

Chapter 1

Today, the band I was in played to cut corners. As I listened, I could feel that everyone was playing with boredom. Halfway through the song, I clapped my hands as a signal to stop and stared at everyone, demanding an explanation for why it'd come to this.

"Why?"

A short but meaningful question. Everyone understood what I meant. Yak, the lead singer and the bravest among us, spoke up without hesitation, but his words pierced my heart like an arrow shot from a fully drawn bow, nearly knocking me off my feet.

The song is suck. It's boring."

"Boring? What boring?"

"All of it."

"So, how do you want it to be? Usually, the songs I write are in this way, and everyone plays them well. Why the sudden mood swings? Why can't we play this song?"

"Because everything has changed. Everyone wants a change."

"Change to what?"

"Love songs."

"What?"

"Everyone wants songs made with love. Your job is to write songs, so work on them. If you keep writing songs about rough life, hardships, rising cost of living, and a government that doesn't meet your expectations, our band will be over."

I gaped. Suddenly, everyone was opposing the songs. I wrote. *Love songs? Everyone writes love songs. Aren't they sick of it?*

"Love songs are just about love no matter what who sings it. There has to be one band that's different."

"Our band is already too indie. We want to be more mainstream. We want love songs."

"So, what should I do?"

"Write a love song"

"But I'm not in love"

"Then find one!"

That was easier said than done. Since I was born, I'd never fallen in love with anyone except myself. Looking in the mirror, I saw only myself as beautiful. No one in the band was attractive enough to make me fall in love. So, how could I love someone?

I asked everyone to leave for the day and went downstairs to the cafe to relax with a cup of coffee

"What's wrong? Why do you look like a sick dog?"

A junior who managed the cafe noticed my troubled expression and greeted me in a way that made me want to shove my foot in her mouth. I bared my teeth slightly before calming myself with a gentle smile.

"Not much. I just need to find love."

"Huh?"

"Yeah."

"Why do you need to do that?"

"So I can write a song."

"Is love that easy to find, Poy?"

"Right? They just told me to go find love. And if I'm in love. I can write a song. I can feel jealousy, Intimacy, the desire to be near, to touch, to see, and feel my heart race..."

**Ding.**

The bell at the door rang as someone in a casual outfit walked in, head down, and ordered a cappuccino. I took the order without much interest, but as soon as she looked up to pay, our eyes met. Her light brown eyes made my knees weak for no apparent reason.

"Miss"

"Yes?

**Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo....**

A melody played in my head out of nowhere. Even though it was just a melody, I knew she was the reason it appeared, and it was a new type of song I'd never experienced before.

"What would you like?"

"A cappuccino."

"Right away."

I clumsily took her order and instructed my junior to make it, all the while staring at her. The melody kept playing in my head. She noticed my gaze and looked away. I bit my lip. felt my mouth dry, and wanted to say something but was unable to

"Do you come here often?"

I finally spoke. This was our first conversation, and I was trying to chat with her. *Was it rude? But it was just normal small talk, right?*

"I came here every evening."

She answered politely but still avoided eye contact. I nodded, deciding that from now on, I'd come here every evening to continue the melody in my head, hoping to find the lyrics.

Suddenly, I had an inexplicable passion to make a song. My passion was so strong that I couldn't sleep. The face of the person who walked into the café, whose name I didn't even know, made my heart yearn strangely. After tossing and turning for about thirty minutes, I got up to write a song with the melody that had popped into my head. I tried to add lyrics, and miraculously, they came to me.

*Since I met you, my heart's been in flight, Dreaming and wandering day and night.*

Who'd believe that someone could write a song for a person they didn't know? How could this happen from just one brief encounter? It was past one in the morning, and I couldn't contain the overwhelming emotions in my head. I ended up calling a friend, ignoring the time. Naturally, when she answered, she sounded groggy and ready to scold me, but I just laughed nervously.

"Don't laugh. Why are you calling at this hour? My husband is sleeping next to me."

"Get up and walk away from him."

"If it's not a life-and death matter, I'll curse you out, Poy"

Wai, my best friend who was now married and a full-time housewife, didn't have kids yet but said that quitting her job to manage the house was overwhelming. She was already tired of being a wife, let alone a mother.

She walked away from her sleeping husband and spoke in her normal voice.

"What's up?"

"I can't sleep."

"Okay, bye"

"You idiot. There has to be a reason why I can't sleep. I'm restless, so I thought I'd call you."

"Restless? About what?"

"Today... I wrote a song."

"That's good."

"It's a love song."

"And?"

"Don't you get it? Without love, I can't write this kind of song. And I don't have one right now. How did this kind of song come into my head?"

"It means you're in love, then."

"How can it be love when I just met 'her' once?"

"Her? Why use her? Is it a woman?"

"Well yeah. A customer at the cafe. We met this evening."

"Now, this is more interesting. Worth waking up for. What happened next?"

I briefly explained how she appeared and what we talked about, but it wasn't much. When I got home, I was restless. I got up to write a song and sang a part of it to my friend. She was silent for a moment, then spoke like a commentator.

"You should take singing lessons with a professional."

"Hey! Is that the point?"

"Just kidding... You like her."

"Ridiculous. How can I like someone I just met? Besides, she's a customer. More importantly, she's a woman."

"Oh, come on. Don't be old-fashioned. Remember, I used to have a tomboy girlfriend, my friend teased, and I laughed nervously.

I didn't, but I never thought it'd happen to me. Am I a lesbian? I've never liked a woman before."

"If you've never, then start from now on. Accepting yourself isn't hard. Why overcomplicate things? If you like her, admit it. Then you'll know what to do next."

"What can I do? How can I know when she'll come to the cafe again? She might be a one-time customer."

"If she's a one-time customer, write a song about longing. If she's a regular, write a song to flirt with her. Find as many ways to flirt with her as possible.

"Me? Flirting someone? I don't chase anyone."

Then you'll miss out. She's your first love and inspiration. Can you resist?"

"If I do that and my dad finds out...

That's Like the obstacle in Korean drama. It's there to overcome.

What's a Korean drama obstacle?"

"Korean dramas show it all the time. If their love were easy, the story would end quickly. In those series, chaebols only marry other rich circles, right? You're the same. Your dad won't let you marry a poor person or a woman. That's the obstacle for you to overcome. You'll get the experience of dating a woman, writing love songs, and clashing with your dad. Where else could you find an experience like this?" "Are you really my friend?"

"Good luck. I'm going back to sleep."

"Hey, don't just hang up."

I looked at my phone to confirm that the call had indeed been cut off and sighed. Even my friend abandoned me at this hour. But it was past one in the morning. Who would listen to someone with love problems? The face of the person who walked into the cafe still lingered in my mind-her small frame, thin lips, an oval face, sharp nose, and the small bun she tied for convenience.

Now, I could only wait for her to visit again. This time, I'd get to know her.

I had to know her name first.

Chapter 2

My eyes were hollow like a panda's. If my coffee shop had a beam, I'd have climbed up and somersaulted down, letting my juniors pamper me like I was a real panda in the zoo. I barely slept, my mind filled with thoughts of a song that popped into my head... And that person, the oval-faced girl who spoke so little with just a cool smile when ordering a cappuccino, was enough to make me so enchanted that I couldn't eat or sleep, excited by new inspirations and a fluttering heart like never before.

"Poy, you look like a panda today."

"I thought I was the only one who noticed. I didn't sleep much last night."

"What did you do to yourself?"

"What do you mean?"

"You play with yourself?"

"You Idiot."

"Hehe... just kidding. What kept you up?"

"Writing a new song."

"By the way, no one came to practice today."

"We have no song to practice. Everyone's pressuring me to write a new song... a love song."

"Wow, that's tough. Writing a love song without being in love."

"Actually, it's not that hard. I have the intro, but I can't find the middle and the chorus. I'm looking for inspiration." As I said this, I bit my cheek and pretended to ask about the customer from yesterday. "By the way, that quiet, pretty customer with the sweet smile who bought coffee yesterday. does she come here often?"

"The woman that looked like that can't be anyone but me."

"Do you want to die? I'm serious."

"Come on, we have hundreds of customers every day. Who can remember?"

"If we have that many, why is the shop still losing money? The one who... how do I describe her? The one who stands out more than others. How do I explain?" I tried to recall her appearance, but the details were still vague. Before I could ask more, the bell on the door rang, and the door opened. A woman in a white shirt and jeans, looking like she stepped out of a magazine, walked in. Today, her hair wasn't tied up like yesterday, but she still looked energetic and ordered the same thing.

"Cappuccino, please."

"..."

"Cappuccino?"

"Ca...pu...c...c.cino."

"Yes, cappuccino."

I stuttered, hesitated, and fidgeted, excited by her presence. My strange behavior made my junior suspicious, and she probably guessed it was her.

"Dr. Or always orders the same thing."

"Dr. Or?" I repeated and turned to the person. A faint smile was on her lips as she nodded quietly.

"Yes, the same, please."

"Sure."

Dr. Or then walked to a table by the window, looking out at the twilight view. I watched her longingly. My junior's elbow nudged my side, making me startle and frown as she interrupted my daydream.

"What?"

"Is she the one you mentioned?"

"Yeah."

"She's a regular. She comes in the morning, at noon, and in the evening."

"That often?"

"She says our coffee keeps her awake, so she comes often. Caffeine addicts. Why? Do you like her?"

"Can't I?"

"A lot of people like her."

"It'd be strange if no one did. She's beautiful and a doctor... Hurry up and make the coffee. I'll serve it myself."

"Fine, fine."

My junior turned to make the coffee as ordered. Meanwhile, I was sweating with excitement. Today, I had to talk to her. At least hearing her speak a bit more might give me more inspiration. I wanted to get to know her, to see what kind of person she was. Surprisingly, the coffee was ready faster than Fast and Furious 8. I looked at the cup and frowned a bit.

"Did you take coffee from the fridge and microwave it? Why so fast?"

"I've done it so many times that I could do it with my eyes closed. Now it's your turn. Go ahead."

"..."

"Good luck. Doctors can be strict, you know."

I took the coffee and walked towards her, my hands shaking slightly, making the cup rattle. She noticed my approach from the sound. I placed the cup in front of her and spoke without giving her a chance to say anything.

"Hello, Doctor, I'm the owner of the shop. Sorry, I never came down to greet you. I just found out you're a regular. Seeing you makes me want to talk. You're beautiful, cute, and more radiant than the sun. Just looking at you makes my heart..."

"Are you rapping?"

"Huh?"

"You're not speaking normally."

"What?"

"You're singing." She said with a calm face but a slight smile at the corner of her mouth before continuing. "I heard you're a songwriter, but I didn't expect you to rap."

"Do you know music?" I took the opportunity to pull a chair and sit across from her without asking, seizing the moment. "I thought you'd be too busy with work to enjoy such things."

"Nice move, chatting and introducing yourself... Poy."

"You noticed?"

"You didn't hide it." She took a sip of her coffee, savoring it before setting the cup down. "Don't call me Doctor. I'm sick of that word at the hospital."

"What should I call you then?"

"Just call me Or."

"Or... that's a cool name."

"Yes"

"..."

"..."

Then, there was dead air. If I didn't start a conversation, she wouldn't continue. People like her were hard to build good relationships with, so I had to find something to talk about.

"Do you have a boyfriend, Or?"

"Hmm?"

But finding something to talk about shouldn't be that personal. My eagerness to know about her made me blurt out everything on my mind. The sweet-faced woman in front of me took another sip of her coffee and shook her head.

"No."

"Is it hard for a doctor to find a boyfriend?"

"We have no time for that. I barely have time to sleep, always needing caffeine. After this coffee, I have to go back on duty. Who would want a lover who's always so busy?"

"Me.

"..."

"I'm a songwriter. My lover doesn't need to have time for me because I need intense ficus for my work. Some days I go home, some days I sleep in the studio. Just chatting or texting is enough for a relationship."

"Are you hitting on me, Poy?"

**Thump...**

**Thump...**

I swallowed a big gulp. if I had an Adam's apple, it'd have moved visibly.

"Can I?"

"No."

"If you said yes, that'd be strange." I replied, knowing the answer but not wanting to give up. "I've never hit on anyone. Approaching people is impossible for me."

"You seem to be doing well. Now you're chatting with me like we've been friends for years."

"When hitting on someone, you start as friends and confess later."

"Will that day come?"

"If you give me a chance, it will."

"It's not that easy."

"I didn't think it would be. The harder, the more challenging. I'll try... You're the inspiration that makes me want to write songs."

"Really?"

"When I saw your face... the melody and the first verse came to mind."

"How does it go?"

"Since I met you, my heart keeps dreaming..." I sang a bit for her and stopped. "That's all I have. Can't continue yet."

"It sounds nice."

"Can you help me? You don't have to do anything. Just follow your daily routine. I'll handle the rest."

"What will you do if I do nothing?"

"I want to see your face."

"..."

"I want to chat with you sometimes or meet you at different places. If you're free, we can go on a date."

"It's not that easy. I barely have time. I can only date during lunch breaks."

"That's enough."

"No, thanks." She gently declined. "I'm already annoyed enough. If you bother me at the hospital, I'll die. Let's meet at the coffee shop. If I'm free, I'll reply to your chat."

Talking to her wasn't easy. It was like the Great Wall of China between us. She blocked herself in every way. It was easy to talk to her but hard to really approach her. But I wasn't one to give up easily.

"Okay. Just chatting with you is a big step. Nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you, too."

Chapter 3

It was both difficult and easy. I'd gotten her LINE ID, which she willingly gave to me by exchanging LINE IDs. But what came after was what I called difficult. Now that I had it, what should I do next? It was already past 8 p.m., and I'd been hesitating for a long time about what to do with her contact. She might be on duty or perhaps already asleep. What if messaging her disturbed her?

But then again, if she were really asleep or on duty, she'd probably have her phone on silent. *Alright, whatever will be, will be*.

If I did nothing after getting her LINE, it'd seem a bit cowardly. I decided to message her bravely.

Poy: *Send Sticker*

I sent a funny sticker to test the waters. She hadn't read it yet, so I took the opportunity to type another sentence to let her know it was me.

Poy: It's Poy, the one who asked for your LINE today.

And in less than thirty seconds (which felt like an eternity when waiting for someone), she read the message but didn't reply. I furrowed my brows slightly and tried to reason with myself on her behalf.

She might be busy.

She might be groggy, having heard the notification, and opened it before flipping her phone over and going back to sleep.

Or she might be being aloof.

Heh, I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I didn't think she'd be this difficult. I tried to find numerous reasons why she couldn't answer the message. Just reply with something, anything.

Or: ...

That was her response: "..." What did it mean? I didn't understand either. I blinked at the message and tried to interpret what she was trying to convey, so I sent another message.

Poy: Flirting

I wanted to make it clear that I wasn't here as a friend. Typing that was more of a test than a serious confession. The person on the other end read the message and went silent for a while, making me think she'd fallen asleep. But about fifteen minutes later, she replied with a long sentence (long for her. I suppose).

Or: It's not that easy.

The phrase seemed to be her catchphrase. Today, all she talked about was how difficult things were and how nothing was easy. But she didn't outright reject me. If someone didn't want to continue a relationship, they could easily ignore the message But she chose to reply. I convinced myself that she was testing the waters to see what I'd do next.

Poy: I'll make it easy.

That was the extent of our conversation, and it ended there. I lay down, feeling frustrated. Talking to her was more challenging than I'd imagined. But it wasn't surprising, Most people who approached her probably did so out of admiration, and I was one of them. But I also wanted her to be my Inspiration for writing songs. But if she kept giving me ellipses, where would I find my inspiration?

*Never mind, tomorrow is a new day. I'll be able to see her at some point. I'll stay at the shop all day, waiting for her to come in the morning, afternoon, or evening. Let's see...*

How hard could it be?

As I was about to close my eyes and drift off to sleep, my phone rang. I made a small annoyed sound at being interrupted just as I was about to sleep because falling asteep was always difficult for me. Seeing that it was my big brother's number made me feel even more forlorn.

"What is it? It's almost 9 PM."

"So what if it's 9 PM? Who goes to bed at this time?"

"I do."

"Why are you in such a hurry to sleep? Afraid of clogged pores or something?"

"Just get to the point. I'm already annoyed."

"Don't hurt yourself."

"That's the second person today to tell me not to hurt myself," I grumbled. "So, what's up?"

"When are you coming to work at the company? Dad asked me to call and hurry you up."

"The same old story, huh? I've refused countless times that I won't do it. I have a job now, running a coffee shop and writing songs. Do you still think your sister is unemployed, Pae?" My older brother, who always acted on behalf of our father, called to pressure me every day, and it stressed me out. But my answer was always the same: No.

"How much profit can a coffee shop make? The dividends Dad would give you are ten times more than the coffee shop's profit. As for the songs, I haven't seen you produce anything substantial."

"Nuang."

"That's Room 39's song."

"I wrote it."

"Your name isn't in the songwriter credit on the album."

"Did you open the album just to look for my name? What an honor," I said, rolling my eyes in exasperation. "No, I'm not going to work with Dad. I'll live off the family money. Why do you want me to work with you? Aren't you afraid I'll take your inheritance?"

"Oh, if you can, go ahead and take it. I have more than enough. Right now, I need someone to help manage the business. It's booming. During the Coronavirus, people ordered exercise equipment like crazy."

"But the Coronavirus is over now. Shouldn't the business be over, too?"

"Is that your mouth or your butt talking? Who curses their own business to fail?"

"People like you and Dad, who curse me to close my shop and give up on my dreams."

"Your dream hasn't materialized in five years. Dad has given you plenty of chances. All I've seen is you singing other people's songs on stage."

"I'm working on a new song now. Just wait. When it becomes a hit, don't come begging. Don't tell anyone we're related. I won't acknowledge you."

"Big talk. What's the song? Sing it for me."

"I said I'm writing it. How can I sing it now? Tell Dad I'm getting new inspiration. This song will definitely be a big hit. If it doesn't become popular, I'll quit everything and work for the family. Okay?"

"You said it."

"Yeah."

"I recorded that."

"Yeah."

"Then I'll wait and see. I'm curious about your song."

My brother hung up, and I was left with my bravado. Even if I had good inspiration, that inspiration wasn't cooperating, except for saying, 'It's not easy.'

*But someone like me would never give up. Once I intend to do something...*

*I have to achieve it.*

Now, I was the new Poy. Poy who went to bed at 9 PM and woke up at 6 AM to exercise on the treadmill and do some bodyweight exercises. One must start the day strong. Physical health was the most important. When the body got dopamine, it felt happy, and good ideas rushed in.

*Today, I'll get a chance to see her again... Dr. Or.*

Since my band hadn't been practicing much lately because my bandmates pressured me to write a love song, I had free time to sit yawning in the coffee shop, which rarely had customers. It was a good thing because, during my free time, I could write songs, add lyrics, cross something out, add new ones, and cross them out again, repeating the process until the melody fit. Finally, at 9:30 AM, the doorbell rang. The first customer of the day was Dr. Or, who was more addicted to caffeine than anything else.

"Cappuccino, please."

"Got it," my staff took the order. As I sat writing songs, I waved at her and invited her to sit together. But, of course, it wasn't that easy. She chose to sit at another table, facing the window. The white light from outside illuminated her face, highlighting her beautifully arranged eyelashes. I was so mesmerized that I gaped, then quickly closed my mouth, gathered my thoughts, and moved to sit across from her without even asking for permission.

"Did you sleep well last night?"

"Almost, if it weren't for the sticker someone sent that disturbed me."

She was indirectly scolding me, but it was okay. I was shameless.

"Are you going on duty after having your coffee?"

"Yes"

"You're not much of a talker, are you?"

"Actually, I'm quite talkative, but only with friends."

"How lucky that we're not friends because I didn't come as a friend," I said, resting my chin on my hand and blinking rapidly.

"You came to flirt, didn't you?"

"I made that clear yesterday."

"How can you flirt with me when you're a woman too?"

"Plumbers can fix electrical issues. Why can't women love each other? Let's not talk about love. Let's start with admiration. I approached you because I have a hidden agenda."

"What?"

"You inspire me to write songs."

"You're not just a barista, are you?"

"Don't call it that. I owned a coffee shop because I wanted to sell coffee. I can't even make it myself. My employees are the baristas. I'm actually a songwriter."

"Do you have any hit songs?"

"I'm about to, now that you're here."

"Big talk," she said, seemingly scolding, but with the word "big" in it, I'd take it as a compliment. "Being a songwriter means you can play many instruments, right?"

"Not really. I mostly use the software. But it's not like I can't play any instruments at all."

"Then play the piano for me. I see it sitting there collecting dust. Every time I come here, no one ever plays it." the pretty doctor challenged my dark power. When she saw I was silent, she got up and walked straight to the piano. She sat down, opened the cover that hid the keys, and began to play a tune. The sound was off-key because it hadn't been tuned in years, which annoyed my sensitive ears a bit, but it was still recognizable as music. I walked closer, hands in my pockets. watching how well she could play.

They said that people who could play the piano well had hands that looked like they were holding an orange. Her hands were curved, not flat, and she hit the notes clearly, starting to play Pachelbel's Canon in D. I smiled. Everyone loved this song because of the influence of "My Sassy Girl, a Korean movie that came out in Thailand twenty years ago.

At first, she played smoothly, but without sheet music, she had to rely on her memory, which led to some mistakes. When she made too many errors, I sat next to her and played the correct notes for her. Once she got back on track, I played alongside her, hitting the lower octaves while she played the higher notes. It sounded harmonious at first, but anyone familiar with the song would know it was going off in different directions.

She played wrong.

I played right.

"It's not easy, is it?" I smirked while playing, echoing a phrase she often used in conversation. The sweet-faced doctor glared at me and slammed her hand on the piano in frustration, unable to accept defeat. She stood up abruptly, looked at me angrily, grabbed her bag from the table, ignored her coffee, and stormed out without looking back.

*Shit...*

"What have you done?"

The barista rushed over as I stood there, puzzled.

*We were just playing music, why did she get so mad? Did I say something wrong?*

"I was just playing the piano with her, and she got mad and left."

"There must be something wrong."

"She played it wrong."

"What did you say to her?"

"I said... 'It's not easy, is it?' like she always says to me. She got mad and left, I guess. I scratched my head, causing dandruff to fall. Was I getting a scalp infection?

"Don't you like her?"

"Well... maybe."

"Then why did you say that to beat her?"

"She played it wrong. Should I have said she played it right instead?"

"If you like her, you should flatter her. Women like compliments."

"Even if it's not true?"

"If someone told you your songs were terrible, that you've been a songwriter for years but have no real work to show for it, and that you should go home and farm instead of running a coffee shop, how would you feel?"

I bared my teeth at the barista, who was getting cheekier by the day. Was she insulting me? I did have real songs, they just hadn't caught on with most people yet. That was all.

"I wouldn't feel good."

"Exactly. She felt the same. You said something she didn't like. Just wait and see. If she doesn't come back, you won't have any inspiration to write songs, and you'll end up like the cow grazing on grass as he compared."

"So what should I do?"

"You need to apologize and flatter her as much as you can. Even if you hate the phrase 'persistence conquers all, you need to be shameless now."

"I've never apologized to anyone."

"Then start now."

Chapter 4

Apologizing–that word had never been in my dictionary before. It wasn't that I was arrogant or anything, but I'd never made anyone angry, upset, or sad, especially someone who could be called a lover.

*Oh, I can't even call her that. She isn't even an acquaintance.*

But now, I had to do it. Today was another day filled with excitement, novelty, and challenges. I found myself at the hospital where a junior from the shop told me Or worked. Since this was a public hospital, people gathered here without an appointment, starting as early as five in the morning. Even though I woke up early at eight, the queue had already reached 200.

Of course, I didn't join the queue. I just came to take a seat.

I watched the queueing system at this hospital with amazement. Everyone placed their shoes in a line to mark their spot, indicating the first, second, and third positions, waiting for the nurse to call them for their queue number. Meanwhile, I sat on a chair, unmoving, arms crossed, observing the surroundings with the scent of Dettol and hospital medicine in the air. I watched people bustling around, and of course, I was looking for her... Dr. Or.

Finally, she arrived... right at eight o'clock. I guessed she might've stopped by a coffee shop in the morning, or maybe she was mad at me and went somewhere else. So, the surest way to see her was to wait for her here. As she walked past me in her white coat, I called out to her briefly and raised an eyebrow. "Dr. Or."

She paused for a moment, then turned to look at me with a puzzled expression before greeting me with extreme politeness.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came here because I missed you."

"It's not that easy."

"It's not that hard either."

Since she often said things weren't easy, I practiced saying the opposite to encourage myself. We stopped talking, and she went into the examination room before the queue started. Each patient went in for about three minutes and then came out. It was a lightning-fast diagnosis, just like in medical dramas where state hospital doctors worked quickly to avoid delays. They were diagnosed swiftly, and serious cases were sent to specialized departments. I yawned and waited for her for over three hours. Every time the door opened, I peeked in and waved, probably annoying her, but she just ignored me. Finally, as the patients dwindled, it was her break time.

"Cappuccino."

I ran to order a cappuccino from my coffee shop, the closest one, and brought it back to her as if offering a tribute. She looked at the coffee cup coldly, then put her hand in her coat pocket and asked provocatively.

"Looking for trouble?"

"What? I'm here to apologize."

"For what?"

"For making you angry yesterday."

"Angry?"

"For playing the music correctly while you played it wrong."

At the mention of that, her pride showed clearly. She hated to be wrong, probably a trait of a doctor who couldn't afford to misdiagnose. She walked past me, ignoring the coffee, so I had to run after her, flattering her.

"You look good when you're working, so composed and mature. Especially in that white coat, you look like an angel."

"Smart talk."

"Sweet talk!"

"It's not easy to be friends with me."

"But it's not that hard either. Even though you played the notes wrong yesterday, it was still music and sounded good. I guess you haven't played in a long time."

"Yes, I haven't played in a long time, so I forgot the notes."

"Everyone makes mistakes."

