyes closed.

"My arm's bruised."

The arm that had been resting was lifted for a moment to show the marks to my lover, even though I was still resting my face on her shoulder with my eyes shut.

"What did the team make you do?"

"It wasn't the team."

"Then where did it come from?"

"Jay staggered and hit a pole near the subway station in the city center."

A laugh escaped her before her soft lips pressed gently on the bruise on my arm.

"Here too,"

I said, pulling down the wide neckline of my shirt to reveal another bruise on my shoulder.

"This one's from a pole too?"

"No, that was from a scene-slap fight with the villainess."

Her fingers gently traced the mark, then leaned in to kiss it.

I lifted my face from her shoulder, straightened up, and gathered my long hair to one side, exposing my neck. Tilting my head, I pointed just below my ear.

"Here too."

Her golden-brown eyes sparkled as she looked.

"I don't see any mark here."

"I want there to be one."

"How many days off do you have? The marks might fade too fast."

"I'm not working all week."

I closed my eyes. My lips parted slightly as I exhaled a slow, heavy breathjust as her lips pressed into the spot I pointed to.

Red marks of longing bloomed one after another across my skin.

"You still haven't said you missed me."

"I'm telling you, aren't I?"

My hair was spread out across the bed. My body, bare and covered in sweat, received her kiss once more - a silent way of saying how much she missed me.

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**---------THE END-------**