"But doctors can't."

"You were playing music, not treating patients. As for me, I'm a musician, so it's weird to make mistakes. Don't be so upset over something so small. Today, I'm here to apologize with a flower..."

I was about to pull out a rose I bought from a street vendor when a large bouquet was delivered by a messenger asking for Dr. Or. She waved to the rider, identified herself, and took the flowers, reading the card with a blank expression, showing no excitement or affection.

"Who sent this?"

"Butt out."

"Wow, harsh."

"It slipped out. I meant to say it's none of your business, but 'butt out' is shorter. Doctors need to be concise."

"But your explanation was longer than saying 'none of your business. So, who sent it?"

"Someone you don't know." She carried the flowers outside the hospital and threw them in the trash without a second thought. "What a waste. They cut flowers that were fine on their own just to turn them into trash."

I quickly put my flower back in my bag, pretending nothing happened. Good thing I hadn't given it to her yet.

"You're so cold."

"No, just being honest. People who approach me usually do pointless things... like you." She glanced at me and bared her teeth. "Waiting at the hospital is annoying."

"If I didn't wait, I wouldn't see you."

"I went to your coffee shop regularly. We could meet there."

"But we were mad at each other, so I guessed you wouldn't go today. That's why I came straight to the hospital to wait for you. But it wasn't a waste of time. While waiting, I wrote songs and watched you. It was nice." "At least you used your time well. Okay, I'm not mad anymore."

"So you were mad." I covered my mouth and giggled. "Ah... our relationship is progressing."

"Give me the coffee."

"Hmm?"

"You brought coffee, right? I need caffeine now."

"But you need to eat. It's noon. Drinking coffee on an empty stomach will make you dizzy and faint."

"Just a sip is fine. I have no energy left now." She grabbed the cup from my hand and sipped the cold coffee without any reaction. "That's better."

"Alright, now you need to eat."

"Yeah, I guess so. Thanks for the coffee."

"Hey, don't be rude. At least invite me to eat with you."

"It's not that simple."

"But it's not that hard either. I'll treat you today. You can eat as expensive as you want."

"Where did you get all this money?"

"You wouldn't believe it."

"Good, I'll eat so much you'll cry."

She chose a very expensive restaurant, an omakase course, costing 3,500 baht per person. But it didn't hurt my wallet much because I had enough money. What she didn't know was that the restaurant belonged to my father. No matter how much she ate, the bill would go to my dad. He wouldn't mind his daughter eating here.

"You're really something. You said you'd eat something expensive, and you did."

"Well, you're rich."

"Yup, born with a silver spoon. Go ahead, eat whatever you want. Any course is fine. Enjoy."

"Just ten pieces will do."

"Then ten pieces it is."

After choosing the course, the chef started preparing the food, explaining how difficult it was to get the seafood. Fishermen had to dive deep without oxygen tanks to catch the fish and then raise then, forming trust between them before eating them. Or, who rarely showed any emotion, blinked in surprise and swallowed hard. I turned away and laughed because the chef's speech was something I'd briefed him on.

"That's cruel, raising them to trust you and then killing them."

"That's why it's expensive."

Then, other dishes followed with bizarre stories, but I hadn't briefed those. Or managed to eat some of them because they weren't as cruel as the first one. After eating, we sat there, feeling stuffed because the small portions were surprisingly filling.

"Now that we're done, let's pay. I need to get back to the hospital."

"Sure, let's go."

I stood up and urged her to stand. She looked around, confused about why we were standing up, but when I insisted, she reluctantly stood.

"Don't we pay at the table? Or do we pay at the cashier?"

"Hold my hand."

"It's not that easy."

"I promise it's not hard. Hold tight."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Because we're going to dine and dash."

"What?"

"Run."

Or hesitated, but when she saw me running out of the restaurant, she quickly followed, sprinting past me. Seeing me Lagging behind, she came back, grabbed my hand, and pulled me along. Three people from the restaurant chased after us, demanding payment. I held back my laughter, but Or looked like she'd seen a ghost, as if she'd never experienced anything like this before. Once we were out of the restaurant, she quickly hailed a taxi and told the driver to drive as fast as possible.

"You didn't tell the driver where to go. How will he know?"

"Who can think of that now? Just let me catch my breath."

She took a deep breath and glared at me with dark eyes, furious. "What the hell is wrong with you? You said it's your treat because you were rich." "I didn't finish. I'm rich-not with cash, but with imagination."

"Imagination... you fool," Or said, her face turning red as she bared her teeth. The taxi driver glanced in the rearview mirror, stifling a smile before clearing his throat and speaking in a normal tone.

"Where are you headed?"

"Where... should we go?" I asked, looking puzzled. Or's scowl deepened as I failed to provide a clear destination, so she decided to choose the place herself.

"To the coffee shop next to Siriphat Hospital, please."

"Got it."

She chose the coffee shop to gather her thoughts. When we arrived, she took the opportunity to flip the sign from "Open" to "Close" since there were no customers. Then, she immediately started venting about the recent incident that had left her sweating and red-faced.

"You! I've never had to run for my life like this before. If you didn't have money, you should have said so. We could have eaten street food instead of going to a fancy place that costs 3,500 per head and then running out like we dropped a bomb."

"What could I do? I wanted to impress you. Someone gave you a huge bouquet worth thousands, and I can't even treat you to a meal?"

"But you couldn't do that."

"But I did. You ate a lot."

"Just talking about it makes me want to puke... I feel sick."

She suddenly remembered how she'd run out of breath, and now the food was stuck in her throat. She rushed to the employee restroom without caring that she was just a customer. A junior who'd witnessed the whole scene tiptoed over to me, whispering curiously about Or's dramatic reaction.

"What did you do to her this time?"

"Oh, we went to an omakase restaurant and then dashed out without paying."

"You idiot, did you really do that?"

"Yes, I did."

"Wasn't that supposed to be your date?"

"Date? What date?"

"You got to have a meal with Dr. Or. That means she gave you a chance to go on a date, but you turned an opportunity into a crisis."

"That was a date?" I looked shocked, not having considered that. I quickly ran to Or, who was retching like a pregnant woman, and rubbed her back as she tried to vomit everything out. I couldn't help but tease her, "You know, that was deep-sea fish, raised with care before being slaughtered."

"Stop talking."

Her mouth was smeared with vomit. I looked at her beautiful face, now devoid of its usual elegance, and gently rubbed her back.

"Sorry, sorry. Just teasing a bit. How was our first date?"

"Date the hell! You embarrassed me. How can I ever go back to that restaurant?"

"I'll make up to you next time."

"It's not that easy. I'll never go with you again."

"It's not that hard either. You'll go. Didn't you think our date was fun today? I just found out you run really fast. I couldn't keep up."

"I used to be a university runner."

"No wonder. At least I learned something about you today-you were a runner."

"Blargh."

She turned to vomit again. I laughed affectionately and ordered my junior to bring her some water to rinse her mouth. After a while, she started to calm down, but her face still showed anger as she lightly punched my shoulder in frustration.

"You're such a troublemaker."

"Just trying to be memorable for you."

"I'll remember this till I die."

She got up and walked out, but not before ordering another cup of caffeine to quench her thirst and recharge. I followed her and sat down, resting my chin on my hand, gazing at her with admiration. My eyes clearly showed how much I adored her.

"My heart is about to burst."

"What now?"

"Because your cuteness is stronger than the sun."

"Can I go puke again? What's wrong with you, talking like that?"

"It's a song lyric. Seeing your face makes the lyrics pop into my head. You're truly an inspiration to me."

"Stop talking. I'm not going to be friendly with you that easily."

"But it's not too hard either... Is it that hard to be friends with me and get to know each other gradually?"

"Isn't what just happened enough? That run was like what we did in physical class."

"True. What subject next... What are you good at?"

"How did we get to this? I'm being sarcastic!"

Then, my staff made a cappuccino and served it at the table. Dr. Or took a sip, looking a bit more cheerful. As I enjoyed watching her sweet face, my observant staff noticed a flower stem sticking out of my bag and pulled it out.

"Why are you carrying a flower?"

"Hey," I exclaimed, looking flustered. Of course, Or saw everything. A faint smile appeared on her lips, but she couldn't resist a sarcastic comment.

"The flower was fine where it was, but you cut it instead of letting it grow. Humans are really cruel."

"I intended to give it to you, but when I saw you throw away that bouquet, I changed my mind... Another thing learned is that you hate flowers. Next time, I'll buy you a plant."

"Are you crazy? I don't have time to plant it. Since you already brought it, give it to me," She said, taking it from my junior's hand and examining it, "One flower is fine. No matter how many you buy, I always end up putting just one in a vase."

**Thump...**

My heart pounded as she looked at the flower and smiled. It seemed she didn't dislike my flower after all. My junior, seeing the pink atmosphere, quietly faded away like a background character in a cartoon, leaving Or and me as the main characters sitting by the window with the sky as our backdrop.

"So, can I give you a flower every day?"

"Hmm."

"Hmm, what?"

"Someone like you asks for permission?"

"Whatever I do, I have to inform you first. Like when we ran out of the omakase restaurant, I told you to run first."

"Talking about it makes me angry. I want to hit you."

"From now on, I'll give you a flower every day."

"It's not that easy."

I leaned in a bit and looked her straight in the eyes.

"But it's not that hard either."

Chapter 5

I completely forgot that today was Dad's birthday. My stomach was already full of sushi from the restaurant. When I saw the table decorated with hotel food and some Japanese dishes, I felt nauseous but tried not to show it too much.

"Aren't you going to eat something?"

"Just looking at it is delicious enough," I replied honestly to Mom. It was delicious in my imagination, but forcing it down would be a bad idea. I might end up vomiting at the table, making Dad think I was pregnant with some guy."

"That's not right. Delicious food must be eaten. There are only a few things that make people happy: having money, having beautiful bags, and eating delicious food." Mom delicately peeled a shrimp and put it on my plate. Of course, I didn't touch it; I just smiled weakly and tried to steer the conversation away from food. "Happy birthday, Dad. Wishing you a long and healthy life."

"Humph."

Dad turned his head to the northeast in a huff. I hadn't been home for over a year, so he was probably sulking because of that. I got up and hugged him from behind, being the youngest child he loved the most.

"What are you so mad about? I'm back now."

"If it weren't a special day, you wouldn't have come back."

"Coming back on special days is good. It shows you the value of a daughter who went out to chase her dreams and returned with all her senses intact." "That music career of yours, huh? How's that going? None of your songs are hits."

"That's discouraging." I loosened my hug, but Dad pulled my arm to keep me close. I rested my chin on his shoulder, trying to be affectionate. "Believe me, soon, there will be a new song that's beautiful and popular because now I have good inspiration."

"What kind of inspiration?"

"A surprise."

"It must be a big surprise, running out of an omakase restaurant like that."

"Did the restaurant manager report everything to you?" I smiled weakly and let go of Dad, returning to my seat. "After eating, you need to run to digest. It's normal."

"No wonder you ignored the shrimp I peeled for you. You were already full." This time, it was Mom's turn to sulk, but less than Dad. I walked over, kissed her cheek, and sat down beside her.

"I'm full. If I force myself to eat more, I'll end up vomiting, and Dad will think I'm pregnant."

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"..."

"I mean, I'm bloated. I need some antiflatulent."

Pae, who'd been watching me act cute with our parents, looked annoyed. I hadn't greeted my brother since I arrived, so I decided to be polite.

"What's wrong with you? Why are you so quiet?"

"I'm just annoyed. Seeing you happy makes me feel down, like I was drowning."

"Swim up and get out of the sad water."

"Mom, Dad, why do you two pamper her so much? You should be stricter with her. When it comes to me, I have to study this major and work in that position you guys wanted and became an executive. I want to have my own life, too."

My brother complained to our parents, but Dad didn't seem to care.

What do you dream of doing?"

"Cabaret performer."

"Just keep working at the company"

"See? It's always like this. Am I adopted or something? Am I not your son?" Pae pouted, sulking. Dad tried to appease him by feeding him food like a baby, which he accepted, feeling better as if he'd received some love.

"Feeling better now?"

"A little, but I still want you to be stricter with her."

"You're a man, the future head of the family, like the pillar of the house.

When I'm gone, you have to take care of everyone. So, bear with it. Once I'm dead, you can go dance cabaret or whatever."

"You won't die easily, getting health check-ups every month."

"Hey, do you want me to die?"

"Let's change the subject... Poy, why did you run out of the restaurant today? Didn't you have anything better to do?" Pae changed the topic to me, so I straightened up and told the truth.

"I was trying to get to know a friend, but this friend is hard to get close to. For people to get close, there has to be something that makes their hearts race, sharing joys and sorrows. So, I thought if we ate and ran out without paying, our hearts would race together. Have you heard of the suspension bridge theory? If our hearts race together, they'll beat in sync, and we'll think it's love."

"So, do you love your friend?"

"Why not?"

"Do you have a boyfriend?" Dad's voice grew stern, but I shook my head.

"No. She's a female friend."

"Oh, okay then."

"But I like her."

"Huh?"

"I like women."

The atmosphere at the dinner table fell silent. I watched to see how everyone would react. Dad was quiet for a while before blurting out.

"Lick this clams. It'll make you grow up faster."

"Just use the word 'eat' is enough," Mom quickly interjected and turned to me with interest. "What do you mean you like women?"

"She's my inspiration for songwriting. I have to be friends with her, but it's not easy."

"Nothing is too hard for you," Pae said, understanding me, and picked up a piece of clam to lick as Dad suggested. "Why do we have to lick this?"

"It's basic."

"Dear!" Mom raised her voice.

"Hehe," Dad laughed, pleased that Mom blushed. I got my cheekiness from Dad because he was always in a good mood and didn't think too much. He loved whatever I loved. When I said I liked women, he didn't mind, which was a relief. But Mom... she might be a bit harder to convince.

"Looks like I'll have to keep an eye on you. You've been alone too long, doing whatever you want. Who is this woman?"

"A doctor."

"Which hospital?"

"Near my coffee shop."

"Arrange for me to meet her sometime."

"Let me be friends with her first. She's still mad at me for doing the dine and dash."

"Once you're close, bring her to meet me. I'm not like the typical parents in those BL novels, but I want to see if she's worthy of you. Even if she's a doctor or an astronaut, I need to meet her. What if she's a doctor but a psychopath who hits you with a brick? I need to know her real nature."

"That's scary."

"Alright, let's eat. The food's getting cold. As long as you're happy, that's enough. But don't run out of restaurants and make up stories about feeding fish until they're fat and then killing them. It's sad."

"Did the manager tell you everything in detail? You can't trust anyone, I see."

"Well, it's my restaurant. They have to report everything. Do they know we're rich?" "Not yet."

"Do they know we're..."

"Enough, dear."

And we all ate without talking further because Dad would steer the conversation to something inappropriate...

Now, I was out walking to digest because I felt like I was going to burst. I might turn into a glutton or a frog with a bloated belly. To forget my bloated stomach, I couldn't help but pick up my phone and text Dr. Or, who might be vomiting or still mad at me for making her run out of the restaurant today.

Poy: Do you miss meee?

She read it but didn't reply. That was her style, or maybe she was so mad she didn't know what to type. I laughed, imagining her face. The angrier she got, the cuter she looked. I was really smitten with her.

Or: I'm thinking about how to make you stop texting me.

Poy: I can stop.

Or: Really?

I switched from texting to calling her on LINE. She hesitated for a moment before answering but didn't say anything. I could hear the background noise, so I knew she was holding the phone. I spoke cheerfully.

"Are you hungry? I'll buy you something to eat. How about sashimi?"

"Do you want to die?"

"You're not very friendly."

"Can't you be a bit more friendly? Are you trying to woo me or push me away with that behavior?"

"I can't push you away. You're too cute, and you're a doctor with a good income. I'll cling to you for life."

"It's not that easy."

"But it's not that hard either. If you want to eat something good, I'll take you to a French restaurant next time."

"And then you'll make me run out of the restaurant like today? I'll kill you."

"Come kill me. I'm always at the shop... Hey."

"What?"

"I miss you."

"..."

"When someone says they miss you, you should reply that you miss them too. It's basic manners."

"Annoying."

"The more annoyed you are, the cuter you get."

"Can I ask you something?"

"What?"

"Why are you so shameless?"

I held back a smile. Today, besides running out of the restaurant together, we had a long phone conversation. She didn't realize she was spending her precious time arguing with me.

"Because you're cute. You're unique. As I said, it's because you're unique that my heart feels strange."

"..."

"My heart feels like it's going to burst because your cuteness is stronger than the sun."

"Oh my gosh, why are you so annoying?" she said, sounding like she was about to cry. "When we first met, you were serving coffee with shaky hands and stuttering. You weren't like this at all."

"That's because I knew you were easily annoyed. If I kept stuttering, you would have run away. It took an enormous amount of courage, the most in my life, to flirt with a girl like you."

"Making me fall in love isn't that easy."

"But it's not too hard either. Oh, by the way, I came home for dinner today."

"So what?"

"There were shrimp, clams, crabs, and fish at home. I ate the clams."

"So what?"

"Dad taught me how to lick the clams."

"I'm hanging up now."

She hung up immediately, refusing to listen to my nonsense any longer. I chuckled, looking at my phone with affection before rubbing my face in embarrassment. As I said, I'd never been this bold. I had to act like I didn't care, and if I got rejected, I had to keep a straight face and be shameless.

*How do actors do it? Crying easily, being shameless easily, even though it's incredibly hard.*

"Someone's in love."

A teasing voice came from behind, making me look up from my hands and turn to see Pae, who seemed to have been listening to my conversation for a while.

"It's rude to eavesdrop on other people's conversations."

"Is she so beautiful that you have to be this shameless? How could you say that?"

"It was literally a clam. What's shameless about that? She didn't listen to the end."

"I wouldn't have listened to the end either. Introduce her to me sometime."

"Not yet. We're not even friends right now. Let's wait until we get a bit closer. But I made a lot of progress. We talk longer, argue more, and share more experiences. That's already a lot."

"Is she playing hard to get?"

"She's a typical introvert. Her walls are higher than the Great Wall of China. But I'll break those walls down. I'll bet my grandpa's name on it."

"I'll wait to see if she's worthy of you. Does she know you're rich?"

"Do I have to tell her I'm rich? Isn't owning a coffee shop and a record label rich enough?"

"Songs that aren't hits are like people without money."

"They're going to be hit soon," I said, scrunching my nose in frustration. "You always underestimate me. Just wait. Everyone will be singing the new song that's about to come out. I already have music and melody in my head. It's going to be a hit."

"Yeah, I'll wait and see."

"And you, when are you going to have a girlfriend?"

"I'm trying to, but I keep getting rejected."

"Who dares to reject someone as wealthy as you, Pae?"

"Who is she? I'll be your matchmaker."

"She's a doctor."

"Stop."

"What?"

"The world can't be this small. Don't make it like a novel where siblings flirt with the same girl. I hope you didn't send a big bouquet to the hospital and get it thrown in the trash."

"No, I think flowers are pointless. I wouldn't do something like that."

"Good. Flirt with whoever you want, but don't flirt with Or. She's mine."

"Oh, her name is Or. At least I got some basic information."

"Don't send a detective to spy on her personal life. Even if it's Dad's order, don't do it."

"..."

"Promise me."

"I'm leaving."

My brother didn't say anything and walked away. I tried to follow him, but my legs were shorter, so I couldn't keep up. In the end, he got into his convertible sports car and sped off, leaving his little sister standing with her hands on her hips, watching the taillights with a longing look.

Chapter 6

"Here comes the clown!"

I rushed over to Or as she ordered her cappuccino and sat at her usual table. Today, I was in a great mood, holding a rose in my mouth and handing it to her with a playful wink as always. Or took the flower with a disgusted look, wiping the saliva off the stem with a tissue, typical of a cleanlinessobsessed doctor. Her reaction killed my joy.

"Hey, no need to be that grossed out. Someday, we'll be exchanging our saliva anyway."

"Why would we exchange saliva?"

"Because we'll be smooching, hehe!" I grinned widely and laughed heartily. The adorable doctor pushed my face away slightly, annoyed as usual. I then walked around to sit across from her, watching her sip her coffee like always. "What a beauty. Are you an angel?"

"What will it take for you to stop bothering me?"

"Hmm, good question... but I can't help falling in love with you~"

"That's an old song."

"Knowing that song means we're from the same era. What can I say? You've become my muse. Yesterday, I told my parents all about you-how great you are, how beautiful you are."

"You told them even though we're nothing to each other?"

"We'll be soon."

"Your shameless persistence is starting to make me..." I didn't let her finish, fearing it'd be too harsh. I was actually quite sensitive, but I acted cheerful to fight for what I wanted, so I avoided harsh words by not listening.

"Enjoy your coffee. The flower is for you... Oh, and have a great day,

Doctor."

"What? Leaving already?" She looked bewildered as I suddenly got up without any warning.

"I'm not gone for good. We'll see each other again soon."

I wasn't lying. When I said I was leaving but not gone for good, it meant I followed her to the hospital and waited outside her office like before. And as usual, a big bouquet of flowers was delivered to her by a messenger. I peeked in and saw the doctor looking like she had a small piece of dog poop in her mouth, her face flushed with embarrassment. Her workday wasn't as peaceful as it should've been. Instead of treating patients normally, she had to answer each one's questions about who sent the flowers and then waste time throwing them away. Of course, when she came out, she saw me sitting outside her office.

"You're here again?"

"Told you we'd see each other again."

"Aren't you bored sitting here waiting?"

"I could look at your face all day. Got flowers again, huh? I'm jealous."

"If you want them, take them." She shoved the flowers into my arms as if I were a big trash can. "Consider it a gift."

"Great, I'll use them to decorate the shop. It's sad, you know, cut and then thrown away."

"If you think they're useful, go ahead. When did you start waiting here?"

"I followed you closely since you left the coffee shop. My heart can't be without you."

"Smart mouth."

"Sweet mouth."

"There's not much difference in meaning, don't you think? But wasting time like this is pointless. I don't like pointless people."

"I'm writing songs, looking at your face, writing songs, enjoying it. Scribbling, drawing when stuck... By the way, when will you be done? Let's have dinner again today."

Talking about dinner made her look like she'd seen a ghost, probably flashing back to running for her life from the restaurant.

"No, I'll eat at the canteen today."

"Great, I'll join you."

"It's not tasty."

"Just looking at you makes everything tasty."

She smiled when I said that, but when she saw me looking, she stopped smiling Immediately.

"What's with that? Smiling and then stopping. Do you know you have a beautiful smile?"

"..."

"I want to see you every day... I want to see that smile on you forever. I'm in a trance and can't escape because you're unlike anyone I've ever met."

"..."

"..."

"Shit, I got a song lyric out of nowhere."

I tossed the flowers aside and searched for a pen but couldn't find one. The doctor, standing in front of me, seemed more excited. She quickly handed me a pen from her pocket and eagerly watched me jot down the lyrics.

"So this is how you write songs?"

"Yeah, it just comes out of nowhere. It's like it's in the air; if you catch it, jackpot." After finishing, I closed the notebook and snapped my fingers in front of her face. "To thank you for the new lyrics today, I'll treat you to lunch at the canteen."

"No running this time?"

"No running."

The food here didn't offer much variety. The trays were like what we had when we were in school, with compartments for different foods, fruits, rice, and vegetables. I didn't eat anything because I wasn't that hungry; I just sat there admiring the doctor as she ate.

*Did she know someone liked her every move, even if that person annoyed her daily? It's like a boy seeking attention from a girl he likes by lifting her skirt and teasing her.*

"Why aren't you eating?" she asked.

"I'm not hungry. Besides, the food here looks bland. I like spicy food. You should've invited me to eat out."

"No way, I've had enough."

"Even a street food?"

"And run away again?"

"With dishes cost around forty baht? I wouldn't run away."

"No matter the price, I'm not risking it. Here's fine. Even if you run, I can pay... How long will you keep smiling like that? Are you crazy?"

"Do you realize you've been talking to me a lot more lately? You used just to say... it's not easy."

"It's still not easy, but you're too annoying."

"Cute... Hey, you're not eating your veggies. You're a doctor. You need all nutrients."

"I'm an adult. I eat what I want."

"But you're a doctor. If patients see this, it's not respectable."

"What patient watches a doctor eat?"

"This one... I'm your heart patient." I took her spoon and put some veggies on her plate. "Eat up now so I can see you really eat it."

"I don't like being forced."

"But this is for your own good."

"Unwanted goodwill is just a nosiness."

"True."

"Wow, you agree so easily."

"It's true, obviously. If someone gets goodwill they don't want, like parents finding a good guy for their daughter to marry, but the daughter doesn't like him because he has bigger boobs than her, that's not goodwill. You're right."

"Idiot, what guy has bigger boobs than a woman?"

"Plenty. Mine's a cup A." I puffed out my chest and held my breasts, bouncing them up and down. "See? Even doing this, my chest doesn't jiggle. My belly's bigger than my boobs now."

**Pfft.**

The food in the doctor's mouth sprayed onto my face as she choked and laughed. I closed my eyes, and a grain of rice landed in my eye. Or, shocked by my face, quickly grabbed a handkerchief and crossed the table to wipe it, laughing non- stop.

"You're crazy. Why are you so cheeky? When we first met, you were so awkward."

"We're close now."

"We're not even friends."

"Good, I don't want to be friends." I picked the rice out of my eye and ate it, winking. "Because I don't want us to be just friends. I want to call you 'Honey,'"

"Is that another song lyric?"

"No, I want to tell you I love you."

"..."

"Finish your meal and get back to work. I'll go back to the coffee shop too. Won't bother you today."

"Really..." Her voice trailed off, sounding a bit disappointed. I smirked.

"Disappointed? Feeling lonely, huh? No one will be peeking at you when the door opens for patients now. Hehe."

"Why would I feel lonely?"

"Don't worry. I'll come see you every day until you're sick of me. But today, I have a meeting with my band. I need to update them on the new song. Gonna have a friend help arrange the notes. There's a rap part I want help with... your song."

"When will it be done? I'm sick of seeing your face."

"Not too soon, not too late. Let's say when I win you over, the song will be done. Yay."

"Hurry up and get off."

I returned to the coffee shop and went upstairs to the rehearsal studio. The band members were all there, waiting eagerly to hear the new song I'd been working on. I told them it was just a demo with only my voice. The only thing missing was the rap part, which was Yak's job, our other lead singer.

Yak's talent was rapping and writing rap lyrics quickly as long as he had a direction. I handed him a sheet of paper with the lyrics and feelings described. He scanned the paper quickly, occasionally glancing at me with curiosity.

"Are you in love?"

"What makes you think that?"

"The descriptions are full of passion and infatuation. Who is this guy?"

Everyone in the band crowded around to read the paper. I stood with my arms crossed, trying to keep my cool, and shrugged like I didn't want to give too much away.

"I got the lyrics now, so just practice, and don't ask too much. You wanted a love song, didn't you?"

"But this love song doesn't even have the word 'love' in it."

"The person I'm seeing isn't romantic. If the word 'love' is In there, someone will probably puke." Just imagining if the song had a line with 1 love you, Or would probably make a face like she was chewing on dog poop and collapse on the floor. I thought it was better to avoid that.

"I want to meet the person."

"Why do you need to?"

"So I can get more into the lyrics."

"Don't be overdramatic. Normally, when you write rap, you don't need to get involved with the subject. Just write it. The content is already provided. Meeting adjourned."

I briefly ended the meeting without any further discussion. When everyone wanted to meet the person I wrote about, I feared that if I mentioned it, things would get longer, and everyone would want to meet her. Honestly, I was possessive. If anyone met her, they'd fall head over heels like I did. So, it was better to avoid it. But it wasn't that easy. When I came down from the second floor, I saw the charming doctor sitting at the same corner table, drinking coffee at 7 PM, which wasn't her usual caffeine time.

"Or."

I stopped in my tracks and called her name in surprise. My friends, who were following me down, bumped into me in a line and then stopped to look where I was looking, whistling. Yak, who had the strongest sense among us, smiled at the corner of his mouth and walked straight to that table, placing the paper with the content about her in front of her before asking directly:

"Are you the person in this song?"

"Huh?"

"Hey!"

I ran to grab the paper, but Or was quicker. She picked up the paper and read it. Her face blushed, clearly realizing that the person in the song was her, and she alternated her gaze between the paper and me.

"What is this?"

"It's a note about you that will be used to write a rap verse that this girl asked me to write. Hi, I'm Yak... I'm surprised that the person in the song is a woman."

I bared my teeth at Yak immediately, but what was more surprising was that Yak didn't show any shock or strange expression like seeing a ghost, as I thought he'd when he found out the person I was flirting with was a woman. Unlike my friends, who were now whispering openly.

What are you doing here at this time? This isn't the time for coffee. If you drink it now, when will you get to sleep?"

"I don't feel like going home yet. I have a night shift... and I wanted to see you work with the band a bit."

My heart pounded a little at the thought that she was interested in my work. I held back a smile but maintained my composure because it wasn't just the two of us here.

"My name is Yak."

"I'm Or."

"What time is your night shift?"

"Midnight."

"There's still time." Yak looked at the wall clock. "Let's get to know each other better. I want to know more about you so that I can write the rap verse."

"Bullshit," I cursed my friend outright.

"Why so rude." Yak pretended to scold me in front of Or. Of course, Or agreed and just smiled. "To work on this, you need material, a subject. And now I have that right in front of me. I won't let it slip away easily."

"So, what are you going to do?"

"Invite her to eat BBQ to get to know each other better."

"Oh, come on. She's hygenic. She wouldn't eat that kind of food."

"I do," Or said nonchalantly. "There's a good grilled pork place nearby. Let's go there. After eating, I can head straight to the hospital."

"How convenient. Let's go then. This meal... is on this chick."

"You..." I bared my teeth at my friend, who called me 'chick' so openly, but I couldn't refuse, so I just shrugged and sighed. "Fine, let's go."

"Everyone, this meal is free!"

"Yay!"

There were about five people in my band, including Or, making it six, so we had to join two tables. Everyone was particularly interested in Or. They looked at her like dogs looking at an airplane, each with longing eyes for her beauty. She didn't fit in with the grilled pork setting. It was like she had an aura shining brightly, like a diamond's brilliance amidst the mud. And yes... we were the mud.

Everyone took turns interviewing Or with questions like how she knew me, why she became a doctor, her life story, how many boyfriends she had, etc. Each question was something I'd never known. Honestly, it was good that my friends asked for me. I learned things I never knew about her. Sitting next to her, I served her pork, cutting off the burnt parts because I was afraid of cancer, as they shared on the internet. She looked at me and smiled, thanking me for taking care of her.

"Do your parents know you're dating a woman?" Yak asked the crucial question, which made Or glance at me with interest.

"They do."

"Hmm?" Or looked at me and smiled at the corner of her mouth. "Pretender. Dating a woman? We're not even anything yet."

"They know I'm flirting with a woman, not dating one."

"And they don't mind?"

"Not yet. If we start dating, they might or might not. You know my dad loves me to death."

"But at least they should investigate Dr. Or."

"They probably have, but there's nothing to worry about."

"Do they really need to investigate?" Or, who never thought there would be such a thing, looked like a dog choking on water. "This is like in a Korean drarna."

"My dad is afraid I'll meet a bad person. Don't worry about that. If I love someone, my family will do so. Let's stop talking about this. We'll eat and then go home. The interview is enough."

"What? We're not even drunk yet." Yak reached out to hug me. "I haven't heard you call yourself 'l' and 'Thou.' How can we leave?"

"Hey, how much more do you want to embarrass me? And stop being so touchy. Go away."

Our playfulness was in Or's sight. At first, she smiled, but now her face turned indifferent. From eating normally, she stopped and started sipping water, watching our close interaction.

"How did you and Yak become close? How did you join the band?"

"We've been close since high school, but we were in different classes. Poy was in the math-arts program, and I was in the language-arts program. But we both liked music, so we formed a band and competed in various events. These guys joined later... The secret is, I used to like her."

"Ah, you used to date."

"No," I quickly denied. "Who would like him? He's as big as a bull."

"Yes, that's the reason she rejected me. I was heartbroken for a while. When I got over it, we became friends and got closer. Being friends is much better."

"But being friends doesn't mean you have to be this close."

"Huh?"

"Hmm?"

Both Yak and I were stunned by what Or said. Or continued sipping her water and spoke in a flat tone, without any hint of joking, even sounding stern. Yak immediately withdrew his arm from around my neck.

"There's a line between men and women. You shouldn't be too close. Didn't your parents ever tell you that?"

"..."

"If no one has told you, I'll tell you myself. Don't do it again." "..."

"I don't like it."

Chapter 7

I was a bit tipsy from beer. I didn't normally drink alcohol for social gatherings or parties, but my friends were insistent on pouring beer into Or's glass to get her to loosen up and spill some secrets. So, I had to take the beer from her and drink it myself. Besides, she had a midnight shift coming up, and it wouldn't be good for a doctor to be hungover while on duty.

The barbecue restaurant wasn't far from the hospital, so I walked alongside her, stumbling a bit. I tended to talk more when I had alcohol in my system, and I couldn't resist teasing her a little when we were alone.

"Are you jealous?"

"What?"

"If you're jealous, just say it."

"What are you talking about?"

"When Yak had his arm around me, you looked furious."

"It's not jealousy, it's a matter of appropriateness."

"But you were pretty harsh. The whole table was stunned. No one dared to mess with me after that. No one even dared to touch me."

"That's a good thing. A woman shouldn't let men touch her so freely."

"So, it's okay for women to touch each other, right? Here, take this."

I poked her shoulder. She made a sound of annoyance and brushed my hand away, glaring at me.

"You're drunk."

"Not really, just gain more courage than usual."

"You're already pretty brave. Now you're even braver. Who knows what you'll do? It's scary."

"Hmm... if I'm this brave, what should I do? I'll poke your cheek then." I reached out to poke her left cheek, but she brushed my hand away. Then I tried to poke her right shoulder, and she eventually stopped resisting out of annoyance. "What's this? You should brush my hand away. You look so cute when you're all protective."

"Everything's cute to you, isn't it?"

"Well, you're cute." I clasped my hands behind my back and walked beside her, humming a song I made up. "Ever since I met you, my heart has been dreaming and wandering."

"..."

"Your smile."

"..."

"Your eyes."

"They make me fall into a trance, and I can't escape."

"When did I smile at you?"

"You always give a small, reserved smile. That's enough to be considered a smile. It's a haughty smile but full of charm, making my heart race. The first time I saw it, I was shaken to my core."

"You judge people by their appearance, don't you?"

"Guilty as charged." I raised my hands in surrender. "The eyes are the windows to the soul. We judge people by their appearance first, then get to know them from the inside. When I found out you were a doctor, I figured you must like helping people."

"No, when I was a kid, I thought being a doctor would make me rich quickly. And I happened to be good at studying."

"How many people have you helped?"

"Never counted."

"That means a lot."

"Maybe."

"The number of people you've helped is your kindness. It's wealth that can't be measured by money. If that's not being a good person, then what is? You don't need to see it, you can feel it from the heart."

"When you're drunk, you talk a lot."

"Yes, when I'm drunk, I talk a lot. Normally, I wouldn't say things like this because I know you can't stand it. It's cheesy."

"I can't stand it now."

"Bear with it. I'm on a roll now. I can't help it... Oh, we're almost at the hospital. It feels like we just started walking."

"It feels like an eternity with you. After dropping me off, what will you do?"

"I'll probably walk back to the coffee shop and sleep there."

"Don't you have a home to sleep in?"

"I can sleep at the coffee shop. There's a studio there. Actually, the building has three floors. The third floor is a bedroom... We should sleep there together sometime."

"You're so cheeky."

"Really cheeky. Hehe." I covered my mouth and laughed. Or, seeing me laugh, smiled and frowned in confusion.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I'm thinking about doing something dirty."

"Why? Do you want to kiss me?"

"How did you know?"

"Talking about that and thinking about dirty things, what else could it be? Especially when you're drunk and bold like this." She reached out and pushed my face back. "Go away. Go back and get some rest. You'll have a splitting headache in the morning."

"Seriously, can I kiss you?"

"It's not that easy."

"But it's not that hard either."

"If you have the guts, try it."

She didn't even try to dodge or avoid me. She faced me head-on, hands behind her back. It was me who, when given the chance, swallowed nervously, feeling a bit sobered up, and blinked.

"Really? Can I really do it?"

"If you have the guts."

"If I kiss you, you'll just dodge."

"I won't. Go ahead."

"Why?"

"I want to see how far you'll go."

She underestimated my dark power. But when she said that, I got scared that I wouldn't do well enough. But opportunities like this didn't come often, where the reserved, sharp-tongued doctor would give in to me like this.

"Then, may I?"

"Permission granted."

I cupped her cheeks with both hands, leaned in, tilted my head slightly, and pressed my lips against her soft, moist ones. The faint scent of menthol was in her breath. I didn't do more than that; I just kept my lips there, absorbing the feeling as much as I could, then pulled away and stood back. She looked at me, raising an eyebrow.

"How was it?"

"Well..."

**Thud.**

My legs gave out, and I collapsed to the ground. She looked at me, halflaughing, half-concerned, and quickly came to help me up. I waved my hands to indicate I was fine, but she shook her head.

"You're very drunk. You can't go back to the coffee shop. Sleep in my room tonight."

"Really?"

"Yes. We kissed, didn't we?"

So, I didn't go home. Or took me to sleep in the staff room, which had a bunk bed in a small room that no one used. She told me to sleep on the bottom bunk while she put on her long white coat and got ready for her shift. I, still tipsy, watched her move energetically, feeling a warm glow in my heart. I couldn't resist tugging at her coat as she walked by.

"Don't go yet. Stay with me a bit longer.

"I have to work. Why are you being clingy?"

"I want another kiss."

"You call that a kiss?"

"Lips touching like that, what else would you call it?"

"Just lips touching. There was no emotion in it. You need to learn how to kiss properly."

"You're underestimating me. Have you ever kissed anyone?"

"Never, but I know what a kiss should be. Yours was nothing. You have no skill."

She was always sharp-tongued. I pouted and turned away. sulking. She stopped, looked at me, then sat down beside the bed, poking my shoulder lightly and asking in a flat tone.

"What? Just a few words, and you're sulking? You used to be tougher than this."

"Yes. It was our first kiss, after all."

"It wasn't a kiss, and I still insist it wasn't. I can't accept a kiss that smells like beer and barbecue all over."

"Do I have to bathe for three days and nights and brush my teeth eight times a day to kiss you?"

"If you can do that, it'd be good. But you can't because it's not easy."

"Don't challenge me. If I want something, I'll get it."

"Then do it, and I'll let you try again."

I immediately turned to face her when I heard I'd get a second chance. My heart raced, and I could feel my eyes sparkling like bright stars.

"Really? Another chance?"

"Find a good opportunity. Now, get some rest. You smell like a ripe fruit."

"Really? If your doctor friends come in, will they be disgusted with me?"

"Probably, but I'll tell them I brought a friend to sleep here. No one will dare come in. Just make yourself comfortable."

"Can't I sleep with you? I'm scared of ghosts. Hospitals are haunted."

"If you sleep with me, you might not get any sleep."

She left it at that and walked out, leaving me puzzled until I fell asleep without dreaming...

Actually, being drunk was a good thing. It made me sleep without dreaming because, normally, my dreams were all over the place. One moment, I was in hell; the next, I was soaring to heaven, running from ghosts, and every step felt like a struggle. But I didn't dream at all. I just woke up feeling a bit miserable, my head heavy as if a hundred-ton iron block was pressing down on it. I got up and hit my head on the bunk bed's upper frame, forgetting I wasn't in my own bedroom. As I stumbled out of the room, I saw a bottle of hangover medicine and a yellow post-it note with a doctor's scrawl that I could barely read:

'Take this. It'll help with the hangover.'

I didn't need to guess whose handwriting it was. I looked at the bottle filled with goodwill, feeling touched, and hugged it to my chest before opening it and drinking it all. That wasn't all; there was also a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste, with another post-it note: 'Brush your teeth. Your breath stinks.'

Everything was going so well until something happended.

I grabbed my toothbrush and toothpaste and opened the door. The doctors and nurses, who were chatting in groups, stopped and looked at me simultaneously. I stood there, stunned, not knowing what to do, so I pretended to ask for directions to the bathroom. Everyone pointed to the same spot on the right. I bowed slightly in thanks and walked to the bathroom to wash my face and brush my teeth. It took about five minutes before I came out, only to be grabbed by the arms by the doctors and nurses who'd been chatting earlier and dragged to their table.

"Sit down right now."

"W-what? What's going on?"

"Is this the person Dr. Or brought to sleep over?"

Everyone whispered excitedly as if it was something new and unprecedented. One of them, a doctor in a short white coat with a cute face and shoulder-length hair, pulled up a chair next to me and immediately started interviewing me.

"What are you to Dr. Or?"

"A friend."

"She has no friends."

"Is she that not friendly?" I looked bewildered and a bit sympathetic, but I couldn't deny it. She really was that unapproachable.

"It's not that she's unapproachable, but she doesn't let anyone in. She spends all day treating patients and has no time to chat with anyone. So, when she brings someone to sleep over, everyone gets excited."

"So, everyone wants to be friends with her but can't get close to her, " I concluded.

"How did you manage to get close to her?"

"Well... I just kept trying. Little strokes fell great oaks."

"How persistent do you have to be to break through Dr. Or's defenses and get invited to her private space? Tell us everything. We want to know."

"Where should I start?"

"From the beginning. We all want to be friends with Dr. Or, too."

Everyone, including doctors, nurses, and orderlies, nodded in unison. I looked at them, pursed my lips slightly, and then nodded in understanding. I began to recount my story from the beginning to the end-who I was, where I came from, how I met her, and why I ended up in her private room.

"That's not a particularly special story."

"But we kissed. Isn't that special enough?"

"Just touching lips doesn't count as a kiss."

*Why does everyone call it just that? For me, it was incredibly special. I held her face, tilted my head to get the right angle, and focused on her soft, moist lips. But she still said it was just touching lips. It made me angry. It was like she was belittling me.*

"So, what counts as a kiss?"

"It has to..."

Just as one of the doctors in a short white coat was about to explain, a messenger interrupted with a large bouquet of familiar flowers. Her smiling face fell, and she sneezed about ten times like someone allergic to pollen. She waved her hand to stop the rider from coming closer because her nose and eyes were already watering.

"Don't bring the flowers in. Take them away."

"But I was instructed to deliver them to Dr. Jane... according to the attached card. Who is Dr. Jane?"

"The one who told you not to come in. Just give me the card. As for the flowers..." She paused to think for a moment and then nodded. "Take them to Dr. Or in the general patient ward. She should be done with her rounds by now."

"Yes."

The messenger followed the instructions and left. Dr. Jane looked at the card she received and placed it on the table. My curiosity made me lean forward to look, but I couldn't see much until she slid the card in front of me, allowing me to read it without being nosy anymore.

'These flowers are for you. I hope one day you'll soften your heart and agree to have dinner with me... Pae'

*Oh my God, I hope this Pae isn't my brother. That would be a drama story.*

I sat quietly, not expressing any opinion. Dr. Jane, still teary-eyed, seemed to have forgotten what she was initially going to say about kissing and looked furious.

"When will he stop sending flowers? What are men thinking? Why do they always assume women love flowers?"

"Because women are often associated with flowers. Have you ever told him you don't like flowers?" "No, I haven't."

"Why not tell him?"

"Because I refuse to meet him."

"Then go meet him once." I tried to help my brother without revealing that I knew who the sender was, but she didn't suspect anything and just looked annoyed.

"No way. If I meet him, he'll think I'm giving him hope. Just dealing with patients' bad breath while treating their teeth is bad enough. I don't want to talk to a man who doesn't make sense, and I can't help but notice if he has tartar on his teeth."

"Are you a dentist, Dr. Jane?"

"Yes."

"Then he must take good care of his teeth. He wouldn't miss that. The company he works for has excellent health benefits for executives because they're afraid they'll die. Even when flying with his father, they have to take separate planes because they don't know which one might crash. One has to survive." I spoke nonchalantly without thinking much, but Dr. Jane looked at me suspiciously, making me nervous that she might figure it out. "What is it?"

"You talk a lot. Do you know the person who sent the flowers?"

"No, I was just speaking generally. Dr. Jane, with your wall that is as high as the Great Wall of China, when will you ever get a husband?"

"Dr. Or has even higher walls and still got a wife."

"We're not a couple yet."

"If she lets you sleep in her private room, you'll eventually have sex. Hehe."

*Do doctors normally talk about such things?* I sat there, shrinking like a piece of A4 paper, feeling awkward. I pretended to excuse myself to make a phone call, and everyone let me go freely, continuing to talk about me with amusement. The first person I called was my brother, who sent flowers to a girl who had no idea about his feelings.

[What?]

"Hi, dumbass. You woke up so early and sent flowers to a girl who's allergic to pollen. What were you thinking?"

Pae, who heard me scolding him, sounded confused. He was probably just getting ready for work. When he heard about the flowers, he turned on the emergency light, and I could hear the ticking sound through the phone.

[How did you know I sent flowers to a girl this morning?]

"Because this is a novel. Anything can happen. I finally found out that the flowers that get discarded every day are from you. I knew there had to be some connection between me and you. Good thing we're not hitting on the same girl."

[Speak clearly.]

I briefly explained the details about the dentist and the flowers being sent and then redirected to the girl I was courting.

Pae sounded shocked because he'd never known this information before, making me grit my teeth at the phone.

"You sent someone to investigate your sister's love life

but never bothered to find out that the girl you're courting is allergic to pollen?"

[But all women love flowers.]

"Not Dr. Jane. And she doesn't like men with tartar either, as a dentist would."

[I get my teeth cleaned every three months to be ready for a kiss.]

"Go kiss a clam instead. You think you'll get a kiss? She refuses to meet you because she's mad about the flowers. You need to do something if you want to hit on a dentist."

[What should I do?]

I don't know. Just stop sending flowers. Find another way. That's all I can say."

I hung up and walked back into the doctor's lounge, where they were still talking about me with great enthusiasm or had already changed the subject. Everyone smiled and welcomed me, pulling up a chair for me to sit with respect. I spoke politely and asked what they were discussing.

"We're talking about organizing a Christmas event. This year, the hospital management wants some entertainment activities. We're all doctors and nurses with a lot of work, on-call duties, rounds, cleanings, and other tasks. We can't think of what to do... or maybe we should sing."

"Can you sing, Dr. Jane?" one of the male nurses asked. Dr. Jane puffed out her chest confidently.

"People with beautiful teeth sing beautifully."

"That has nothing to do with it."

"May I interject?"

"What is it?" Everyone turned to look at me simultaneously. Feeling the pressure, I had to speak up.

"Actually, I'm a songwriter and have my own band. If a band played at the hospital on Christmas, it'd be quite entertaining."

"That's great! Why didn't we think of hiring a band to perform at the hospital? Patients waiting for their turn could enjoy the music and not get frustrated about when their turn will come," another doctor snapped his fingers in delight. "But our hospital doesn't have the budget to hire a band."

"No need for that. We'll play for free. We have a new song to promote, so we'll take this opportunity to perform. If it's not too much trouble..."

"Come on over." Everyone said in unison.

"But we all have to repay you somehow. We just don't have money. Can we offer something else?"

"Free health check-ups," one doctor suggested. "From head to toe for the entire band."

"That's a good idea."

"Free tartar removal, no charge," Dr. Jane said. "And I believe Dr. Or will be impressed. That girl values teeth and tartar removal more than anyone. And most importantly..."

Dr. Jane leaned in close to me and whispered so only the two of us could hear.

"I'll even teach you how to kiss properly. I guarantee Dr. Or won't be able to resist."

"What are you two up to?"

"Ah-choo!"

Dr. Jane sneezed right into my ear, spraying saliva all over it. Or, who was carrying flowers, looked at me and Dr. Jane with a displeased expression.

"You know I'm allergic to flowers, so why bring them?"

"If you don't like flowers, just tell the sender directly. Don't have the messenger deliver them to the examination room every day. Patients tease me every day, and I don't know how to respond. And what are you two doing, sneaking around?"

"Talking about love and relationships," Dr. Jane replied nonchalantly.

"Since when did you start having relationships?"

"Just recently."

"I didn't know you had a thing for women."

"Actually, it doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman, as long as they moan when I scrape their tartar."

"You're sick," Or said, tossing the flowers at Jane in annoyance. Jane sneezed again, almost fainting. Or pulled me up by the arm. "As for you, you can go now. You've been here too long. It's annoying."

"What? You come in and start picking a fight," I said, frowning as I noticed the dark circles under her eyes, indicating she hadn't slept since last night. "Have you slept at all?"

"I'm about to, but I need a cup of coffee first."

"Not today. The shop's closed. I'll open it for you to buy coffee once you wake up."

"Is that even a thing?"

"Go to sleep first." From her holding my wrist, I switched to holding hers and dragged her to the restroom, closing the door behind us. Now we were alone, and surely there would be gossip outside. "I slept well last night. Now it's your turn to sleep."

"I can't sleep soundly here."

"But you need to sleep, and I'll sleep with you."

I grabbed her head and pushed her to lie down on the first bunk. She made a fuss.

"I don't like being forced."

"Try being forced for once. It's good for you." I squeezed in next to her on the outer side. The slightly smaller woman pouted and turned her back to me.

"You're annoying."

"I'm worried about you. That's why I'm doing this."

"Worried about me but flirting with Dr. Jane?"

"She's a good person. A little flirting won't hurt."

She glanced at me briefly before turning back. I hugged her, but she shook my hand off.

"Don't touch me."

"Jealous?"

"No, you smell. You haven't showered. Disgusting."

"You haven't showered either. You're still in your lab coat."

"..."

"Turn around."

"No."

"Turn around."

"Why?"

"So you can sleep soundly."

She remained stubborn, so I pulled her towards me, flipping her to face me and hugging her close, pressing her head against my chest. Or resisted slightly before mumbling against my chest.

"Your heartbeat is so loud."

"It's exciting to hold you in my arms."

"..."

"My heart is all about you. I'm adjusting and doing everything to make you happy. Right now, we're just touching lips, but I promise next time, it'll be a real kiss. Now, go to sleep. When you wake up, I'll make you coffee and take you home."

She didn't say anything and fell asleep in my arms, her breathing steady. She was like a little cat that hissed but would become affectionate if you knew how to pet her. I thought I was starting to understand her moods.

I thought our song was nearing its end.

Chapter 8

I slowly tiptoed out of the staff room, leaving Or to continue sleeping. I kept my promise to return to the shop, shower, wash my face, brush my teeth, and get ready to make coffee for her myself before seven in the morning, which was her usual time to come to the shop. It was now 7.40 P.M. The coffee shop door opened before I could get there. At first, I thought it was her, but when I saw it was my brother, I was even more surprised.

"What brings you here?"

"Your call this morning about Jane being allergic to pollen."

In the end, I had to sit and be a cupid for my brother instead of making coffee for Or. My brother was dressed to the nines today, as always, in his executive style, looking sharp from head to toe. Compared to me, I looked like a beggar waiting for handouts. His slicked-back hair, expensive watch, and straight posture showed his well-trained personality. But now, his face was a mess, completely lacking confidence.

"I never knew she was allergic to pollen. I've sent her almost a hundred bouquets."

"She threw every single one away."

"How do you know?"

"Because every bouquet you sent, she gave to Or, who then ordered the nurses to throw them away. I was always there when they did it. Sorry, it's like throwing money away."

"I've never felt so bad and wasted so much money. She must think I'm a complete idiot.

"Well, you are."

"Where's your encouragement?"

"There's none for you."

"What should I do?"

"Maybe you should get your teeth cleaned."

*What's wrong with me and teeth cleaning today? Maybe it's because I talked to the dentist too much, and Or always emphasized oral hygiene.*

"You should hurry back. Or will be here soon. This is the time when we're supposed to date. Having you here makes it awkward." I straightforwardly shooed my brother away and got up to make coffee. I glanced at the wall clock; it was five minutes to seven. But my brother grabbed the back of my shirt like a little kid, begging his mom not to leave him with a scary teacher.

"Help me."

"And how can I help you?"

"Do whatever it takes. I'm begging you."

Then, the unexpected happened. My executive brother dropped to one knee, raised one leg, and held my hand as if proposing. I widened my eyes in shock, like being kissed by a ghost when he kissed my hand with his disgusting lips, just as Or walked in, catching the perfect moment.

"Sorry to interrupt."

"What the heck!!!"

I almost screamed as Or turned and half-ran out of the shop. I shook off my brother's hand in a panic and snarled at him.

"Why don't you just give me a ring while you're at it?"

"Do you want one? I didn't bring one."

"You idiot."

I ran after Or and found her about to hail a taxi. I grabbed her wrist just in time. Her face was red from the heat, her eyes still dark from lack of sleep, but nothing compared to the anger on her face.

"You have to listen to me."

"I don't want to."

"Don't make this longer than it needs to be. As a doctor, you need to be reasonable. If this were a novel and you didn't listen, you'd get in the taxi, and I'd have to chase you to your house, meet your mom, get to know her, and then go to your room to make up with you, and we'd end up together."

"This sounds like a plot from a novel."

"Doesn't it?"

"It sounds reasonable. So explain. What was that? A proposal?"

"Can't we skip to the part where we end up together? It's more fun."

"Don't take it as a joke!"

"It wasn't what you think. That was my brother."

"What kind of brother kneels to propose to his sister?"

"A crazy one. He's used to welcoming important guests from abroad at the company, and he does it with physical gestures." I scratched my head. Maybe explaining would make it longer. There were many things she didn't know about me.

"Is your brother the prime minister or something?"

"If I tell you, will you be mad?"

"Why would I be mad?"

*For not telling you I'm rich. I liked to act normal and not show off my wealth. Was this a serious offense? In Thai and international series, this was a big deal. Would it be the same in real life for her? It's time to find out.* "I'm wealthy."

"..."

"I never told you that I'm the heir to the fifth richest family in the country, the youngest daughter most loved by my father. And the one kneeling was my eldest brother, Pae."

"Do you think I'm stupid?"

She looked even angrier. I quickly waved my hands.

"No, I never thought you were stupid. I had no intention of lying or deceiving you. I just like to be casual."

"I've known all along that you're rich."

"Oh, then why are you mad?"

"Because you thought I was too stupid to know. Just your last name gave it away. I'm a doctor who studies hard and is capable of using the Internet. Just Google it, and I know who you are."

"Oh, I'm famous, too, huh? If you Googled me, you'd see Pae, too. So why are you mad?"

"Mad that siblings are proposing to each other."

"What proposal? Pae was asking me to help him hit on Dr. Jane."

"Huh?"

"The one sending flowers to Dr. Jane every day is him."

So, I cut out the nonsense that would drag the story. Now Or, I, and Pae sat facing each other. Pae looked disheveled, more exhausted than Dr. Or, who'd been up all night. He never knew the person he was courting was allergic to pollen, and the flowers were given to Or every day, who ordered the nurses to throw them away. He wasted countless money, but it wasn't as bad as the embarrassment my brother faced. He loved her, but she didn't love him back

"Your career is great, you look decent, your taste is impeccable, but you're hopeless with women. You know everything about Or, manage our father's company, but you didn't know Dr. Jane was allergic to pollen. How can you come to this?"

"Love makes people blind," Or said sympathetically after hearing everything. "Besides, you didn't get much chance to talk to Jane, did you?"

"No, I barely had any chance."

"You wouldn't have. Jane doesn't like people with tartar."

*How many times do I have to hear about tartar?* Pae covered his mouth, suddenly unsure.

"But I get my teeth cleaned every six months."

"Make it every three months. And that gold tooth inside- Jane doesn't like it. She says it's unnatural. She has had many boyfriends but never kissed anyone because she's disgusted. She doesn't even share utensils at the table." Or she spoke as if she knew her friend well. I looked at my dream girl in awe and started worrying about my own tartar.

"What should I do then?"

"To get close to her, you need to do it like going to a dentist. Get your teeth cleaned, remove wisdom teeth, consult about cavities, let her teach you how to brush, and importantly... um..."

"What?"

Or hesitated, unsure if she should speak until I nudged her to bring her back to her senses.

"Just say it. We're this far already."

"She loves money."

"..."

"If you want to give her flowers, make them out of money. She'll definitely get them. And when you open your mouth for a tooth extraction, hum 'Material Girl. You'll have plenty to talk about with Jane."

Pae left with his fancy car worth nearly eighteen million, the same one James Bond drove. I stood at the shop entrance until his taillights disappeared, then returned to the shop and sat where Or was. She sipped the coffee I promised to make, but I took it away and poured it out. The sweetfaced girl frowned slightly, displeased because she hadn't had enough.

"Why did you throw my coffee away?"

"Why drink to stay awake? You need to sleep."

"Give my coffee back."

She stomped her foot under the table like a three-year- old. She was acting without any pretense, and I shook my head, not caring about her behavior.

"You need to sleep."

"I already slept."

"Two hours isn't sleep. What kind of job sleeps that little?"

"Doctors don't sleep much. It's a waste of time."

"Sleeping is part of work. Go home and sleep."

"No, it's far."

"I'll take you."

"You don't even have an Aston Martin."

"No problem, I have a Toyota."

"When did you get a car?"

"I have Uber."

"No, it's cheap."

"When did you become Dr. Jane?"

"Since I knew how rich you are."

I smiled to myself when I saw that she was starting to banter with me. Since she didn't want to go home and it was probably really far, I offered her a new option by suggesting she sleep on the third floor, which was my bedroom.

"Then go sleep upstairs. It's quite comfortable up there. There's a good bedroom, a bathroom, air conditioning, and no one will bother you. When it's time, you can shower, get dressed, and go to work as usual."

She glanced at me with a mischievous look and smiled slightly.

"What are you thinking?"

"Nothing, just offering you a place to sleep."

"You want me to get used to this place, sleep here regularly, then gradually make me come over often until it becomes a habit, and then eventually sleep together, and then..."

"You're overthinking it," I laughed irritably. When I wasn't thinking anything, she came up with such a wild idea that I couldn't help but flick her forehead, making her yelp. "With a face like a ghost, who would be in the mood to do that with you? Come on, follow me."

I got up and dragged her upstairs to a floor I'd never taken anyone to, not even the staff who'd worked here for years as I valued my privacy. Or followed me closely, looking around. As we passed the second floor, she saw the practice room and the studio, looking impressed before we moved up to the third floor. This place was beautifully decorated because I'd used the interior designer from my dad's company, who decorated condos for sale. Or looked around, pouted slightly, and nodded in acknowledgment of what I was.

"You're really rich."

"I'm quite surprised that you're not mad that I'm rich like in the dramas."

"Why would I be mad that you're rich? I should be happy to see you doing well and having money. If someone comes to chase after us with nothing, we'd only worry if they're here to leech off us. Besides, not all doctors are rich. They still have to work to pay off their education loans, and I haven't finished paying mine off either. Jane is the same. She wants to pay off her debts so badly that she wants a rich boyfriend. Money is everything."

"And what about you? Is money everything?"

"Money isn't everything, but it's good to have it."

"Excellent, you're straightforward," I said, pinching her cheek affectionately before walking to the wardrobe. I pulled out a clean set of pajamas and a new Calvin Klein towel that I hadn't used and handed them to her. "Go take a shower. The toothbrush is behind the mirror cabinet, brand new."

"Why do you have so many toothbrushes? Are they for your conquests?"

"They're for friends who stay over."

"Am I your friend?"

"Not a friend, but not a girlfriend either. We're 'situationship."

"You come up with words, huh? Fine, no more talking. I'm sleepy. Yawn," she said, yawning widely. I playfully stuck my finger in her mouth, making her close it and bite my finger in annoyance, making me yelp. "Serves you right, putting a dirty hand in my mouth."

"Alright, no more teasing. Go shower and sleep. I'll check on you periodically. In the meantime, I'll go downstairs to write songs. I need to hurry up with work"

"Why the rush?"

"Surprise"

After letting Or rest, I went downstairs to the second floor to write songs quickly, calling Yak over to check the rough rap lyrics he'd written. The lyrics were coming together, but some parts still needed tweaking. I had him sing it, and it sounded good, but there were some parts that needed fixing, which he agreed with.

"I've been writing this as fast as I can. I think it's going to be a hit. A love song without the word 'love.' You're talented." said Yak.

"Of course, I take that."

"Be humble, maybe."

"We're going to launch this song at the hospital."

"Why there? I thought we'd debut it in the middle of Siam Square like other indie bands."

"The hospital is having a Christmas event. I promised the doctors we'd do it for free, no charge."

"Then what about our wage?"

"I'll pay for it. Don't forget how rich I am. If we really need a sponsor, I'll ask my dad."

"Not something to be proud of, you know."

"Can you eat your pride?"

"You're just trying to show off in front of your girlfriend, aren't you?"

"She's not my girlfriend yet, but if she becomes one, that'd be great," I winked before remembering that we actually had benefits and compensation for the band this time. "But we're not doing it for free. Our band will get free dental cleaning and health check-ups."

"I don't want a check-up."

"Don't you want to know if you have AIDS?"

"Hey!"

"Come on, think of it as making a merit. Launching the song for patients is a good cause. It's not like launching in the middle of Siam Square will have people flocking to listen to us. There are many bands there, mostly students. They might flock to other bands. But if we debut here, we'll be the only band. They'll flock to us. We'll be the only highlight. It's cool."

"Alright, you're the leader. It's your call."

"I'll tweak the lyrics a bit more, and it should be good. Alright, you can go now."

"What?"

"What do you mean, what?"

"I've been here less than ten minutes, and you're kicking me out? We haven't even chatted. Why the rush?"

"Why stay long?"

"Why can't I stay long? It's rare for a friend to visit you, you know?"

"Men and women shouldn't stay together long. Don't you remember what Or said?"

"Well, henpecked."

"Don't even know who's the hen or the cock."

"You guys still haven't done it?"

"No."

"Idiot"

"Hey."

"What are you waiting for?"

"Waiting for the right time. Go, just go. Why are you here talking dirty like this? You're a man, and I'm a smart and good- looking woman. We shouldn't talk like this. I was thinking of getting my teeth cleaned."

Since it'd be a while before Or woke up, I planned to use this time to clean my mouth to prepare for a kiss. She couldn't say my breath stank or my teeth weren't clean anymore.

"Fine, I'll go. Since you got a doctor girlfriend, you've become so hygienic. You used to shower once every three days."

"What the? I'm a person, not a dog. I shower every day."

After Yak left, I planned to get my teeth cleaned but decided to check on Or, who was sleeping, to see how she was doing. Sleeping was just sleeping, but I wanted to see what she looked like when she was out of energy. As expected, she was sleeping soundly, breathing evenly, her long eyelashes fluttering with the air from the AC. I sat down next to her on the bed, looking at her sleeping face with affection before playfully brushing her eyelashes. She squinted slightly in annoyance and swatted my hand away. I giggled and couldn't resist giving her a kiss on the forehead out of affection.

"You're so cute when you sleep. When you wake up, you're like a devil. Come here, let me cuddle you."

Since it wasn't easy to find such an opportunity, I kissed her left cheek, then her right, her nose, and then hesitated at her lips. It'd be too much to take advantage of her. Last time, I had to ask for her permission.

*If she woke up and found out I did this, she'd be furious. Better not. I should wait until she wakes up. After I get my teeth cleaned and remove all the tartar, with fresh breath, I'll show her and say, 'My teeth are clean now. Let's kiss.' That wouldn't be too late.*

Thinking that, I sighed, feeling regretful for being a good person, and got up to leave, but she grabbed my collar. The person pretending to sleep spoke without even opening her eyes.

"After doing all that, you're just going to leave?"

"Were you not sleeping?"

She opened her eyes, her light brown eyes staring at me unblinkingly.

"Kissing my left cheek and right cheek and rubbing my cheeks until they're bruised. Who wouldn't wake up?"

"Hehe."

"It's not symmetrical. If you kiss, you have to kiss everything. Why did you leave out the lips?"

"Well..." I scratched my cheek nervously. "I haven't gotten my teeth cleaned. I'm afraid you'll be disgusted."

"Now, you think I would be disgusted?"

"..."

She pushed my face away forcefully and turned to the other side in annoyance, pulling the blanket over herself and shouting in a muffled but still clear voice. "You're an idiot!"

*Welp...*

Chapter 9

"So, how is it stupid for me to keep things clean? I do it all for her." I was pushed down onto the bed. "Hearing that makes me feel unappreciated. You said you hated tartar, so I was careful about it. Dr. Jane, do you agree?"

"I do. Open your mouth, please. No more talking. Whatever you say, I agree with it. Open up."

I lay on Dr. Jane's dental chair, having specifically chosen her. Actually, I didn't have a choice; I had to wait in line for two hours for this. But knowing how meticulous she was about teeth, I endured the wait. She was also close enough to Or to understand what her friend needed, so I had her clean my teeth. Dr. Jane was gentle with me. As I complained, she listened and laughed, then started drilling my teeth, making me open my mouth, doing this and that, and I yelped in pain that pierced through my core.

"It might hurt a bit."

"Mmm."

"Don't make that noise. It's quite arousing."

"Ugh."

Her playful comment shut me up. Dr. Jane was a bit of a tease. She wasn't as stunning as Or but had a charming, playful allure. No wonder my brother was head over heels for her. I hadn't introduced myself yet, but it didn't matter. Right now, Or was more important. She was probably still sulking in my room. Hmph

"You're impressive, getting close to Or like that. Even her coworkers rarely talk to her. She's very reserved, but you managed to get close, kiss her cheeks, peck her forehead, peck her nose. It's good you didn't peck her lips, it would annoy her that it wasn't symmetrical. It's amusing."

"..."

"She's a perfectionist. Everything has to be complete, and she forgets how clean she keeps herself. Not kissing her lips makes her feel incomplete.

Once the tartar is cleaned," Dr. Jane whispered in my ear, "go back to Dr. Or and kiss her lips, then lick them."

I was wide-eyed, stunned by the word "lick," and accidentally spoke with the dental tool still in my mouth.

"Wat ah youh saing?"

"Don't talk yet."

The suction tool roared, and the nurse assisted in preventing me from choking on saliva. It remained a mystery. Dr. Jane seemed to know I was inexperienced and that her friend wasn't much better, being focused on her studies. She whispered to me while glancing at her assistant.

"You're married, right?"

"Yes"

"Then I can talk about this."

"Yes."

"Your first kiss was just lips touching, right? No head movement, just a blink as a signal."

Blink, blink.

I followed her instructions. She laughed and praised me like a child.

"Good job. Now, I'll teach you more."

"After cleaning the tartar and filling the cavities, your mouth will be fresh.

You can proudly say your teeth are the cleanest in the world."

"..."

"Then, use both hands to hold her face, kiss her left cheek, kiss her right cheek, kiss her forehead, kiss her nose, kiss her chin, then kiss her lips. Lightly lick her lips to build the mood." Blink, blink.

"Then slip your tongue into her mouth."

"..."

"Slightly tilt your head, gently explore her mouth with your tongue. Don't lick her teeth or inner throat, we'll just give her a friendly greeting. No more than a minute. Then pull back, letting the saliva stretch a bit for a soft smacking sound."

Blink, blink.

"Lesson over. Wink at her a bit. That's enough. Next time, if you want to know more, ask me again, or let your instincts guide you if it goes further."

My heart pounded like I was having phone sex. She continued her work, drilling, suctioning, cleaning, and filling with some bleeding. After about forty-five minutes, she waved goodbye, encouraging me before I left.

"Good luck."

Of course, I thanked her by calling my brother, asking him to send a bouquet made of folded five-hundred-baht bills with a card saying, "To my beloved," as a token of appreciation. She was a great dentist and advisor.

I returned to my coffee shop with newfound confidence. I avoided food or coffee, drinking only water to keep my mouth and teeth in perfect condition. I didn't talk to anyone, heading straight to the third floor. Opening the door, I found the young doctor awake and ready to leave. I was puzzled since she'd only slept for a few hours.

"Where are you rushing off to? You've only slept for three hours."

"That's enough sleep. Besides, the host isn't here. I feel awkward."

"Do you have a shift?"

"No, I'm going home to sleep."

"You have a home?"

"Do you think I'm homeless?"

"No, not at all." I waved my hands frantically. "But you rarely mention home. Let's stop talking about home. Today, I'm ready."

"Ready for what?"

"Ready to..." I stepped closer, giving her a mischievous look. "seduce you."

"What nonsense. I don't have time for your games. Move. I'm annoyed."

But I blocked her way and did exactly what Dr. Jane taught me. Before that, I pursed my lips and blew a breath in her face.

"What are you doing... Hey, why does your breath smell nice?"

"I had my tartar cleaned, all set for this."

"For what?"

"May I?"

I held her face with both hands and pecked her forehead. The gorgeous woman looked bewildered and stepped back, wary.

"What is this?"

"You can't run away."

I moved in again, this time kissing her left cheek and nuzzling it because it was too soft. She initially resisted but then giggled because it tickled. I switched to her right cheek, nuzzling it to make it symmetrical.

"What are you doing, Poy?"

"Not done yet."

I pecked her nose. She touched her nose. Then I moved to her chin before focusing on her lips. The sweet-faced woman realized and quickly covered her mouth, shaking her head.

"No way."

"You can't escape this. It has to be symmetrical, or you won't sleep well. Today, I had my tartar cleaned, teeth drilled, cavities filled, brushed thoroughly, all clean. Dr. Jane taught me special techniques."

"What techniques?"

"Like this."

I wrapped my arm around her waist, pulled her hand away from her mouth, and pressed my lips on hers. Our lips touched. She kept her mouth closed, not letting me in. But I pried her lips open and slipped my tongue in. Her eyes widened. Initially, she resisted, not expecting this. But as I tilted my head, gently exploring her mouth with my tongue, she started to relax, wrapping her arms around my neck and letting me lead.

But the kiss shouldn't last too long for the first time. We should know its limits, so I pulled back, making a gentle sound as we parted. Her eyes were half-closed, still dazed, leaning in as if it wasn't enough. I rested my forehead against hers, smiling with closed eyes, and laughed.

"That's enough for today."

"Why?"

"Because there will be other days. Now it's symmetrical."

"Uh-huh."

"I'm not stupid anymore, right?"

"What did Dr. Jane teach you? You came back so skilled."

"She taught me that you're a perfectionist, needing everything complete, or you'll be annoyed. This morning, I must've made you mad by not kissing you on the lips. Sorry. I started but didn't see it to the end. I wasn't confident about my breath, and I was worried about tartar."

"You did the right thing."

"No, I shouldn't have started. But now, I can. Now you can sleep well."

"How can I sleep after waking up?"

"Then let's have coffee. Today, I'll make it for you myself. After that, I'll take you home." "No."

"Why not?"

"I don't want you to meet my parents yet."

"Why? Won't they like me?"

"It's not that. There's something I don't want you to see yet. Let me be more sure... and be more certain. Besides... we're not anything yet."

"After kissing like that?"

"Well, it was just a kiss."

"Hmph."

"Let's have coffee."

She changed the subject and walked to the door, but suddenly, her knees buckled, and she collapsed. I, following behind, was startled but then laughed, helping her up when I saw her weak knees.

"Wow, you're that weak? Just a kiss drained your energy this much, huh? What if we did more? Would you faint?"

"You couldn't handle it. You're so clueless."

"Everything can be learned. I can kiss now, you see?"

"It's not that easy."

"It's not that hard either. Boo."

"Boo."

We went downstairs to have coffee, and as promised, I made her a cappuccino myself and served it while watching her lips. Her thin lips and that taste, I'd never forget. She, knowing full well that I was staring, refused to meet my eyes, looking left and right until she finally sighed heavily in frustration and put the cup down in annoyance. "Stop staring already. What's the big deal?"

"I'm just smitten with you. What can I do?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know."

"Then let me keep looking at you."

"You're staring so hard you might as well see through me. Have some mercy, I don't know how to act."

"Am I a good kisser?"

She almost choked on her coffee when I asked directly, then looked into my eyes for the first time after avoiding them for so long.

"You... *sigh,* being your girlfriend isn't easy."

"You admit it."

"What?"

"You admit you're my girlfriend."

"..."

"Wow, ding ding! Didn't you say we weren't anything yet? Now I can go meet your parents." I waved my hands in a cheerful dance. Today, I got both a kiss and a new status. *Is teeth cleaning always this rewarding? Pae needs to hurry up.* "Well, hitting on you was tough. I had to endure your sharp tongue, your cold stares, waking up early to wait at the hospital, and many more."

"And you'll have to keep enduring because you haven't won me over yet."

"True."

"That's why you can't meet my parents yet."

Thinking about this made me slump like an expired zucchini, but getting this far was already good enough. I smiled cheerfully again.

"Fine, if you don't want me to meet them, I won't. But now you've admitted I'm your lover... to some extent. So I can introduce you to the people I know."

"Do you have a lot of friends?"

"Not many, but everyone I know is important to me. I'll introduce you sometime."

"If I have free time, I'll go. But you know doctors don't have much free time."

"I understand that because I won't have much free time for you either," I said arrogantly. Dr. Or, who'd shown arrogance first, frowned, wondering who could be busier than her in this world.

"What are you busy with?"

"I promised your doctor friends that I'd perform at the hospital's Christmas event for free. Starting tomorrow, I'll gather the band to practice. I'll also schedule them for health and dental check-ups with Dr. Jane," I said, winking. "If I don't get paid, I'll get something else in return, Easy peasy."

"You never tell me anything."

"I'm telling you now."

"Telling me after you've already agreed? That's telling?"

"You were doing rounds, checking patients. I wanted to do something for my girlfriend and fit in with your friends. Come on, I'm being useful here, and I'm making you look good, too."

"I didn't ask for that."

"So we might only see each other at the coffee shop. I might not wait outside your office like before, but I'll find time to visit, okay, honey?"

"Who wants to see you? If you don't want to come, don't."

"Don't be sulky. I'll make it up to you."

"Humph, not forgiving."

"Sweetheart."

"..."

"Please forgive me."

"Fine, I'm reasonable."

"See you tomorrow at seven in the morning."

I walked out of the shop, ready to hail a taxi for her because she didn't have a shift at the hospital that day. But as I was about to call a cab, a man in a black suit, whom I recognized as one of my father's or brother's men, Intercepted us. He stood with his hands clasped, blocking our way, and gestured towards a van.

"Miss, please come with us."

"What is this?" Or looked at me. "Miss?"

She seemed more surprised by the term they used for me, probably having only heard it in movies. But did that matter? I tried to ignore Or's curiosity and turned to the man in black with a serious face.

"What is this about?"

"We haven't even come up with a name yet, ma'am."

"You're annoying."

"Please come with us."

"What if I don't?"

"We'll have to do you hard."

"Are you crazy? I've kept my virginity this long."

"Sorry, that was the wrong word. We'll have to do that hard way."

No matter what, they had to follow orders, and this wasn't from my brother.

I glanced at Or and explained.

"Do you need to go home urgently?"

"I do, but if necessary, I'll go with you first."

"Then come with me. My dad must have something to discuss... probably about us."

"Not meeting my parents first, but yours... we can't avoid it, huh? Let's go."

Or understood easily and got into the new black van without fuss. I sighed in frustration and followed, crossing my arms in a full-on princess pose. This needed answers.

*What was Dad planning? Why didn't he call or give a heads-up? Was he trying to separate us like in a drama? I won't let that happen. We just kissed and became a couple. No one can separate us.*

*It won't be that easy.*

Chapter 10

My dad's flaunting of his wealth was over the top. Instead of taking Or to a grand mansion that would leave her jaw- dropping, he brought us to an omakase restaurant where I'd previously taken her. It made me avoid her gaze a bit when she later found out that my dad owned the place. She looked at me with a vengeful glare, but it was better than a cold stare, which meant she wasn't too angry. However, I was sure there would be some scolding later. But that could wait. Dad had called us to meet here, sitting at the head of the table, waiting for us so the chef could prepare the first dish for us to eat.

"You're here. I've been waiting. My men work quickly, just as I like."

"Did you plan this, bringing us to this restaurant?"

"Of course. I wanted you to eat something good. I remember you came here and then ran off."

This was exactly why my dad chose this restaurant, to make Or and I argue later, which worked. Or would definitely argue with me. I could only give her a dry smile like a fish out of water and pulled out a chair for her to sit in, trying to be attentive. The chef prepared the first dish and explained the origin of the fish, but I didn't hear any of it. The first bite was so tender. Dad chewed with relish and then asked about our journey here out of courtesy.

"How was it? Was the air conditioning working well in the new car I sent to pick you up? Are the seats comfortable?"

"Dad, get to the point. Why did you have us picked up?"

"You're so impatient. It's just the first bite."

"I'm feeling uneasy. Suddenly, being kidnapped and brought to a place where we had an incident before." I used the hand towel to wipe the sweat off my face, feeling hot and cold. "Just say it. I'm ready."

"Alright. I wanted to see your girlfriend, the one who inspired you to make music... I heard she's a dog."

"A doctor."

I quickly corrected him. Dad laughed heartily, his playful laugh lightening the atmosphere. Or managed to handle it and smiled a bit, her initial tension starting to ease.

"She's beautiful too. I heard it's hard for doctors to find partners. Is that true?"

"Well... it's true," Or answered briefly but to the point. "We don't have much time to look around. If no one approaches us, we usually end up with other doctors since we bump into them frequently."

"So, how did you bump into this little one?"

"We met at a coffee shop by chance."

"No wonder you never close that coffee shop. I saw the financial statements, and it's running at a loss, but you keep it open."

"I didn't intend to open a coffee shop. What I aimed to do was the music studio upstairs." I defended myself. "And the business is doing well. People come to rent the studio to record songs regularly."

"Just a little pocket money. It's not worth it."

"At least I don't have to ask you for money."

"But your mom secretly gives you a monthly allowance. It's still my money anyway."

I glanced at my mom and mouthed words silently. Mom avoided Dad's gaze and looked at me, mouthing words back, but neither of us could read each other's lips.

"Hey, stop making music. Help me manage the business. If you want to have a girlfriend, go ahead. I won't stop you. I'm not narrow-minded. Whoever you love, I love the person, too. I'm very open-minded."

Then, the second dish was served. The chef continued to describe the shrimp that had been prepared with a cold mist spreading around. We all ate without really tasting it, except for Dad. I chewed in a bad mood and swallowed before firmly refusing.

"No. I'm happy now, doing what I love. My workplace is close to my lover's. I can eat and sleep whenever I want. Working with you would mean stressing over accounting and too much responsibility. Leave it to Pae. He graduated in business management and is more capable. What can I do?"

"I'm about to expand the business line into fitness equipment. Pae is already swamped with work, so I think it's time for you to help out. You've been playing around too much."

"My work is not just playing around. Every job I do is with dedication. What do you know?"

"You haven't succeeded in anything. None of your songs are hits. I checked the songs you uploaded online, and they don't even have two thousand listens."

"A good song doesn't need views. It just needs to be catchy."

"Engagement metrics measure everything."

"What do I have to do for you to let me go?"

"Finally, we're getting to the climax."

The chef served the third dish, uni, and described its qualities. Dad got annoyed with the explanations and snapped at the chef to stop interrupting and just serve the food.

"We're discussing something important. Just serve the food. It's just sea urchin gonads, isn't it?"

"Y-yes, sir."

"Yeah, you babbling too much, Dad clicked his tongue and turned his attention back to me. "I have a deal for you."

"We finally get to the point. What do you want me to do?"

"The song you're working on is almost finished, right? The one inspired by this Or here."

"Yes, and it will be good."

"If you're that confident, let's make a bet."

"..."

"If this song gets over three thousand views and around a thousand comments, I'll let you continue making music."

"Easy."

"But if you can't, you have to close the coffee shop, disband the band, and come work with me. Break up with Dr. Or and date someone your mom and I choose."

"Hey," I immediately protested. I could accept any condition, but breaking up with Or was not something I could agree to. "I can accept anything, but breaking up with Or isn't acceptable."

"I just thought of that condition. If we're going to bet, it has to be serious. You need to be motivated, right? Why? Do you think you can't do it? Or are you not confident in yourself?" "I won't break up with her."

"Then make the song good."

"I make every song good, and I won't break up."

"You don't have a choice."

"I'll run away from home."

"I'll find you. Besides, if you run away, you won't have any money. Are you going to live off Dr. Or forever?"

"I can manage. I have some savings. Since becoming a doctor, I haven't spent a dime," Or said nonchalantly, but my pride was at stake. It made me stand up straight and look at her, determined.

"No, I won't live off her. The song I make will be good. Don't worry about that."

"But..."

"I won't break up with her. Remember that. Let's go."

I pulled her up and stared at Dad, feeling hurt by the deal he proposed, which I absolutely couldn't accept.

"Dad, you hurt my feelings a lot today, and I'll never forgive you. We're enemies now. Remember that."

"We'll love each other again soon enough."

"I don't love you anymore."

I walked away in a huff. Dad's men moved to block me, but he signaled them to let me go. They reluctantly let me leave. Now, Or and I walked out of the restaurant alone. I walked with my hands in my pockets, head down, feeling stressed. I didn't know what to do with the deal dad proposed. I thought my song was good, but I didn't know if it'd appeal to the majority. Many people made good songs but failed to reach listeners. This was a new challenge I had to solve and succeed in.

"You can do it."

Or's voice came encouragingly. I looked up at her after being silent for a while.

"Huh?"

"You're talented. When you intend to do something, you do it well. You even managed to win me over. Do you think I'm easy?"

"It's not the same."

"It's the same. I'm like a song. You can't just approach me too easily. A song is the same. You have to get into it, understand its strengths and weaknesses, and know what will appeal to most people."

"Uh-huh."

"Do you think the song you're making will make me like it?"

"I think so."

"Is it enough if you to like it?"

"Yes."

"Then that's enough."

"How can it be enough? If I fail, I'll be forced to break up with you and be paired with someone my parents choose."

"If it's hard, let's just fucking run away together."

"Oh, you're being rude. But would you really run away with me?"

"If necessary."

"..."

I stayed silent, unsure. Or pulled me into a hug and gently patted my back, giving me encouragement.

"You can do it. I believe in you. From now on, focus on making the song. I'll be waiting to hear it."

"O-okay."

"If that song can make me like it, you'll get me as a reward."

After parting with Or, I returned to my place and called everyone in the band for a meeting at ten p.m. Some were already asleep, and some were grumpy about coming. But when I said this might be our last song, and we might not work together again because Dad would disband the band, everyone gathered like it was a solemn assembly. Now, everyone was brainstorming on how to make this song known, get people to listen, and quickly increase the views.

"The song isn't very flashy."

"It's a love song, not something like 'Material Girl,'" one of them argued against the lead singer's opinion, who was responsible for writing rap lyrics, and everyone agreed. As for me, I didn't voice any opinions; I was just thinking about how to make Or my wife.

"We might need some gimmick. The music needs to be more fun, something that everyone can enjoy, and make it go viral."

"Should we make a music video?" the drummer suggested. I shook my head because we didn't have enough budget.

"No way. Where would we get the money for a music video?"

"You're rich. Making a music video shouldn't be that hard."

"But that's my dad's money. If he finds out I used it to make a music video, it wouldn't be my own achievement. In the end, the band would still get disbanded because it could be used as an excuse that it wasn't from my own ability."

"So, what should we do?"

"Your brother," Joe, the lead singer, chimed in. I glanced at him, puzzled.

"What about him?"

"He's a businessman. Why not ask for his opinion? He might have some good ideas."

"Businessmen don't give anything for free," I said, rolling my eyes before thinking of Dr. Jane. "Hey, I think I have something to trade. There might be a way."

"What is it?"

"Let me talk to my brother first, and I'll update you. You're smart, Joe. Our band might finally make it this time."

The next day, I was sipping coffee with Or as usual. I greeted her with a bright smile and bid her farewell with kindness and a loving gaze, just like every day. After she left, I called a taxi and headed straight to my dad's company, a place I hadn't set foot in for about six or seven years because I never thought I'd need to. Living off the family business dividends was enough for me.

But today, I had a reason to be here.

After getting out of the taxi, I walked briskly into the large building where many employees were swiping their cards to enter. I had to exchange my ID for a visitor's pass. The receptionist asked what my business was, and when I said I was there to see the Vice President, she flatly refused.

"You need an appointment. Please give me your name and phone number, and we will contact you."

"Just call up and tell him his cupid is here. He'll come running down to get me himself," I said arrogantly. The cupid here could only be me, his sister.

Right now, my brother only had me as his emotional support. He needed me the most for matters of the heart, and I needed him the most for work.

"That's not possible."

"Can you at least check my last name before you refuse?"

She didn't even glance at it, which made me bare my teeth in frustration. I looked at her name tag and repeated her name over and over.

"Pratanpon... I'll remember this name forever. And if I lose the bet with my dad and have to come in and out of this company frequently, you won't be able to work at any of my dad's companies ever again. Remember that."

"If you don't leave, I'll call security."

*Why is this place so difficult? I just wanted to see the Vice President*. Soon enough, two security guards arrived, ready to escort me out. They grabbed my arms and started dragging me out of the building. Naturally, I made a scene like a market vendor, refusing to go quietly. Everyone in the company stopped to see what was happening. One of them seemed to recognize me and ordered the security guards to stop.

"Miss, what are you doing here?"

"Okay, someone recognizes me. I'm here to see Pae."

"Why didn't you call him directly?"

"Good point," I scratched my head, realizing my mistake. "I wanted to do things properly and make it look formal. Look, I even wore formal shoes today. But it's so hard to get in, especially with that female employee named..."

I turned sharply and pointed at the receptionist, glaring at her.

"Pratanpon!"

My brother's secretary sighed deeply before beckoning Pratanpon over and introducing me to her.

"From now on, if she comes in, she doesn't need to exchange her ID. If she can jump over the barrier, let her. This is the Chairman's daughter, Miss Poy, the Vice President's sister."

"I deeply apologize. I didn't know."

"I told you to check my last name first. You didn't even glance at it. Remember my name well and pray I win the bet with my dad. Because if I lose, you're getting fired."

"Please, Miss. Don't get upset over something so small."

"Where's Pae?"

"He's upstairs. I'll take you up in the special elevator."

Being the protagonist and wealthy had its perks. I received special treatment and had to fight for the life I wanted. When I reached the top floor, Pae was standing with his hands in his pockets, looking out at the distant sky like he was filming a drama. He turned around when he heard the elevator open and looked surprised to see me

"What brings you here?"

"A hurricane, I guess. It took a lot to get up here," I said, still fuming over the arrogant receptionist named Pratanpon. *How dare she act like the company president? Should I lose the bet with Dad? I'd make sure she never had any peace.*

"What's with the grudge-filled look? Have a seat."

"Can you stop playing music videos? Why does your face look different?" I noticed something had changed about my brother's face, and then my eyes widened. "Hey, did you get braces?"

Pae covered his mouth, blushing. I looked at him like I'd seen a ghost and asked quickly.

"Has Mom seen it?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She said it looked cute and asked who inspired me. She wants to meet her."

"And what did you say?"

"I said I wanted nice teeth."

"Of course. Mom's been trying to get you to get braces since high school, but you refused, saying you were afraid food would get stuck in them. This must be love. It makes you do anything," I smiled and sat on the sofa, crossing my legs. "No more teasing. I'm here to talk about something important. I'll be quick."

"What's it about?"

"Dad kidnapped me yesterday. He forced me to work with him."

"That's not surprising. Dad's wanted you to work with him for a long time."

"You know I've never wanted to work with Dad. I want financial freedom by living off your earnings and the family business dividends. I've never wanted to take your position as Vice President or anything."

"You can have it if you want."

"Come on, make it dramatic like a soap opera. Life needs some excitement."

"My life is already too exciting. I can barely eat. I've lost weight," Pae opened his mouth, showing colorful braces. "And I had four teeth pulled." "You really went all out."

"Jane said it was necessary. People with nice teeth are attractive to her."

"Got it."

"So, is that all? Just to complain about Dad kidnapping you? You could've called."

"It's not just that. Dad made a bet. If the next song I'm working on doesn't get three thousand views..."

"It'll get there."

"But the comments have to match."

"That's harder."

"If it doesn't, I have to close the label, quit the coffee shop business, and go on a date with someone Dad chooses. I have to break up with Or."

"Oh, that's the real issue. Dad's playing hardball. How can I help?"

At this point, I rubbed my hands together, having thought all night about how to persuade my brother to help me. The only thing that could make Pae help was Dr. Jane.

"I'll be your matchmaker with Dr. Jane."

"..."

"I'll help you win her heart, get married, have kids, the whole deal."

"I'm not even thinking about marriage yet."

"Start thinking. If Dad's trying to find me a husband, Mom will definitely try to find you a wife. Isn't it better to choose yourself?"

"But Dr. Jane isn't easy. Just getting an appointment with her takes weeks. When I finally see her, we just make eye contact, then she pulls my teeth, cleans them, puts on braces, I pay, and go home."

"Nothing's progressing, right? But if you have me and Or, who are close to Dr. Jane, things will move forward. We'll get you two to have dinner, go on dates, get to know each other, fall in love, and get in b..."

"Stop," my brother raised his hand to halt me. "That's inappropriate. Talking about getting in bed."

"Are you saying you never think about it?"

"I do, but I don't say it out loud. It's about respecting her."

"We're siblings. We talk openly. I even lick the clam in front of you."

"Those were literally clam with no hidden meaning."

"Well, are you interested in my offer?"

"It's interesting but not compelling enough. There's no guarantee that if I help you, it'll work. And I don't know how to help you get the views and comments to match."

"Don't worry about that. I've got it figured out."

"How?"

"I want you to be the lead singer."

"What?"

Chapter 11

My brother, who was very close to our mom, always kept her updated on everything. When Mom found out that I wanted Pae to be the lead singer for our new song, she rushed to my practice room, excited and curious. She wasn't angry or anything; she just wanted to know why I suddenly wanted her beloved son to be the lead singer, especially since I'd never really involved him in my work before.

"Geez, Mom, can't you just let it go? I just thought it'd be good for Pae to try something new."

"There must be a reason. Why else would you want him to sing? What's your plan?"

"I do have a plan, but I also think Pae is suitable for it. Don't you think it's cool for Pae to be a singer?"

"Of course, that's why I rushed over here," Mom said, beaming with pride. "It feels like he got half of my talent."

Mom loved singing. She'd often sing karaoke at home when she had free time. So, when her precious son was going to be the lead singer, she couldn't help but be extremely excited.

"Well, he'll need an appropriate outfit to be the lead singer. Have you thought about what he should wear?"

"Just regular clothes. It's a charity performance at the hospital. A suit and a microphone will look cool enough."

"No way," Mom exclaimed loudly, startling me a bit.

"Why are you yelling?"

"I'm not yelling, just surprised. He needs a good outfit. I'll be his... what's it called? Personal stylist."

"Isn't that a bit too much, Mom?"

"No, it's not. What if he becomes famous?"

"Mom, He's an executive. If he wears something weird and becomes famous, his image will be ruined. Dad will be furious with me."

"Your dad won't dare do anything if I'm the one in charge. Let me hear the song so I can design the right clothes for him."

"Pae is rapping. It's more like a normal speaking."

"Wow, that's cool. He needs to dress hip then."

"Not that much."

"Just give me Pae's part. I don't need to hear the whole song. I know you're good at writing songs, but I want to hear Pae's part."

I pouted a bit, feeling a little hurt. Mom loved her son more than anyone. She didn't even want to listen to my part of the song. But it was fine because the song wasn't finished yet. and I didn't want any trouble. So, I cut out the demo part that Yak had sung and played it for her. It was a fast rap part. Mom listened for a bit, closed her eyes to savor the feelings, and then snapped her fingers as if she had an idea.

"It's a good song, but it sounds a bit too infatuated. Okay, I'll go shopping today and take Pae to try on clothes. I won't bother you anymore."

"Good, because I'll be busy all day."

"Humph, you don't need me at all."

"You never find clothes for me."

"You said you could wear anything."

"You don't love me."

"But I just transferred a hundred thousand baht to your account."

"Mom, you're the best."

"Okay, I'm off. La la la."

Mom left happily, probably dreaming about how to dress my brother for his first rap performance. As I was about to continue working on the song, my phone rang. At first, I was a bit annoyed because I felt interrupted again, but when I saw it was Or, my annoyance turned into happiness because I always missed her.

*Ah... so this is love, huh?*

Or: You've been quiet. Are you very busy?

Poy: I'm arranging the song, editing the sound, and all that. Mom just came by and interrupted a bit.

Or: So, I'm interrupting now too?

Poy: It's different. Don't forget you're my inspiration.

Or: Why did your mom come by?

Poy: She heard that I wanted Pae to be the lead singer.

Or: Oh, your brother? Did he agree?

Poy: He seems to agree because I made him an offer he couldn't refuse.

Or: What offer?

Poy: I told him I'd play matchmaker for him and Dr. Jane.

Or: You're making it harder. Dr. Jane is harder to woo than me

Poy: There's nothing in this world I can't do if I try hard enough. Besides, I have you. If you help, Dr. Jane will see the good in Pae.

Or: What makes you trust me so much?

Poy: Because you wouldn't be with a bad person. The people you choose to be with must be good. Dr. Jane will believe that. So, anyone you recommend must be good, and my brother is good. Dr. Jane will like him. Trust me.

While I was replying to the message, an employee from the coffee shop knocked on the door, afraid of interrupting my work. I gestured for her to come in. She reported that a rider had delivered flowers for me.

"Flowers? For me? Are you sure they weren't sent to the wrong person?"

"No mistake. They said it's for you. It's a huge bouquet."

I went downstairs to see for myself. There was a large bouquet of white lilies as if the sender knew I liked this type of flower. I swallowed hard and picked up the card. It was a short message from a stranger, a man.

'Nice to meet you, Poy... from Kla'

Wow, he had the guts to send this, worthy of his name. No doubt, this was part of Dad's plan. I took a picture of the flowers and sent it to Or. She was initially confused but then replied briefly.

Or: They're beautiful. I actually like lilies.

Poy: Do you want them? I'll have a messenger send them to you.

Or: Didn't you just save the picture from the internet?

Poy: Someone sent them to me.

Or: Who?

Poy: He signed it as Kla.

Poy: My dad is making his move.

Because of Dad's actions, I felt even more motivated to continue working on the song. I edited and added drums, melodies, violin, guitar, and electronic tones until the song became a bit chaotic. While I was on the verge of losing it, the studio door burst open without a knock, making me even more irritated. But when I saw it was Or, looking furious, I quickly calmed down and smiled at her, happy that she'd come to see me.

"How did you get here? Aren't you working?"

"I snuck out for five minutes. I only have five minutes."

"Did something happen?"

"I'm jealous."

"What?"

"Jealous."

"Oh, what should I do?"

"Do this."

She climbed onto my lap, sitting on the chair, and kissed me hard. I held her to keep her from falling, confused but willing. Then she bit my lower lip, making me yelp as a bit of blood oozed out, making me a little angry..

"Why did you bite me?"

"Jealous."

"I know you're jealous, but did you have to do that? I didn't ask for the flowers."

"They're too beautiful. I can't afford to send you expensive flowers like that."

"They're just flowers."

"They're beautiful."

"You're more beautiful than flowers."

"I only have lotuses."

"Where are the lotuses?" I looked around for lotuses but didn't see any. Then she pulled my hand to her chest. I was shocked, my hand resting there unexpectedly. "What is this?"

"These are the lotuses. Remember, there's no flower more beautiful than this."

"I'll remember it in my mind and... hands."

"Okay, I won't bother you anymore. Time's up. I have to get back to work. Make the song as beautiful as you can. Don't let your dad win. As for Jane, let's meet your brother tonight. We'll have dinner together."

"That soon?"

"We have to hurry. Oh, don't bring the flowers. Or if you do, make them out of money folded into roses. That would work. Today, we'll be matchmakers. We'll let them get to know each other deeply. And if that's not fast enough..."

"..."

"We'll visit your family."

It was actually really fast. I thought we might meet a few days later, but no, it was that evening. When Pae found out he was meeting Dr. Jane that evening, he threw a fit because he hadn't finished his work. Mom had taken him to try on clothes for half a day for just one song. He came back to finish his work only to find out he had a date. He kept grumbling, making me roll my eyes a bit.

"So, you're not going, right? I'll cancel"

"I'm going."

"Then why are you complaining?"

"It's frustrating! I barely had any time for myself today. I was Mom's puppet all day. Trying on vests, long sleeves, short sleeves, hats, sunglasses, shorts, all for one song."

"Then why did you tell Mom you were singing?"

"I wanted to show off and make her proud. Who knew it'd turn out like this?"

"Serves you right."

"And who planned tonight? Was it you? You never planned anything, so why does it have to be tonight? How am I supposed to prepare? The meeting is at seven, and I'll leave the office at six. There's traffic and all that." My brother kept complaining without repeating a single word, which impressed even a Thai language teacher. I listened to him grumble for a bit before interrupting.

"Alright, just wear the outfit you wore to work today. Bring a bouquet made of ten thousand-baht bills. Not too many, or they'll think we're showing off."

"Will ten be enough? Won't they think we're stingy?"

"No, ten is just right. They'll see that we're not too stingy and know how to spend money wisely. After that, Or and I will help set things up. Then it's all up to your charm and skills. We can only set up the meeting; the rest is all on you."

"Okay, I'll try. I've spent my whole life studying and never had the chance to flirt with anyone."

"Perfect, because she's the same way. She's always been focused on her studies and never liked anyone. Just make her like you."

Today, everything started quickly. The meeting for the band was postponed, and Or swapped shifts with a friend to meet with Dr. Jane. Pae, after rushing through his work, drove his Aston Martin to pick me up at the shop. He was still in his black suit with a tight tie that made me think he'd suffocate in ten minutes. I couldn't stand it, so I walked over, loosened his tie, tossed it in the car, and unbuttoned the top button to reveal a bit of his chest.

"Hey, that's too revealing."

"Revealing? You're not a soldier. Make it look casual. You don't need the jacket; it's hot as hell in Thailand. It's overkill."

"But I'm not used to it."

"Are you trying to flirt or attend a government meeting?"

He immediately removed the jacket. I couldn't stand the long sleeves, so I asked him to roll them up to his elbows and snapped my fingers in satisfaction.

"Women like seeing veins on a man's wrists and arms. It makes their hearts race, you know?"

"How is that sexy?"

"It's like how women can't figure out why men find thighs attractive. Just go straight to boobs, why thighs, and about men, just go straight to d..."

"Okay, enough. Get in the car."

"What? I wasn't finished. That was the climax!" I grumbled but got in the car. In less than 15 minutes, with a bit of traffic, we arrived at the skyscraper. The restaurant was on the rooftop, a French fusion place that required reservations, which I'd already handled. Or and I had planned everything through LINE chat. My brother and I arrived first. I didn't forget to ask about the bouquet of money.

"Did you bring it? That's the first impression, you know."

"Yes, it's in the car."

Pae opened the trunk and grabbed the elegant money bouquet. I admired my brother's taste, and we took the elevator to the top floor where the restaurant was. Ideally, we'd have booked the whole place, but it was too last-minute. The restaurant had other reservations, and we didn't know when Dr. Jane and Or would be free again, so we had to share the space.

*It's like being on a plane. We can share the space with other passengers. It's just dinner.*

I rehearsed about Dr. Jane with my brother. She liked money but wasn't stingy, so to approach her, he had to be generous. We had to pay for the first meal, which wasn't a problem. Dr. Jane enjoyed her food, so my brother had to avoid being annoying, or he'd be cut off immediately. She was raised that way. Other than that, there was nothing to worry about. We talked until our esteemed guests arrived, with Or greeting them.

"You're early. Jane, this is Poy, my girlfriend." Or greeted me a bit awkwardly, probably the first time she introduced me as her girlfriend to anyone. I felt small being introduced as her girlfriend in front of Dr. Jane. "And this is Pae, Poy's brother, whom I've mentioned to Jane."

"The one who likes me?"

**Boom!**

It felt like hearing war drums. Dr. Jane was straightforward. My brother smiled slightly and handed over the bouquet of money. Dr. Jane initially looked disgusted but smiled when she saw the money, probably thinking it was flowers she was allergic to.

"How did you know I'm allergic to pollen?"

"I had to do some research. My brother smiled, showing his perfect teeth. Dr. Jane tilted her head slightly, then recognized him.

"You're the one who left the gold tooth extraction."

"Yes."

"It's not a coincidence or luck. It's all intentional, right?

With Or as the matchmaker and her girlfriend as your sister."

"Yes."

"Are we going to stand here all night? Sit down, it's tiring." I quickly changed the subject and pulled out a chair for Or. But Jane nudged me to sit next to my brother while she sat next to Or, determined to sit across from Pae to talk. Dr. Jane was more straightforward than I thought. She was fun, articulate, and direct. If she liked something, she'd say it. If she hated something, she'd say it. Today was the day to see if my brother would be liked or hated.

"Have you met me before?"

"Yes, I saw you once. I took Bobby to the animal hospital. I saw you carrying a poisoned stray dog into the hospital, telling the senior doctor it was an emergency. My heart raced."

"The suspension bridge theory... have you heard of it?"

"Yes, when we're in an exciting situation, our heart races, and we mistake it for love. But I asked myself if it was love, and my heart said... yes."

"You like me just because I care for dogs?"

"You're very clean."

"I'm a dentist."

"You always smell nice."

"Because I chew mint candy almost all day."

At this point, Or and I covered our mouths to check our breath. Even though it didn't smell, we felt insecure. Meanwhile, my brother puffed out his chest.

"I chew Fisherman's Friend regularly."

"Excellent... one point for you." Jane clasped her hands and squinted as if catching a mistake. "But you failed to order food in advance, even though you should've guessed how hungry your guests would be."

Luckily, the food we ordered earlier arrived. Dr. Jane leaned back slightly, letting the waiter place the dishes on the table. There were about three or four dishes, not too many or too few, just as Or had informed me. Jane was a big eater but didn't like waste. Each dish was her favorite. As soon as the food was served, Jane started eating immediately. My brother watched with a smile, and his braces and rubber bands made him look like an eighteenyear-old with a face full of love.

*I felt like throwing up...*

My brother sat quietly, not initiating conversation while Dr. Jane ate. This was a strict rule he had to follow.

1. *Don't start a conversation during the first bite because Dr. Jane wassavoring the taste.*
2. *Don't serve her food because she doesn't like being forced to eatanything.*
3. *She didn't like sharing utensils.*
4. *Wait for her to start the conversation*

So, the conversation at the table was between me, Or, and Pae. Jane continued to eat, savoring the flavors like a famous Japanese food show, as if she were traveling through the world of food and the vibrant Edo period, swimming with fried sea bass and diving for mussels with villagers along the Andaman coast for this meal.

"I heard you're singing at a charity event this Christmas?"

When we talked about the Christmas event, Dr. Jane's Interest shifted immediately. Pae, finally getting a chance to talk to her, nodded and smiled shyly.

"Yes."

"Wow, even with braces and unclear speech?"

"I'll do my best."

"If you do well, I'll date you."

"..."

"No, marry you if you're willing."

My brother almost choked on his saliva, coughing violently. I was equally shocked and had to pat his back, pretending to laugh as if Dr. Jane was joking.

"Dr. Jane, don't joke like that. If he takes it seriously, he'll practice singing non-stop."

"Why joke? I like people who sing, especially the song..."

"Material Girl."

"Material Girl"

My brother, who'd done his homework, said it simultaneously with Dr. Jane, making them lock eyes. Dr. Jane put down her utensils and spoke without looking at us, as if the world only had her and Pae.

"You can leave now."

"Huh?" Or, sitting next to her friend, was stunned. "What?"

"Go on, both of you. We want our date to be just the two of us, and you're just sitting around like a third wheel. We need to get to know each other better. There's a lot to learn. I want to know this guy deeply, down to his core... You two need to have some manners. So, go."

Or felt a bit embarrassed being dismissed by her friend in front of everyone. I covered my mouth and chuckled softly, understanding Jane's straightforwardness. I nodded in agreement, walked around to Or, grabbed my bag, pulled out a chair, and invited her to come with me.

"Let's go."

"But..."

"Let them get to know each other. We can go on our own little date. Isn't that nice?"

"It's nice, but being kicked out like this hurts my feelings."

"Let's just give them this day."

Or walked along the sidewalk, leaving the building, clearly annoyed at being dismissed so unceremoniously by her friend. I could only walk beside her, linking my arm with hers, trying to cheer her up. I laughed at her demeanor because, to me, she was adorable in every way, even now.

"Are you really that upset with your friend?"

"Yes! I went through all the trouble to find someone perfect, supporting everything, and looking at what she does. Just kicks us out like we're nothing."

"They just want some time together. It's good. Besides, this is a great time for us to be alone together."

"We're alone together all the time."

"But we've never been alone in a setting like this. Usually, it's just coffee shops, hospitals, your bedroom, or the doctor's lounge. Now we have new scenes like a restaurant and a sidewalk. It's great, like a movie."

"It's hot and dark. Our country isn't that safe either." She continued to grumble, annoyed by the passing cars. "There's nothing to do around here. You can't even call this a date."

"Do you want to go on a date?"

"That would be nice."

"How about we go to a temple?"

"At this hour? Where?"

"Hua Lamphong temple. We can make merit by donating coffins, then have some late-night noodles."

"No way, that's fattening. But donating coffins sounds interesting."

"See? If you change your perspective, things get more interesting. Ah... this is really good. I get to flirt with you, love you, and help my brother find a way to approach Dr. Jane smoothly by singing, even though he has to wear braces. Just watch, Pae will come to the studio every day to sing. Someone who can't sing will have to try really hard. Hmmm."

I hummed a tune cheerfully. She started to smile a bit and stopped walking, which made me stop, too. I raised an eyebrow, curious.

"What is it?"

"Why haven't I heard your song yet?"

"Because it's not finished."

"It doesn't have to be perfect. I just want to hear it. Just knowing it's a song written for me makes me happy."

"But the person who wrote it wants it to be perfect... How about this? I'll sing a part for you in exchange for a kiss."

"No way."

"Suit yourself."

"Okay, fine."

"What? Changed your mind so quickly?"

"Hurry, I want to hear it."

I smiled, looked around to see if anyone was passing by, and then whispered softly in her ear, recalling the important part.

*Every day, I long to see that smile,*

*Stay with you, just a little while.*

*Locked in your magic, no way to break free,*

*You're unlike anyone, and you're unique to me.*

I pulled away from her. Or pulled me in for a kiss and whispered in my ear, making my heart race.

"Deal."

Chapter 12

It was the most ordinary date. Even coming to the temple this time, we chose to take the bus to extend our time together as much as possible. We enjoyed the vibe, looked at the scenery and people outside the window, felt the wind on our faces, and commented on what others might be thinking while waiting for the bus. We wondered where they were going, whether they would shower and sleep immediately upon getting home, or just collapse into bed from exhaustion.

When we arrived at the temple, we prayed and made wishes. Then, we walked to the charity foundation to write each other's names on a piece of paper to dedicate merit to our karmic enemies and stuck it on a coffin. As I stuck the pink paper with her name on it, Or looked surprised.

"Why is it my name?"

"So you can get double the merit"

"You must really like me, huh? I didn't expect that... What should I do? I already wrote my own name. I didn't think of you at all."

"I didn't do this for you to do that for me. I just want you to get a lot of merit."

"You really like me, don't you?"

"I love you," I said casually. The person in front of me nudged my waist lightly with her elbow and mumbled a bit.

"You're crazy."

"The more you do this, the more you'll like me. Trust me."

"This isn't enough, is it?"

"No, it's not. You have to like me forever."

"Oh, this is already too much. I'm going crazy."

"Oh, you said it yourself."

She bared her teeth in mock annoyance and quickly walked to the furnace to burn the paper. I followed her and did the same before calling a taxi to take us back. Of course, I asked to drop her off first, but Or refused.

"No, my house is too far. I'd rather stay at your place."

"Hmm?"

"It's close to the hospital. Don't get any funny ideas."

"I just had a tiny funny thought," I mumbled, not wanting to seem foolish. But in the end, I told the taxi to head to my apartment building. I had been quite puzzled several times by Or's refusal to let me visit her house, so I couldn't help but ask directly, "Why don't you want me to go to your house?"

"It's not that I don't want you to go. It's really far, in Bang Na."

"Distance isn't a problem. The taxi driver can take us there, right?"

"It's far, miss. I have to return the car, the taxi driver replied flatly. Or raised her eyebrows in triumph, and I pouted in frustration at the lazy Thai taxi drivers. So, people who live far away can't come to this temple at night?

"Fine, just this time. Next time, I'm going to your house."

"Okay, I'll take you."

"You promised."

"What makes you want to go so badly?"

"Because you never let me go there. It feels like you're always hesitating. Besides," I leaned in close to her ear, "you said you'd marry me."

She nudged my waist lightly again, embarrassed.

"You're really pushing it."

"I can't help it. I won't forget what you said."

"Alright, alright."

We arrived at my place about 20 minutes later. Honestly, I was quite exhausted from the trip. Today had taken a lot out of me. When we got there, we headed straight to the third floor. Or, who was usually very clean, was so tired that she climbed into bed and collapsed face down without even showering. Seeing her so exhausted, I didn't want to push her, so I tried to adjust her position for a more comfortable sleep. But she sat up and shook her head.

"No, I have to shower. I have to respect your bed."

"But you look really tired."

"I'm really. I haven't slept much, and I had to play a cupid who was abandoned by her friend. You must be really tired, too."

"Yeah. I'm sore all over."

"Then let's shower together."

"Okay."

"Come on."

"You go first."

"Shower together means together."

"Um... huh?"

From feeling drowsy, I suddenly opened my eyes wide in shock. The doctor innocently started unbuttoning her clothes in front of me. I looked away, not knowing what to do, until Or pulled my T-shirt over my head. I quickly grabbed her hand and screamed.

"What are you doing?"

"Taking off your shirt. Are you going to shower in that?"

"Are we really going to shower together?"

"Are you going to miss this chance?"

"..."

"The chance to see me naked."

She got up energetically and walked to the bathroom, shedding her clothes piece by piece-shirt, pants, underwear, and bra, all thrown out of the bathroom. I watched and counted down in my head: five, four, three, two, one. Then I jumped up, unbuttoned my shirt from the back, took off all my clothes, and followed her into the shower. Or raised an eyebrow, looking at my naked body without any reaction, while I felt a bit shy, covering my curves and sensitive areas. Or had to reassure me.

"Don't be shy. I'm a doctor. I've seen it all."

"But it's still embarrassing. I've never been naked in front of anyone."

"Aren't you going to marry me?"

"..."

"We'll be naked together anyway. Practice now. Come on, scrub my back. Let's shower quickly and go to bed. I'm exhausted."

When she gave the order, I stopped being shy and walked into the shower. The cold water made me almost scream. Or laughed at my reaction.

"You shower with cold water?"

"Yes, it's refreshing."

"I shower with warm water. Make it room temperature, at least a bit warm. Marriage is about compromise."

"Wow, you make me feel guilty. Alright, fine." She adjusted the water a bit and turned her back to me. "Scrub my back"

I complied. Her back was smooth, her skin soft. She wasn't as pale as the actresses in soap commercials, but she was fair. Her body was toned, with muscles from regular exercise and self-care, probably because she had to be active all the time as a doctor. Unlike me, who woke up, stretched, and went back to sleep with a flabby belly. Poor her, having a chubby girlfriend.

"I need to exercise. Seeing you makes me embarrassed. I'm so fat."

"Your body is just right for cuddling."

"Don't say that."

"Really, seeing you makes me want to cuddle and nibble."

"Then let's cuddle."

"We will."

"..."

"But not today."

"Why not? I was hoping that doing good deeds would bring some excitement."

I laughed, and Or pinched my waist lightly, baring her teeth.

"I'll listen to your song first, then we'll see if you're worth it."

After showering, Or used my towel to dry herself quickly and went straight to bed without putting on any clothes. Even though I handed her clean clothes, she grumbled and refused to wear them, covering herself with the blanket and saying she was sleepy.

"You should come to bed without clothes if you want to cuddle me."

"Why?"

"Clothes are scratchy."

"Is that okay?"

"If you don't want to cuddle, then wear them. It's up to you."

I hesitated for less than a second before walking naked to bed and cuddling her under the blanket. Despite feeling a bit shy, I thought it'd be better to feel her skin. Her skin was smooth and soft, making me feel a bit regretful for not wearing clothes. If I were a man, it would be torturous, with my erection poking her back, letting her know how I felt.

"Hey, aren't we going to do anything?"

"I'm sleepy."

"Just a little."

"No, it's annoying."

"Just a bit," I kissed her cheek, but she covered herself with the blanket, refusing to play along. Seeing that she was really tired from the whole day, I didn't want to force her. Soon, she turned to hug me, wrapping her leg around me, burying her face in my chest, and lightly biting my neck before whispering something I couldn't understand.

"What did you say?"

***Snore.***

"Wow, you fall asleep so easily. How am I supposed to sleep?"

That night, it took me over two hours to fall asleep. Maybe I was exhausted, too. The next thing I knew, it was morning...

I slowly opened my eyes as the sunlight from the window hit my face. Someone was playing with my eyelashes, pouting angrily. I looked at her, confused from just waking up, and asked, "Hmm?"

Idiot."

"First thing in the morning, and I'm getting insulted?"

"Letting a golden opportunity slip away. What an idiot."

"..."

"But you're cute. Here."

She stretched my cheek until my face was squished. I laughed as she poked my waist. We playfully wrestled naked for a bit before she looked at the clock by the bed, showing it was already six in the morning.

"I didn't go to the rounds today. I'm definitely getting scolded. And my girlfriend didn't even do anything last night."

"Hey, I tried, but you said you were sleepy."

"Strike while the iron is hot.? Idiot."

"Hey, what do you want from me? What should I do to make you happy?"

"Just keep doing what you're doing. Let's shower and get some coffee."

She jumped off the bed, still completely naked. I watched her tall, slender figure with affection, and sure enough, the beautiful woman peeked out from the bathroom and waved me over.

"Come scrub my back, darling." And of course, I couldn't refuse, being the idiot that I was.

Starting work with a mix of excitement and some frustration, I still felt like the word "idiot" was plastered on my forehead for everyone to see. Even if no one could read it, I knew deep down that I was useless. She'd gone out of her way to stay over at my place, invited me to shower, slept naked, and turned to hug me, yet I still couldn't muster the courage to do anything. Thinking about it made me feel even more frustrated. That mischievous doctor was quite the tease, probably testing to see if I had the guts to hurt her feelings or force myself on her.

*Playing with my pure heart like that-how cruel.*

*And my brother, what was up with him? He couldn't sing properly because his braces were in the way. This was already several takes in.*

"Hey, bro, you can't even get this rap part right, and you have to sing the whole song. Are you going to make it?"

I stopped the music and spoke directly into the mic. Pae, who'd sacrificed his precious work time to sing, was just as frustrated because he knew he wasn't doing well today.

"The rubber chains on my braces are making it hard to open my mouth. It hurts. What do you want me to do?"

"Try harder, bro."

"You think I'm not trying? Do you know what the prize is if I nail this song?"

"And what is it?"

"Hold on, I have a call... Hi, Jane." As soon as I heard who it was, I jumped out of the control room and into the recording booth, forcing my brother to put the call on speaker. He looked confused but complied, even though he didn't have to. That allowed me to hear Dr. Jane's cheerful voice, which was so different from Or's. Even though we were dating, I'd never heard Or sound like that.

"Hello, are you recording? How's it going?"

"It's going well, but the braces are a bit of a hurdle."

"You'll get used to it. Just give it some time."

"I'm thinking of taking singing lessons with Ariana Grande since the Ariana Venti schedule is full."

I glanced at my brother, who was making a lame joke, and made a face like I was going to throw up.

"You're trying so hard. What do you want, Daddy? If I have to give myself up, I deserve fortune, you know."

"Which fortune do you want? Fortune 500 or fortune teller?"

"See you at the Novotel tonight."

"Suite or sweet?"

"Hehe, take a guess, Daddy. I'm not bothering you anymore. Sing well; I'm looking forward to your performance. See you."

"See you at the Novotel."

"Hehe."

The call ended, and my brother blushed like someone who'd never flirted before. He seemed smarter than me when it came to this kind of banter, going back and forth like a ping- pong match. Meanwhile, I couldn't even touch a breast while lying naked. Damn it.

"You guys are moving fast, huh, Daddy?"

"Come on, let's sing. We have to get at least one part right today!" My brother was fired up. I pouted and stomped back to the control room. "Play the music."

"Make it count this time."

"Yeah."

While listening to my brother sing like a lost dog and adjusting the sound, my phone buzzed. This time, it was Or calling. I answered, grumpy and a bit snappy.

"If I have to give myself up, I deserve fortune."

"Unfortunately, no."

"Or, why don't you have the same flair as Dr. Jane? She's going to the Novotel, you know."

"I was there when she talked to your brother. Just calling to gossip. They're moving fast, huh... But what's with your tone? Why so snappy?"

"Frustrated. Didn't do you last night. I feel like an idiot."

"Well, you're really one."

"I'm hanging up now. Gotta record."

"Are you really mad? I was just joking. You're not an Idiot. You're just a good person who didn't force me against my will. And I was playing hard to get. Honestly, if you'd pushed a bit more, I'd have given in."

"I saw you were tired, so I didn't want to. And more importantly..."

"What?"

"I don't know how."

"You idiot."

"What?"

"Hehe... I was cursing you. Wanting to but not knowing how. So, if something had happened last night, I'd have had to take the lead, right? So I had to be on top, huh?"

"This stuff needs studying. I only knew how men do it with women. I never knew how women do it with each other. Have some sympathy."

"Well, when the time comes, the instinct will guide you. But it's okay. I don't want to be on top. When the time comes, I'll guide you."

"So, we're going to do it soon, right?"

"Let me listen to the song first."

"I'm feeling pumped. I'll go back to work now, okay?"

"I'm looking forward to the song. See you at the Novotel."

"Suite or sweet?"

"Take a guess. Hehe. If I have to give myself up, I better get something good."

She hung up. I chuckled a bit and looked at my brother, who was glaring at me because I hadn't paid attention to his singing at all.

"I finished the song. Did you listen to any of it?"

"Sing it again. Because even if you finished, I can tell you it sucked. Your pronunciation was unclear. Whether it's Ariana Grande or Ariana Venti, it won't sound good. Sing it again until it's right. We're staying here until 1

AM if we have to, until this part is perfect. Only 10 days until Christmas."

"Yeah, let's give it our all."

"Go for it."

Chapter 13

More than a week had passed, and there were only a few days left until Christmas. The song we recorded was about 70%25 complete. Pae's pronunciation improved as he got used to his braces, but we still had to tweak his voice in the program. We had a plan to lip-sync during the performance, which everyone agreed was a great idea. Throughout the recording sessions, we were always served with delicious gourmet food, courtesy of my mom, Dr. Or, Dr. Jane, or sometimes Pae himself. As a result, we were all a bit overfed. However, the unavoidable consequence was the deep, hollow eyes, especially mine, which made me look like a panda in a zoo.

"Your current state is almost unrecognizable."

Every morning at seven, I'd meet Or, who came to have her coffee, Just seeing her boosted my energy levels

"It's almost time for the show. Can you skip coffee today?"

As soon as I said that, she smiled sweetly and understandingly, got up, and led me to the back of the shop, locking the door to prevent any staff from barging in. Then, we kissed passionately. I drew as much energy from her as I could and hugged her tightly, seeking encouragement.

"I'm scared. What if the song doesn't tum out as hoped? Will you still love me?"

"Are you afraid I won't love you or that you won't get to sleep with me?"

"Both, but I'm more afraid you won't love me."

"It's beyond that now. Don't be so serious. Just do your best."

"That makes me feel better."

"Let's get out of here."

"Can I kiss you again?"

She smiled and kissed my cheek, which meant that was enough. Everything should be just right. Or knew what was enough, while I was the greedy type who always wanted more and never seemed to stop. Sometimes, we were a perfectly balanced couple.

As we left the back of the shop, a large bouquet of roses appeared at the front door. Or and I exchanged confused glances. As the shop owner, I walked over to ask for clarification. The moment I saw the delivery person, I was stunned by his model-like looks, as if he'd stepped out of a magazine. I was speechless for about two seconds until Or had to step forward, equally stunned.

"Hello, Poy."

"H-huh?" I pointed to myself. "You mean me? And you are...?"

"I'm Puth."

"Yes, Mr. Puth. How can I help you?"

"I'm here to court you."

This was going to be a long story. Or, who had to go to the hospital, was now sitting beside me, squeezing my thigh tightly. The flowers remained on the table, but the new character in front of us was more interesting.

"What do you mean by courting?"

Since we didn't know each other, he handed me his business card. After reading his name and position, I realized he was the CEO of a mid-sized fitness equipment company. My father's face floated into my mind, undoubtedly sending this man to me with a laugh in my imagination. "Uncle Seng said he had a daughter he wanted me to meet, so he sent me here to get to know you."

"You're quite gullible, aren't you? He told you to come, and you did," Or, who rarely interrupted, couldn't help but speak up sarcastically. The handsome man smiled like a businessman.

"The person who told me to come has significant influence over my company. Besides, there's no harm in stopping by. Poy, you're very cute."

I bit my lip, feeling shy and slightly embarrassed, but Or pinched my side, making me yelp. Seeing me flustered, Or annoyed. She stood up and walked out of the shop.

"Or, wait... Wait for me here... no, you should go back. There's nothing to talk about. Take the flowers with you. They stink"

Of course, I had to choose my person first. I ran after Or, who was walking away angrily, and caught up with her, grabbing her arm. The sulky one yanked her wrist away furiously

"Don't touch me"

"Why are you mad? I haven't done anything."

"Just you being shy is wrong. We were just making out in the back, and now you're blushing over a bouquet. It's annoying."

"Oh, come on. I don't get flowers often. Can't I be shy just once in my life?"

"He's handsome."

"So you think so too?"

"Yes, I was drooling."

"..."

"Oops," she realized she'd let it slip, then got angry again. "But still, it's not right. You made me feel bad. Your girlfriend was sitting right next to you, but you paid attention to the other guy. Yeah, sure..."

*Here it comes... the high pitched 'Yeah, sure.' I was being sarcastically mocked.*

"I'm not a big CEO or anything like that. Not a man who can... you know."

"Pfft," I burst out laughing and ruffled her hair. "You're crazy I wasn't thinking about that at all. You can... you know, do it without that."

"Do you know now that we can... you know?"

"I've started studying it, but you'll still have to teach me. Come on, don't be mad. Don't fall into my dad's plan."

"Your dad's plan?"

"Do you think a handsome guy like that would come to the shop, hand over a business card, and straightforwardly say he's courting me?"

"It has to be like that."

"CEOs don't have time to court girls. Pae had to clear his schedule just to have dinner with Dr. Jane. That guy is probably a model my dad hired, pretending to be a CEO with flowers to distract me. My dad's plan is so shallow."

"Is that so? Your dad dislikes me that much?"

"He doesn't hate you. He wants me to stop making music and run the company. He sent a handsome guy to lure me, and he'll reveal later that such a good-looking person doesn't exist. Understand now?"

"You're imagining things."

"I know Dad better than anyone. When Pae comes, he'll think the same.

When I tell him, he'll laugh and say Dad's playing a new joke. Dad's playful like that."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Sure?"

"Super sure."

"You're not making it up?"

"I'm not."

"So, I'm going to work now."

"We're okay now?"

"Yes."

"That easy?"

"Or do you want it to be hard?"

"You're so cute. Come here." I pulled her close and kissed her cheek in the middle of the street, among many people, without shame. Or looked around nervously and hit me once.

"Aren't you embarrassed? Everyone's watching."

"You weren't embarrassed when you were naked under the blanket."

"I don't want to talk to you anymore."

Of course, I didn't let this go easily. After talking to Or, I packed my bag at the shop and took a taxi to my dad's company, asking his secretary if he was in. He had some important meetings. Today, I was going to cause a scene.

When I arrived, I went straight to Pratanpon, the receptionist, who still had her usual unfriendly face.

"I'm here to see the chairman."

"Do you have an appointment ... Oh, Miss."

"Well, that sounds nice." I raised an eyebrow.

She quickly stood up to greet me politely. "The chairman is in an important meeting."

"So what? I can't see my dad?"

"You can, I'll take you to him."

"Lead the way."

Today was different from the other day. Pratanpon led me to the executive elevator, which she couldn't use unless authorized. The person who took me up recognized me well. The elevator went straight to the top floor, but Dad wasn't in his office. I sat at his desk, picking up and reading random things.

Of course, it was all confusing numbers. *Is this what he wanted me to do! Dream on.*

"I'm exhausted."

My dad walked in, grumbling, with his secretary, not noticing me. He threw his suit jacket onto his chair, covering me completely, I slowly pulled the jacket off and waved at my beloved dad, making him jump.

"Goodness gracious! How did you get here?"

"I took a taxi. So, you're sending a model to my shop, huh?"

"Leave us," Dad dismissed his secretary, leaving us alone. His stern expression softened immediately upon seeing me. As always, his beloved daughter came first. "My daughter, give me a kiss."

"Not a chance. Hmph."

I said it just like that, but when Dad came in, he kissed me on both cheeks as if I were a little girl, missing me dearly, and then knelt down on the chair to be at my level.

"How did you know? I thought I was being subtle"

"No CEO is as handsome as Henry Cavill, Come on, Dad, you made me drool. I was trying to concentrate on writing a song, and you sent a handsome guy to break my focus. Plus, I had to argue with my girlfriend. Is that fair?"

Dad stood up and laughed heartily. "At least it had some effect."

"Just for that?"

"Even a little disruption is good. Everything can't be smooth all the time. I heard you dragged your brother to sing, too. You know how to find allies."

"Pae was happy to sing, and this song will turn out great. You'll lose the bet for sure."

"We'll see about that."

"What do I have to be afraid of? I have Mom as my backup."

"Your mom's in on this too?"

"Her precious son is the lead singer. Would Mom let herself be embarrassed?"

"My wife complicates things even more. Sweetie, is it so hard to work with Daddy?"

"Is it so hard to let me start a music label, Daddy?"

We stared at each other and sighed. Diad always indulged me, and knowing he loved me, I often acted spoiled.

"Dad, do you know that while you were in a meeting, I secretly read your confidential documents? And it turned out..."

"What?"

"I didn't understand a damn thing. How am I supposed to work for you?" I slumped in my chair.

"You could just sit as the company's figurehead and collect a salary. I want you to have some position. Others have to start from the bottom and work their way up to executive roles, but not you. You'd become CEO right away."

"No thanks. I'm already running a music label."

"It's on the verge of failing."

"It won't fail I'm confident in this song"

"Having your mom as backup doesn't guarantee the song will be a hit if people don't like it, they won't listen."

"You always underestimate me."

"Or should I go bother Dr. Or?"

"Stop it." I jumped up from my chair when Dad mentioned Or. "Or I'll sulk and not come home for you to kiss my cheeks again, You know, when I sulk, it lasts for a year. Remember?"

"Alright, let's not do anything else for now. Let's finish one thing at a time. Once the song is done, we'll talk about other things. If the song doesn't do well, you have to work with me."

"And you won't send any more models, actors, flowers, or anything to distract me. The song will be released in a few days. and I need to focus. I want to do my best. Don't you want to see me succeed in something in life?"

"Oh, my poor daughter."

"Please?"

"If you succeed, I won't interfere. But if it fails, you have to work with me. Deal?"

"Yay! Love you, Dad!" I jumped and hugged him tightly like a little monkey. Dad kissed my cheeks as if I were a five-year- old, just as his secretary walked in. We both froze, unsure of what to do next.

And Dad's dignity in the company ended right there...

Dad personally saw me off. Initially, I planned to take a taxi, but Dad insisted on having the driver take me to the building. Before leaving, I wanted to talk to Pratanpon at the reception because I had something to discuss. She stood there, nervous about what I might do next, especially seeing me with the chairman, fearing she might get fired.

"I have a favor to ask."

"What is it?"

"This Christmas, I'm releasing a song on YouTube. As the PR person who meets the most office people in the company..."

"Yes?"

"You need to share the YouTube link with everyone and get them to listen to it fully to reach three thousand views within twenty-four hours."

"What?"

"It's not hard, just three thousand views. However, the challenge is getting people in the company to comment in proportion to the views. If you can do it, you're lucky. I won't have to work at the company with Dad, and your job will be safe. But if you can't, you're unlucky."

"..."

"You'll be in big trouble"

I was just teasing her, but what else could I do? I had to try. And, of course, I had to remind her privately, "Dad can't know about this because he won't let you do it. He wants me to work at the company. So, if you want me to win, do everything to match the engagement with the comments. Okay?"

"O... okay."

"Good girl. Hope we don't meet again."

"Are you leaving, dear?"

"Yes"

Dad's shout made me respond, and I ran to him, hugging him to show everyone how close we were. Then I got into Dad's luxurious car, which was as long as a train, and headed to the building. Honestly, it was over the top. Dad was a car collector, and I didn't like fancy cars at all. Riding in a Rolls-Royce this time made my bandmates tease me non-stop until I had a headache.

"Stop joking and get to work. We need to hurry. The song must be finished in two days. Only the hook is left because Pae's part is done."

"I was going to ask who will sing the hook. We don't have a female singer.

Everyone looked at each other. I straightened up and nodded.

"I'll sing it myself."

"What?"

"This is my love song. No one has ever heard me sing, right? This time, everyone will hear it. So, please work hard. This song is my life's deadline."

I extended my hand, asking everyone to join in. They looked at each other and then put their hands together, saying in unison,

"Let's do it!"

Chapter 14

And then the awaited day arrived, Christmas Day, the day we'd been eagerly waiting for, and the day we could hardly sleep, even my brother, Pae, who was swamped with both public and private work. Today, my brother dressed in a Boss sweater that Mom had picked out for him. Underneath, he wore a light brown shirt, slightly unbuttoned to reveal a hint of fine hair, giving him a sexy look with his hair styled more like a teenager than an executive. As for me, I dressed simply, nothing fancy, just a red Tshirt to match the festive season, paired with jeans and sneakers.

December was a month filled with happiness. Everyone smiled more than any other month, perhaps because of Mariah Carey's songs playing everywhere. I also dreamed of being like her, having people play my songs every holiday and earning royalties effortlessly. But that was still far off. We had to take it step by step. Today, we had to make it great first.

"Isn't Mom coming with you?"

"She probably went to the hospital already, likely securing a good spot for photos. I heard she hired a professional photographer to take pictures of us."

"Mom is always over the top... Well, let's go then. Let's get ready and soak in the atmosphere so we won't be too nervous when the time comes."

"Are you still nervous? This isn't your first performance. I'm the one who should be nervous, singing in front of people for the first time."

"What are you afraid of? You have your little sister here to help."

I patted my brother's back lightly and nodded before we walked to the hospital empty-handed, as we'd already set up the necessary instruments the night before. All that was left was to do a sound check and calm our nerves.

But before we could leave, the shop's doorbell rang. Both Or and Dr. Jane walked in, carrying bouquets of flowers, which I never expected to see from two people who hated flowers. Dr. Jane handed a super tiny bouquet to my brother and chatted with him, while Or handed me a bouquet awkwardly, as someone who was embarrassed to give flowers to anyone.

"Thank you."

"You don't like flowers, but bring flowers for me, huh?"

"It's to show support. Do your best today. I'll be listening."

"You have to listen to every part because this song." I tugged her cheek playfully, "is for you."

"Don't try to be sentimental. I'll listen first, then I'll decide if I like it."

"You'll like it, and you'll be mine. Wahaha!"

"It's not that easy."

"Tonight, it'll be. Others listening is one thing, but the person the song is for will be moved. It's psychology."

"We'll see. Are you leaving now? Did we interrupt you guys?"

"We were about to go. Since you're here, let's go together."

Or, Pae, Dr. Jane, and the whole band walked to the hospital, which was less than a kilometer away. Each step felt heavy, like carrying stones. Even though I acted like it was nothing, I was more nervous than anyone. I feared I wouldn't do well, that she wouldn't be impressed. But I'd done my best. Today would decide my fate-whether I'd have to close the studio and work with Dad.

*Whatever happens, happens.*

In less than five minutes, we arrived. The hospital was unusually crowded today, especially with tripods and photographers gathered to shoot something. When I peeked through the crowd, I saw Mom handing over an ambulance and a flower basket to the hospital director. My brother and I exchanged glances, starting to understand. This was a strategy to attract reporters to cover today's event. Mom had funded the ambulance donation herself, gaining both publicity and numerous photographers for the news. Having Mom as a backer was truly beneficial.

"Pae, hide before Mom sees you. If she does, she'll drag you in for the photos for sure."

"True."

"Go test the mic, get familiar with the stage the hospital set up, so you won't get stage fright."

Today, the hospital played Christmas music all day. The stage wasn't grand, it was just a small step raised about ten Inches from the ground, with drums, an electronic organ, an electric piano, and mic stands on top. I saw sweat forming on my brother's temple and handed him a handkerchief, starting to worry.

"Don't be scared. Just one song, and you'll be cool forever once it's over."

"Is this lip-syncing? Not live singing, right?"

"Some lip-syncing for safety, but also live singing. Don't worry."

Patients at the hospital, seeing us on stage, started to look interested, taking out their phones to record, as if knowing a performance was about to happen. This event was a small gesture to lift the spirits of patients, but for us, it was the launch of a new song and a fierce competition with Dad. I had to make it the best.

"Joe, take care of the piano. The start is crucial"

"Got it. You just do your part well."

I instructed everyone in the band, and each person started tuning their instruments, practicing individually. It didn't sound like a song yet because everyone was practicing their parts. Mom, hearing the music, brought reporters to surround our stage, proudly introducing us as the children of Mr. Seng, the fifth richest man in the country. This introduction made everyone more interested, adding pressure to my already nervous brother.

"Just think of those reporters and photographers as if they were Dr. Jane. You'll get to go to Novotel with her, in a suite, if you sing this song perfectly."

"Using Novotel as bait, huh?"

"You can do it."

"You can, too."

"Let's start then."

I turned on the mic, grabbing everyone's attention. The hospital's Christmas music still played softly in the background but was drowned out by my mic. I announced that we had a special performance today, hoping the song would make everyone feel better and more joyful. I also wished everyone good health on this holy day.

"Let's start the show now."

Doctors and nurses who weren't busy gathered to watch our little concert with interest, knowing that my brother and I were paired with Dr. Or and Dr. Jane. Everyone was curious about how the song would turn out, making me especially nervous. As soon as the piano started, it felt like everyone quieted down, familiar with the tune of Pachelbel's Canon, famous from Korean movies.

But then the song transitioned into a real melody, not too fast or slow. I gripped the mic tightly, closed my eyes, and looked at Or, who stood with her arms crossed, listening and nodding. I imagined the world had only the two of us and sang joyfully, something I rarely did for anyone.

*Since I met you, my heart's been in flight, Dreaming and wandering, day and night.*

*Your smile, your eyes, pull me into a trance, I'm lost in your world, don't stand a chance.*

*'Cause you're unlike anyone I've ever known,*

*My heart pounds wild more than I've ever shown. Those sparkling eyes, they light up the skies, You make hearts race, with a look so wise.*

*That's right, your face is shining bright, yeah, yeah,*

*you're the one, yeah, yeah.*

*A blessing from the stars, like light from the sun. More than an angel, that's what you are, The envy of all, you're the brightest star.*

*Oh, you're stunning, you're beauty's craze,*

*Yeah, yeah.*

*My heart's singing la la la every day.*

*Just one look, and I'm yours to keep,*

*My heart is bound to you, so deep.*

*Since I met you, my dreams take flight, Your smile, your gaze, my only sight.*

*You're the one who makes my heart race,*

*I'm in a trance I can't escape. Every day, I long to see that smile, Stay with you, just a little while. Locked in your magic, no way to break free, You're unlike anyone, you're unique to me.*

*You make my heart feel things so strange,*

*Like my chest might burst, it's a beautiful pain.*

*Your warmth is stronger than the midday sun,*

*I'll give you my heart if you just give me a chance.*

*I'll promise you love, and never let go,*

*But there's one fear I hope you'll know*

*Since I met you, my heart's been in flight,*

*Dreaming and wandering, day and night.*

*Your smile, your eyes, pull me into a trance, I'm lost in your world, don't stand a chance.*

*'Cause you're unlike anyone I've ever known, I just want to see that smile again, And be with you 'til the very end.*

*Trapped in this trance, I can't escape,*

*'Cause you're unlike anyone I've ever know.*

The song ended with the sound of a piano, and everything fell into silence. We all looked at each other, unsure of what to do next. Then, applause erupted throughout the hospital, accompanied by cheers of encouragement from doctors, nurses, and patients. Numerous phones were live- streaming our band, and some were taking pictures enthusiastically. The reporters my mom had invited were snapping photos non-stop.

I, along with everyone in the band, smiled and laughed with tears in our eyes. Of course, I didn't forget to look for the person who inspired the song, standing with arms crossed, smiling, and beckoning me over with a finger. I pointed to myself before handing the mic to Joe, as I had no more songs to sing. The next song was "Material Girl," requested by Dr. Jane, who wanted to be the singer. I followed Or, who took long strides toward the break room. My instincts told me something good was about to happen. Once inside, she locked the door and said briefly,

"Don't be stupid this time."

I smiled and immediately lunged at her. Or jumped up, wrapping her arms around my waist, and kissed me passionately. We slowly undressed each other, but it wasn't fast enough, and the room was too cramped, causing us to bump into things.

"Is it okay to do this here? What if another doctor comes in?"

"No one will if the door is locked; it's understood."

"Understood what?"

"Understood that there's something." She said, then changed the subject. "Do you want a doctor or a nude model?"

"Today, I'll take the doctor."

"Do you know what you're doing?"

"I've studied a bit, but you'll have to guide me."

She still wore her short lab coat, but I'd unbuttoned her inner shirt, revealing a lace bra that made her look both clean and sexy. The music from outside was audible, but it was nothing compared to the sound of our heavy breathing.

We nuzzled and explored each other's bodies, knowing we could and had the right to. I touched every part of her as if she were mine, sometimes squeezing too hard, but she didn't mind. She aroused me by nibbling my ear and licking it lightly like a cat. I couldn't stand it any longer and pushed her onto the bed, pulling her slacks down to her feet without removing them completely because I still wanted some clothing on her body.

"Wait, you need to use this."

She got up, grabbed a small square packet from her slacks, and tore it open with her teeth. I looked at the condom wrapper, not quite understanding.

"Where do you want me to put this?"

"On your finger. It keeps things clean, and... your nails aren't trimmed."

"Got it."

"You know what to do next, right?"

"Yeah, what should I do next..." I pretended to be clueless. The sweet-faced girl narrowed her eyes, put the condom on my finger, and guided it to her most sensitive area, the mysterious land not just anyone could enter. It was slippery, warm, and snug. I slowly inserted and withdrew my finger, moving gently. She closed her eyes, bit her lip, and moaned, holding my neck tightly.

"Faster... do it faster."

I did as she asked, sometimes teasing her until she hit my back hard. I laughed and sped up, but it still didn't seem fast enough for her. Finally, she sat up, straddled me, and moved her body until the metal bed shook and creaked loudly, probably audible outside. But we didn't care. We only cared about how far we could go. I hugged her with one arm, bit her shoulder, and breathed heavily, feeling aroused. The part between my legs was wet, and I knew I wanted more.

Her inside was tight and contracting, signaling she'd reached her climax. She stopped moving and hugged me tightly for a long time before pushing me onto the bed and pulling down my pants.

"It's okay. We did it quite long enough. I think I heard someone was about to come in earlier."

"How can you have me all to yourself?"

"..."

"Now it's my turn."

And she introduced me to the whole new world I'd never known. My mind went blank, my vision blurred, and I felt weightless. Before I knew it, I was hers completely.

The band had finished playing, and the hospital switched to Christmas music to match the festive atmosphere. Everything still seemed joyful. The musicians were now chatting happily, enjoying the positive feedback. I walked alongside Or, acting as if nothing had happened. As we approached the group, Or and I whispered to each other, bantering along the way.

"I'm not your idiot girlfriend anymore, huh?" I started. The doctor, now with rosy cheeks, shook her hair a bit and pulled a hair tie from her wrist to gather her hair casually, looking unbothered.

"Not anymore."

"You must really like my song."

"It's actually pretty good."

"Just pretty good?"

"Was what I reward you just pretty good?"

"It was too good."

"That's your answer."

"Next time will be even more fun."

"It's not that easy."

"But it shouldn't be hard now. I know you like it." I winked. Or put her hands in her pockets and nudged my side with her elbow, but it didn't hurt. She smiled at the band members when they saw us.

"Hey, where have you two been? The feedback is great!"

"Just appreciating the song a bit," I replied, looking for Pae. "Where's the lead singer today?"

"Gone with Dr. Jane. They said they were going to celebrate because they did well today."

"Or." ('oh')

"What?"

"Nothing, just acknowledging. Hehe." I laughed at her innocence and reached out to ruffle her hair. The band members saw my affectionate gesture and smiled slightly but said nothing, forgetting someone else was still standing there.

"Hey, songwriter girl, you look so happy. Your feet are practically floating"

My mom's voice, coming from the corner, startled me a bit. I looked at her, thinking she'd already left since she usually stuck to my brother like glue.

"Mom, is that actually you?"

"I'm not dead yet."

"No, I mean, you haven't gone home yet? Pae's not here."

"I stayed to congratulate you. I wanted to say you did great." Then she looked at Or and nodded. "Is this your girlfriend?"

Mom spoke openly, without any embarrassment, even though Or was a woman. I nodded slightly and winked playfully.

"Yes, this is my girlfriend."

"Hello," Or greeted my mom gracefully. Mom looked her up and down, not with disdain or contempt, but more like scanning her.

"I've actually gotten to know you a bit already after doing some digging."

"Mom... don't kill the mood."

"I haven't said anything yet. I just wanted to compliment her on being a beauty."

I started to worry if Or would feel scared, so I stood between her and my mom. Mom clicked her tongue at my protective stance and pushed my head aside because she wanted to talk directly to Or.

"Since we're meeting, we should get to know each other better. I don't mind that you're a woman, but..."

"..."

"But I want to know more about your background. Clear your schedule for Saturday. I want to meet your family. I hope that's okay."

Or looked stunned, clearly worried. She seemed to hesitate. I looked between Or and my mom, about to object, but Mom waved me off.

"Don't speak. Let her answer. So, can I meet your family?"

"Yes, I'll let them know we have a guest coming."

"Good. See you then."

Mom opened her purse, took out a credit card, and handed it to me with a wink.

"Use this to celebrate tonight. There's no budget limit. It's a reward for making such a beautiful song." I took the credit card, not feeling particularly happy, but I was surprised when she pulled me into a hug, patted my back gently, and kissed my cheek. "I'm proud of you. Great job, my little girl."

"Mom," I pouted, about to cry, but Mom made a face.

"Don't get sentimental. I just praised you. Alright, it's a good day, so go celebrate." Mom looked at Or again. "See you."

"Yes, see you."

Chapter 15

"Cheers!"

**Clink.**

More than five glasses of alcohol clinked together to celebrate the skyrocketing view count. It wasn't as massive as Taylor Swift's, but it was enough for a no-name band like ours to hit a million views. This meant I won the bet with my dad. I didn't have to manage the company and could start my own music label, following my dreams. Another bonus was that today... Or and I became each other's.

I drank my beer with gusto. Normally, I didn't touch this stuff much, but today, I had to join in the fun with my friends. The table was full of food, thanks to my mom's credit card, which she gave me to celebrate today. I'd have to thank her properly for her love and support in my success.

Or was drinking too. Even though I tried to stop her, she said she had to join in the fun with friends. She could control herself, of course. She didn't drink much but talked more than usual, making the atmosphere even more fun. But I sensed some unease in her and thought we needed to talk after the party.

It was past eleven now. Or and I decided to leave early because we were tired, leaving the guys to continue celebrating. They drank like fish anyway. I called a taxi to take us to my studio apartment. Many times, I offered to take her home, but she never let me. This time, I had to ask

"You seem to have something on your mind. Is it about my mom?"

"It's not about your mom. It's about my family"

"Are they very strict?"

"Not exactly."

"Do they know you're dating a woman?"

"I haven't told them yet."

"Ah... that can be a big deal. A daughter suddenly dating a woman can be

hard to talk about. Will you tell your parents first, or should we postpone the meeting with my mom?"

"No need. It's rude to cancel on elders. Your mom might not like me. I'll just tell my family straight that I have a girlfriend and will bring her and her family to meet them. It should be fine."

"It's a big deal, you know. You have a girlfriend, and suddenly, her family wants to meet yours. It should go step by step. How about this? Let me meet your mom first, see how it goes, and then I'll postpone the meeting with my mom."

"Really, it's not what you think."

She still looked worried and leaned her head on my shoulder. "I'm dizzy."

"You drank quite a bit."

"It was fun. I'm happy you wrote a song that turned out great. I love you."

"Hmm? What did you say?"

"Nothing."

"You just said you love me."

"I didn't say that."

My heart pounded. Since we started dating, she'd never said she loved me, only that she liked me. But today, she let it slip.

*Should I thank the beer or the song for making her say it?*

Soon, we arrived at my apartment. We went upstairs, showered, and got ready for bed. Everything was the same. Or slept naked, and I had to do the same. The slight buzz made me feel a bit frisky, so I teased her with kisses on her left and right cheeks. She, lying on her side, pushed me away, saying she was tired.

"Alright, I'll let you sleep. You must be really tired today, drinking so much beer."

"Don't be an idiot."

She turned and straddled me, biting my shoulder hard, clearly annoyed.

"When I play hard to get, you should insist a bit. I like being pursued."

"Is that so?"

"You're too accommodating. Now I want to relax. The beer has already heated us up. Let's go all out tonight. No creaky metal bed, no worries about anyone coming in." "Uh-huh."

"All night long."

"Woohoo!"

I laughed and obliged her request. There were many lessons from her that I never stopped learning. She was calm but passionate inside. She wanted more and liked to receive rather than give. She taught me to do what she liked, sometimes asking for the same things repeatedly. We'd been courting each other for a while, and today, we let it all out. I did so well that she passed out.

Before the Saturday meeting, my Dad called me in. It was about my song's success or, more accurately, winning the bet with him. I went into the building. Everyone started recognizing me, bowing slightly in respect. The first person I met was Pratanpon. She stood up, clasped her hands in front of her, and greeted me with a nervous smile. But today, I smiled back because I felt that good deeds deserved praise.

"You did great. I think most of the YouTube views came from your efforts"

"Thank you. I tried my best, sending links to friends and emailing everyone in the company to listen to the song. Your song is beautiful."

"Good talk. Lucky for you, the views and comments are good. You don't have to suffer seeing me anymore."

"Don't say that."

"I know you're not sincere. Anyway, thanks, and congrats. I won't be working with my dad anymore. Bye."

I walked straight to the executive's elevator and went up to the top floor. My dad, reading a file, closed it immediately when he saw me and laughed heartily like Santa Claus on Christmas.

"Corne here, my daughter."

Dad pulled me into a hug, kissed both cheeks and my forehead. He held my cheeks and squished my face.

"What's this? Why are you so happy?"

"I'm proud of you. What a talented kid, writing such a beautiful song. I never thought you had such talent."

"What? You just realized? Don't pretend. You were the one who said my song wouldn't be good at first." "That was then. This is now."

"You promised that if I got over three thousand views, I wouldn't have to work at your office. Leave it to Pae."

"A promise is a promise. What can I do? I've loved you since you were born and saw you had no little dick."

"Dad! What are you saying?"

"When the doctor said it was a girl, I couldn't believe it until I peeked and saw you really didn't have the little buddy. I announced it everywhere, 'It's a girl!'"

"I'm going to faint."

*Why is my family so cheerful and cheeky? Do I get this trait from Dad or Mom? I'm starting to doubt.*

"So, why did you call me?"

"I just wanted to congratulate you. Since I can't make you work at my company, I'll support you. Here." Dad pulled a paper from his suit pocket and handed it to me. It was a check for five million baht, making my eyes widen.

"Why so much?"

"We're billionaires. Five million is nothing."

"Still, why give it now?"

"To run your music label. Make it good. Make music videos, and start a drama company if you want. I'll support you fully. I'll get my friends in advertising and music to push you to the top. Wahaha."

"Wow, how much do you love me?"

"I've loved you since the moment I saw you had no dick."

"Love you, Dad." I hugged him, tears welling up. Dad patted my back gently before pulling away, as if remembering something. "Hey, I heard your mom is meeting your girlfriend's family tomorrow, right?"

"Yes."

"I'll go too."

"Why make it grand? No need. Just my girlfriend's mom is hard enough to handle. Besides, I don't know how her family will handle ours. They don't even know their daughter has a girlfriend."

"Would they dare reject my daughter? We're rich."

"Money has nothing to do with it."

"Money has everything to do with it. Everyone loves money. I'm going. I want to see your girlfriend. I heard she's a doctor and good-looking. I want to meet her in person."

*This seemed bigger than I thought. Should I tell Or that Dad is coming too?*

I didn't say anything, just smiled and hugged dad again, thanking him for his immense support.

"I told my family that I'd bring my girlfriend and her family to meet them."

Or, who'd been staying over like she had moved in, said while we were lying in bed. She still looked worried, so I hugged her and gently patted her back to comfort her.

"It's okay, honey. No matter what happens tomorrow, I'll be by your side... Did you tell them your girlfriend is a woman?"

"I did."

"And what did they say?"

"They said to bring you over first, and then they'll tell me how they feel."

*Wow, this is really nerve-wracking. There are no clues to help me figure out how to act. How should I carry myself? What could possibly make a usually calm doctor like her so worried?*

"You got this. Don't worry," I said.

"But I'm scared."

"I've never heard you say you're scared before."

"I'm scared your family won't like me when they meet mine... I'm scared of everything." She turned and hugged me tightly. "What if we're kept apart?"

"Then we'll run away together."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Love you."

"Say it again."

"Once is enough."

"Say it again. Can you say it again?"

"No, I'm going to sleep. Who knows what we'll face tomorrow... Hey, don't tickle me! I'm ticklish."

"Quick, tell me."

"No... Hey!"

And then we pulled the covers over our heads and tickled each other to ease our worries before falling asleep, even though, in reality, I was the one who was worried. *What would her family be like? If they really don't like me, as she worries, it'd be awful. My mom's no ordinary person, and neither is my dad.*

*Nothing is ever easy, is it? On the path of love between two women like this.*

Or left the room at dawn to wait for my family at her house, sending me the location on my phone. She was visibly anxious, which made me start to feel nervous, too. *What if things didn't go well this time? How much could my parents handle if the other family criticized us, accusing us of something bad?* I kept thinking of all the bad scenarios until I had to shake my head to clear them out.

*Whatever will be, will be, I won't break up with her. Even If her family disapproves, I don't care.*

After showering and dressing early, I went downstairs to instruct my staff to close the shop a bit earlier today. We might come back in a bad mood and not want to show it to others. Maybe Or and I would come back crying together. After giving instructions, my staff looked like she'd seen a ghost, her mouth agape. Without turning around, I knew my dad's car had arrived.

*Oh, great...*

"Dad, I told you to bring a regular car. A van would do. There's no need to bring this train-like car," I said. He loved showing off his Rolls-Royce so much that my sentence made him laugh heartily like Santa Claus.

"It's so cool. We're meeting your lover's family today, so we need to go all out. They won't look down on us."

"Are you going to stand outside? We can't park here for long," my mom grumbled. I squeezed into the seat opposite my dad, pouting. Then, Mom said, "There's nothing wrong with going in this car. It's a sign of respect that we're serious."

"Will they think we're trying to intimidate them?"

"Why should we be so scared? Are her parents very strict? Have you met them before?"

I shook my head. It was because I hadn't met them; the face made me even more anxious.

"Then why are you so scared?"

"I just want it to be as normal as possible."

"This is normal. Usually, I wear a suit and tie, but today, I'm in a T-shirt and shorts. I plan to go golfing afterward."

"And I plan to get my nails done and sing karaoke. La la la."

Both of them were so carefree that I couldn't help but smile. Sometimes, their good mood could chase away a lot of my negative energy.

This morning, traffic was heavy, and from the location Or gave, her house was far from the hospital, as she'd mentioned. No wonder she didn't go home and rent a place near the hospital or stay with me. It took about an hour and a half to get there. My dad, sipping white wine in the long European car, had a rosy face and laughed even louder.

"How should I introduce myself to your partner's family? Ha ha ha. Hello, I'm... the fifth richest man in the country. Jenmontri."

"Gosh," I massaged my temples when I saw my dad drunk. "Dad, it's better if you don't say anything. Just sit quietly."

"Let me handle it, dear. I have a feeling," my mom interjected.

"What feeling?" I asked.

"You'll see."

My mom looked serious, which made me start to worry. *Did she have a feeling that this family wouldn't like us, that they wouldn't accept our relationship because we're both women and might chase us out? And my mom isn't one to back down. This could end badly. Waaaaah.*

"We're here, sir"

The driver reported, according to the GPS Or's house was a two-story white modern house, looking newly built. Her family seemed quite well-off. My parents and I got out of the car, looked around, and then at each other.

"What now?" my mom asked. I called Or to tell her we'd arrived. She quickly ran out to greet us. She wore a short- sleeved white shirt and light brown slacks and opened the gate for our car.

"Hello, sorry to keep you waiting. The traffic must've been bad."

"We meet again, young lady," my dad, tipsy, laughed loudly for no reason, pulling Or into a hug and patting her back hard. "Still as beautiful as ever, but a bit less than my wife."

"Oh, you and your sweet words. Hello, Dr. Or."

"Please call me just Or."

"Alright Can we come in, Just Or?" my mom teased. Or looked a bit startled, worried she'd been rude, and quickly invited us into the house, leading us to the living room and offering us drinks. But my dad asked for whiskey.

"We don't have any."

"Oh."

"Dad, we're at their house. You can't ask for whiskey,"I scolded. My dad was having too much fun. *Who told him to drink?*

"Drink water, dear. It's not our house. You can drink at home. He's been stressed about work lately, so he's been drinking a bit too much," Mom said to Dad and then turned to me

"Really? But he was laughing like he'd seen a comedy show. Can this be called stress?" I snapped. But before I could say more. Or's parents came to greet us. We all stopped talking and looked at each other as if scanning for something.

*Why was the atmosphere so strange?*

"Poy"

Or, seeing me turn pale, sat next to me and held my arm. "Do you need an inhaler? You look very pale."

"I feel like fainting, but it's okay, It's just that the vibe is weird."

"It's not what you think."

"Then what is it?"

"Hello, I'm Poy's mother, Nuan-anore," my mom introduced herself first. Or's mom greeted her gracefully and introduced herself, too.

"Hello, I'm Or's mother, also named Nuan-anong."

Or and I looked at each other. We'd never known this before.

*How could people have the same name by coincidence? But maybe that's how people named their kids back then. Let's see what happens next.*

Or's family sat opposite mine

"I heard your daughter..."

"My name is Poy."

"Poy and Or are dating, right?" Or's mom said, making me feel uneasy.

*I nodded, not knowing what to do. Should I drink water, take some herbal medicine, or do something to make it better? I'm feeling terrible and scared that things will turn ugly.*

"Do you have a problem with their relationship?"

"And you? Do you have a problem?"

Our moms exchanged words and stared at each other Intensely, as if communicating through their eyes. I sipped my water. Or, not knowing what to do, also drank water, looking around nervously. Suddenly, Or's mom stood up abruptly.

"Nuan-anong!"

My mom called Or's mom loudly, as if she had no manners.

"What?"

"What's your plan tonight?"

Or and I looked confused. My dad looked confused. Everyone looked confused and checked their watches, seeing it was only 11:30.

"Why do you ask?"

"..."

"I'm going to Kor Mor 4, that's right"

*Huh?*

"What will you do? What's there in store?"

Then Or's mom started dancing, shaking her hips, and my mom joined in, dancing the same way they'd planned.

"A gang awaits to bang me more!"

*Pffffffffffffft!*

"Anong, it's really you!"

"I knew it was you. When I had someone investigate who Dr. Or's mom was, I saw it was you. But I wanted to see it with my own eyes. You old hag, you're still around?"

"You bitch, come here and hug me."

"Kyaaaa, my dear friend!"

Then our moms hugged and jumped around. I was gaping. My dad, drunk, was asleep. Or's dad smiled as if this was normal. Only Or and I spat out our drinks like whales in the Antarctic Ocean.

*Wow... what a surprise!*

Chapter 16

"Gosh, how long has it been since we last saw each other? Since we graduated high school, right? We didn't even meet at the high school reunion. Did you achieve your dreams? You said you'd be filthy rich, driving five supercars, having two kids, a rich husband, and doing nothing but lounging around all day." Or's mom asked excitedly, holding her friend's hand and looking her over. "Your skin looks amazing! You've taken such good care of yourself."

"I had to make it happen. It's the power of manifestation, the universe's energy... My husband was one of the top five richest in the country, but he's passed... out now," my mom nodded towards my dad, who was passed out drunk. "And you? Did you get that handsome doctor husband who owns a hospital?"

Of course, I did. My manifestation worked, too. Look at him." Or's mom gestured proudly to her husband, who was beaming with pride. "He loves me with all his heart, right, honey?"

"My heart belongs to you."

"He's crazy about me. And we have a lovely daughter named Or."

"And your daughter fell in love with my daughter!"

"Oh my, what a small world! I'm so impressed."

The moms hugged each other tightly, showing no concern about the fact that Or and I were dating, which I'd feared might cause a scene. Or and I sat there, bewildered, until Or cleared her throat to get their attention

"So, Mom, you don't have any issues with us dating, right?"

"Just go on. End of story."

"Really? No objections, no obstacles, no concerns about us being women and not being able to have kids? Or is your only daughter..."

"Oh, come on, what year do you think this is? Being with Anong's daughter is a blessing. Besides, I've never forced you to do anything. You could study whatever you wanted, do whatever you liked. It was you who was pressing yourself, wanting to be a doctor like your dad, always saying I was too carefree. And now you're worried about this?"

"Mom, I actually have a brother," I suggested, trying to introduce a potential obstacle, but Or's mom looked annoyed.

"What do you want? Do you want me to object?"

"Well..."

"Get off. We'll reminisce and tour the grand house of the hospital owner. He might not be in the top five, but he's still rich. Or, show her around. Go hide in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, balcony, roof, whatever. We have a lot to catch up on."

"Let's go," Or smiled, realizing there was nothing more to be done. Any potential problems had been resolved before they even became issues. Or led me on a tour. My dizziness from worry had faded, replaced by sheer confusion. *How could the world be this small? Our moms are best friends with their own secret theme song.*

"What made you not want me to come over?"

"Well..." Or laughed a little, rubbing her hands together apologetically. "I was afraid you wouldn't be able to handle my mom being like this."

"Like what?"

"Being this crazy. She's always been this hilarious. I was worried she'd act inappropriately in front of your mom, and you wouldn't be able to handle it. So, I thought it was better not to bring you over."

"You scared me to death, you know"

"I was scared, too, but for different reasons. I was more worried your mom wouldn't accept it. But after hearing the song 'Nuan-anong Kor Mor 4,' It seems like they're a perfect match."

"So, what do we do now? It's just us."

"Well... do what we want to do."

"Like..." I squinted at her mischievously. Or raised an eyebrow

"Explore the house."

"Oh, come on!"

"Don't be too disappointed. Mom said to show you around. What do you want to do?"

"Fine."

She led me around the house, pointing things out. Her house had been built eight years ago. They used to live in the city in a smaller house, but when her dad became a hospital owner, their financial status soared. Land in the city became too expensive, so they bought a large property in the suburbs.

This grand house was a source of pride for the family, but Or was Indifferent. It was decorated in an adult style, with chandeliers and numerous sofas, making it cluttered.

"Instead of being beautiful, it just looks messy. Hey, turn around."

"Hmm? Oh... what?"

"I'm too lazy to walk. Let's go."

She jumped on my back and pointed directions. She was light as a feather, then leaned down to kiss my left cheek affectionately. Lately, she had become more affectionate. Normally, she was reserved and didn't show much affection, but as we grew closer, I saw this sweet side of her, and I loved it.

"Where to?"

"Upstairs. I'm also too lazy to climb the stairs."

"No wonder you jumped on my back."

But carrying her up the stairs felt like double the effort. I had to hold the railing and take it step by step. When we reached the second floor, she pointed to the farthest room, which was a large bedroom and library. She jumped off my back and proudly showed off the room.

"I became a doctor because of this room. It's full of knowledge. Most of the books are from my dad's notes that I read and used to study."

"No way, you're naturally smart and curious."

"That's true."

"Be humble, will you?"

I explored the room, looked at various things, and accidentally pulled out a photo album from the shelf. It was filled with baby pictures of her, with dates and notes: I started flipping through it while she continued her enthusiastic commentary, unaware.

"Actually, I used to wear glasses, but I recently had LASIK. Hey, what are you doing? Oh gosh, you're looking at my peach!"

"Ha, I really am."

The album was full of her baby pictures, many of them naked, taken by the adults when she was a newborn with no hair and no diaper. Some showed her breastfeeding, learning to crawl, and other milestones. She tried to snatch it from me, but I dodged and ran to the sofa, flipping through it. Realizing she couldn't take it from me, she sat down next to me and sighed, deciding to narrate the photos instead.

"You know too much about me now."

"Come to think of it, I know almost nothing about you. I only know you don't like flowers, drink only coffee, play hard to get, and only talk about necessary things. We hardly dated. You never opened up to me. Can't you let me know more about you?"

"You're so dramatic. I wasn't hiding anything, I just didn't know what to share. Ask me anything you want to know."

"How many relationships have you had?"

"None"

"Really?" I looked at her in disbelief. "Someone as beautiful as you?" She flipped her hair like in a shampoo commercial and winked.

"Yes, someone this beautiful hasn't been in a relationship before. I have high standards, you know"

"But you chose me."

"Well, you caught my eye. Actually, you were persistent. No matter how much I acted annoyed or even insulted you, you kept coming back. Plus, your coffee was delicious. What could I do?" She shrugged. "If it weren't for the coffee, you wouldn't have won me over." "Thank goodness I have a coffee shop."

"And the song you wrote made me feel something."

"Speaking of which, let's get it on."

"Hold on, you can't get turned on by baby pictures of me. That's creepy."

"True."

I continued flipping through her photos, watching her grow from a baby to a kindergartener. There were pictures of her in a graduation gown, looking adorable. Kindergarten, elementary school, and then the album ended. Seeing my disappointment, Or fetched the second, third, and fourth albums, and we continued flipping through them. She narrated her life story, and we spent hours without getting bored. "You wore thick glasses."

"I read books day and night."

"Did you always want to be a doctor?"

"Not really. I saw my dad as a role model. He looked handsome in a gown coat, so I wanted to wear one too. It looked clean and neat, unlike my mom, who was a teacher, always laughing. Being a doctor seemed much cooler."

"Your mom is adorable."

"I think so too. She's a great math teacher. If it weren't for her, I wouldn't be a doctor. When she's a mom, she's funny, but as a teacher, she's terrifying." Or described her mom, and we could hear karaoke music from downstairs, guessing they were singing together. It seemed like it'd be a long night.

"With brains like your parents, how could you not be a doctor? Good genes."

"That's why I'm a doctor, as you see. I've told you about me. Now, what about you? Why did you become a songwriter instead of a business executive like your brother or dad?"

"Because I wasn't as smart as my brother. I'm more artistic. No numbers involved, please. I can speak three languages and draw."

"Really?"

"Hmm, I got it from my mom. She's a really good artist. but as you can see, she's just as crazy. And my dad never forced me to do anything. Whatever I wanted to do, I could do so. I could study whatever I wanted. When I grew up, Dad couldn't make me work because I wasn't under his control. He loved me so much. When I was born, he announced all over the hospital...

'It's a girl! It's a girl!"

"Hehe. Your dad really loves you."

"Seems like it."

"So, how did it turn into a music label?"

"I loved all kinds of musical instruments, so I played everything. Drums, guitar, piano. Eventually, I started mixing music on my computer. Then, I tried opening a label and forming a band with my university friends... Yak was one of them. At first, it wasn't serious, but over time, it got serious. We played at music venues, but playing other people's songs didn't satisfy us, so we started writing our own. But the songs didn't catch on until a friend suggested writing love songs. I'd had never written a love song in my life until I met you."

At this point, the person in front of me blushed and looked away.

"Don't try to sweet-talk me."

"I'm serious. I was more into the serious type of songs When my friend suggested writing love songs, I got really stressed. Then one day, I came downstairs and happened to see you buying coffee. The lyrics and music followed. After that, I pursued you relentlessly, shamelessly until I got you."

"Cute." She lunged at me, kissing my lips and biting my shoulder, refusing to let go. I yelped and laughed.

"Hey! Are you a dog or a doctor?"

"I'm a dog." She mumbled against my shoulder, biting harder. I let her do it and kissed her forehead, stroking her hair.

"I love you so much."

"Right here, then."

"What?"

"Let's make love right here."

"Is that a good idea? This is a reading room. What if someone comes in?"

"No one will, The maids don't dare enter my dad's reading room because it's his most treasured room. No one can touch anything except me. And right now, Dad is happy watching Mom sing. So let's have some fun too:"

"But this room feels sacred. Besides..."

"What?"

"I'd rather go to your bedroom."

"Alright, it has a balcony."

We half-ran, half-walked like we were racing, with Or leading to her bedroom just a few steps from the library. Once inside, we raced to strip off our clothes, leaving us naked and cuddling passionately. We fought like wolves attacking prey. She knew my weak spots, and I knew hers. But since this was her turf, she took the lead, attacking me fiercely until I moaned loudly, competing with the karaoke outside, forcing me to cover my mouth.

"No need. No one can hear. I want to hear you."

She ravaged me, thrusting and probing with her fingers when she knew I was ready. Then she flipped me over and took me fiercely. I gripped the bedsheet tightly, bucking against her, making her more excited like a wild horse. When I reached the climax, she flipped me onto my back, spreading my legs and rubbing her sensitive parts against me. It was a new position I'd never tried before. My new world opened up, thrilling and sensitive, making me see her as powerful, sexy, and fun. I couldn't help but grab her breasts, squeezing and kneading hard, hoping to hurt her. After I finished, she wasn't satisfied, licking me like she wanted to kill me until I had to scoot away.

"Wait, I just finished. I can't take it. Don't..."

My body shook violently, too weak to resist it was as if her lips drained all my energy. She dragged me off the bed, forcing me to stand against the mirror, her fingers teasing my sensitive parts again while her other hand squeezed my breasts.

"You like the balcony, right?"

"Why are you so rough?"

"Because I love you."

"Ah..."

"I love you... with all my heart."

"This is too much for me..." I finished again and again until my knees buckled. She turned me to face her, forcing me to use my mouth on her, standing at the same height.

"Help me."

"I love you... with all my heart, too."

"We fit together so well"

We showered together without doing anything more, relieving our exhaustion. I had to ask her about her intense passion.

"Did you eat something special? Why are you so fierce?"

"I don't know. Maybe because it's my house. It's like doing something naughty while my parents are around."

"Did I moan too loudly?"

"No one heard. My parents are still singing karaoke non stop."

The music continued, and my mom's voice might soar out of the world now. The long separation of best friends for over ten or twenty years had brought their children to such great heights.

"Looks like I'll be sleeping at your place"

"That's good. No one has ever slept at my house. You're the first. I never brought anyone here, not even friends."

"Not even at the old house?"

"Nope. I didn't have many friends. I only studied. Besides, I wasn't as pretty and charming as I am now." "Praising yourself, huh?"

"You spoiled me rotten now."

"But you're really beautiful. I admit."

"You're, too."

"Another round?"

"Sure."

"Just kidding. I can't take it anymore." I splashed water at her.

Or laughed and hugged me, nuzzling my cheek affectionately. "I love you."

"You've been saying that a lot lately."

"It feels like I haven't shown you much love. You've been the one chasing and showing love. From now on, I'll do it more for you."

"Thank you... Oh, I think I heard a phone ringing is it yours or mine?" "Sounds like mine. I'll get it and come back. This is so relaxing."

"Okay."

She got out of the water. I watched her wet, naked body. feeling aroused again but tried to calm it down. She was so irresistibly charming, like a fire ready to explode.

*No worries. When she comes back, we can do it again, I'm sure she'll agree.*

But she returned with a startled look. My mood dampened when she told me to get out of the water and get dressed.

"We have to go. Jane called."

"Is something wrong? Why do you look like that? What did Jane say?"

"Jane said..."

"Said what?"

"She's pregnant with your brother's baby."

Chapter 17

I traveled from Or's house to meet my brother and Jane in the city center, which took about an hour from the suburbs. I braved the traffic, feeling anxious, especially Or, who seemed very worried about her friend. I was more concerned about how my brother would handle the situation. Having a girlfriend wasn't a big deal for me since our mother didn't pay much attention to me. But for my brother, it was different. He was the pillar of the family, our father's hope, and the future leader. His partner had to be carefully chosen, and even though Jane was a doctor, she was no exception. When I arrived, I found Jane and my brother sitting comfortably, smiling as if nothing had happened.

"How can you still be smiling?" I blurted out as I saw my brother's wide grin when he stood up to greet me and Dr. Or, like a well-mannered gentleman. My brother looked puzzled.

"Why? Should I be frowning?"

"What did you do?"

"He got me pregnant," Jane said cheerfully, patting her belly as if she'd just eaten. "Is this your happy face? I'm disappointed."

Jane pouted, looking upset. Or quickly pulled up a chair and sat across from her, asking worriedly.

"Jane, isn't it too soon? You just started dating. Do your parents know about this?"

"No one knows yet. As soon as I found out, I told Mister first," Jane gestured towards her boyfriend, referring to my brother as 'Mister.' "He's the father, he should know first."

"And you didn't react with shock, fear, or anything?" I asked my brother.

"It's a good thing. Having a child is precious. I've wanted a child for a long time. An heir to the billionaire," my brother said proudly. "I think I'm pretty competent. Just a month, and I got a child."

"You've only known her for a month..." I counted on my fingers, recalling when I introduced Jane to him, not counting the early courtship. "You just had dinner together."

"It was that night."

"That's crazy. How could it be that easy?"

"When you meet the right person, why make it hard?" Jane said casually. "It doesn't have to be that hard like you and Or, but in the end, you got together."

Or put her hand on her forehead as if she was about to faint from her friend's carefree attitude. I sighed deeply, worried for my brother, and turned to stare at him.

"You know how difficult it is to talk to Mom. She loves you more than anything. If she finds out..."

"She'll be happy. She loves me. Whoever I love, she'll, too."

"You're too careless. You're the only heir to the Wachiravej Group."

"Why can you have a girlfriend so easily, but I can't have a wife? If it's too hard, I'll give up my inheritance and live with Dr. Jane."

"No way. I won't live in poverty," Dr. Jane quickly refused. "Love has obstacles. I want our child to be the billionaire heir. You have to fight your parents."

"Still worried about money, huh?"

"It's real."

"Then I'll do everything to give our child everything you want. I'll convince

Mom."

Yeah, right. She's so easy to convince." I said.

"What's she doing now?"

"Singing karaoke."

"She's in a good mood. I'll call her now," my brother said, picking up his phone to call Mom, but I jumped to grab it and shook my head immediately.

"Hold on, bro. Think it through. When you do business, you think it over and over. Why is this so easy? Plan a bit, will you?" I told my brother as gently as possible. "Tell Dad first. It's harder, but it can't be undone."

"Oh, you're so fussy. Should I get an abortion? It's just a fetus," Jane said casually. "It's only been a month. We can still fix it. I can get pregnant again. Hehe."

"Stop joking around, Jane. You're an adult," Or scolded her friend like never before. Jane pouted and whined.

"What now? Nothing is good enough for you. What do you want me to do?"

"Why didn't you use protection?"

"Sometimes it happens too fast. In the heat of the moment, you don't have a heart to think of anything. You wouldn't understand. You use fingers, we use d..."

"Enough."

Or raised her hand to stop her friend, knowing what she was about to say. I also knew what Jane was going to say, so we all fell silent.

*Well, it had come to this point.*

"The only way out is... You must have a daughter."

"Why a daughter?"

"Dad likes didn't like dick"

Or, who was sipping water, spat it out, looking at me with a mix of wanting to laugh and feeling annoyed.

"Are you still joking at this time?"

"It's true. Dad likes girls. If the first child is a girl, everything will be easier. The next one can be a boy, and Morm will go along with it. The real decision-maker in our family is Dad, you know. He's the one who decided that Pae would be the heir. If Dad agrees, Morm won't object. So, while

Mom is in a good mood, let's all go home and talk. It'll lighten the situation. At most, Mom might just yell at you a bit, Pae, but she won't force an abortion"

"Whatever you say."

"Do I need to come?" Or asked

"No, you don't need to. You'll get dragged into this. You've already scored full points with Mom. If you come, your score might drop. Focus on helping Jane. I got this. Don't worry."

"How can I not worry? If Jane loses it and yells at your mom, we don't have to talk about anything else, then." Or said.

"Fine, I'll raise my child myself," Jane replied.

"I won't let you raise our child alone," my brother said, standing firm. "Besides, I love you with all my heart. I'll marry you."

"But you need to get your braces off first."

"Still worried about braces, huh!"

After our conversation, we all agreed that we had to tell the elders. My brother would tell our family first, and Dr. Jane would inform her family. Both sides would have to face the situation.

After dropping Or and Dr. Jane off at their place (Dr. Jane still had a shift, and Or wanted to rest at my place), my brother and I headed back to the family house alone. During the drive, I couldn't help but talk to my brother.

"Did you plan this?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You're not stupid. You're always careful with everything, both work and personal. You wouldn't let a gold-digging girl trap you. Did you plan to get her pregnant?" I glared at him. He rolled his sleeves up, showing his sexy arm veins.

"I won't say about this. It's rude."

"We're siblings. We can talk about anything. Without me, you wouldn't have gotten close to her. So, tell me. I really want to know."

"..."

"It wasn't a mistake. It wasn't an accident. You trapped Dr. Jane. Do you love her that much?"

"Yes."

"Seriously?

"Love has no reason."

"If it has a reason, it's not love."

"Did you read that novel too?"

"I got it from a series."

"Oh, we watched the same one."

Then, we were silent for a while.

"What do you like about Dr. Jane? She seems money- minded. The flowers had to be folded into thousand-baht and five-hundred-baht bills. The child had to be the heir to the billionaire. When you said you'd give up the inheritance, she didn't seem like she really loved you. I'm not criticizing, just saying what I see."

"She's playful."

"Are you blind?"

"No, when I'm with her all the time... You just said I'm not stupid. I hit on her from the beginning, giving her flowers. Do you think she didn't notice what car I drove, how I dressed, how much the flowers cost? No matter how rich, she didn't care."

"Uh-huh."

"But when I got braces, folded five-hundred-baht bills into four flowers, made a money bouquet, treated her a meal, said a few things that touched her heart, she laughed easily. That's because she opened her heart to me. Do you think I was the only one chasing after Jane?"

"Many people chased after Dr. Jane, huh?"

"A lot, and all wealthy. But Dr. Jane chose me. She said I was the only one who decided to get braces."

"Silly," I laughed at Dr. Jane's idea. "And when she knew she got pregnant, didn't she freak out?"

"She said she'd get rid of it. She didn't want to be accused of being a gold digger. She's that decisive. The thing about the child being the heir to a billionaire, she said it jokingly. Nothing serious. Our mom is like that, and also Dr. Jane."

"You like her because she's like Mom."

"Well... maybe."

"Having one mom isn't enough; you find a wife like her, too."

When we arrived, it was past 8 p.m. We saw Dad's Rolls- Royce parked, and Mom was doing aerobics in compression wear, showing no signs of fatigue. When she saw us coming home together, she looked like she'd seen a ghost because it was such a rare sight.

"How did you come home together?"

Mom hugged us both and kissed my brother's left cheek and my right cheek, even though we'd already seen each other that day.

"It's a good day," I started, looking at my brother to let him speak. "Right?"

"Yes, a good day."

"What's so good about it?"

Dad, who'd started to sober up but still felt a bit dizzy, sat on the recliner sofa, eating rice soup and chewing noisily. He waved a hand in greeting.

"Hey, kids, how did you all come together?"

"I got a girl pregnant, so we came together."

"Oh, I see... *cough!*"

Dad sprayed rice soup from his mouth in surprise. Mom, who was about to start her aerobics routine, froze mid-pose, looking like she hadn't heard clearly. She tumed back, moving like a robot.

"What did you just say?"

"I got a girl pregnant... I have a wife now."

Dad jerked up from the recliner, but it sprang forward, causing him to fall face-first onto the floor. I rushed to help him up. He looked bewildered, as if he hadn't quite understood what he just heard.

"Say that again, clearly."

"I have a kid now."

Our whole family sat down for a serious conversation, with me acting as a witness. Mom, who adored and was very protective of my brother, slapped her knee in disbelief. She couldn't imagine what kind of woman my brother had chosen. She immediately assumed the worst, thinking the woman was out to deceive him and take our family's wealth, like a plot from a melodramatic TV show.

"She's definitely a gold-digger."

"Actually, it's me, Mom."

"Who is she? Where is she from?"

"She's a doctor."

"What? Why is everyone a doctor?"

"She's Or's friend, Mom," I interjected. Mom turned to me immediately. "So, you introduced her to your brother?"

"They knew each other before, Mom, I was just the bridge that helped him reach his dream. As for the pregnancy part, I had nothing to do with that. They handled that themselves."

"I intended to get her pregnant," my brother said without shame. "The moment I met her, I knew she was the one. I couldn't let her go."

"And she just let you get her pregnant that easily? No way. She's definitely trying to trap my Gong Yoo."

"Mom, she's like a Song Hye-kyo herself."

"Why are you siding with her?" Mom was still fuming. My brother looked displeased that Mom was speaking ill of his wife.

"Mom, don't talk about Jane like that."

"Her name is Jane? You're already defending her. I'm hurt."

"I want you to meet her first."

"I will, for sure, but I won't accept her easily. I won't accept the child either. Who knows if it's even yours? if she was easy with you, she might be easy with others, too." Mom's words were harsh, making Pae's face turn red with anger. He stood up abruptly, causing Mom to stand as well, as she'd never seen him like this before.

"You don't believe her, but I do. If it's such a big deal, I'll just go away and live with Jane alone."

"Then you won't get any inheritance," Dad threatened, but Pae was prepared for this.

"I don't need it. Let Poy take over everything for me."

"I don't want it," I replied dismissively. "I don't know how to manage."

"Hey, it's worth ten billion. You can't just say no like that."

"I love her, just like you love Mom. How can you not understand my feelings?"

"How do you know I love your Mom?"

"What? You don't love me?"

"No, That's just a hypothesis," Dad replied awkwardly, trying to change the subject. "If you love her that much, then let's meet her. Who are her family, and where do they live?"

"Honey!" Mom snapped. Dad scolded her back.

"You can't change the past. Do you want to lose both your son and grandson? Let's meet her first and then decide. Our daughter already has a girlfriend, so why can't our son have one, too? Set up a meeting, or we can go to them. What's the big deal about one woman? I want to know who you've chosen."

"Fine, I'll end her. Just wait and see."

Pae arranged a meeting with Jane's family. Today, Mom dressed like a street vendor, showing no respect for Jane's family because she was overprotective of her son. We arrived in our Rolls-Royce, with Dad in a suit, unlike the casual attire he wore when meeting Or's family. We came formally, with no alcohol, to discuss what to do next and how to handle the baby.

When we arrived, Jane's house wasn't as grand as Or's. It was a simple twostory wooden house in a small village. Mom looked at it with disdain and made a sarcastic comment.

"She's definitely a gold-digger."

"Mom."

Pae's tone was like a warning. I shook my head slightly and opened the car door. Jane came out to greet us with a cheerful face, bowing respectfully, Mom looked at Jane with a hint of affection before quickly changing her expression to that of a stern mother.

"Did you bring your maid with you?" Jane asked.

Mom snapped immediately. "I'm his mother!"

"Oh, hello. You looked like a street vendor selling fried bananas."

"Wow, look at that mouth of yours."

"Please come inside."

Jane was Jane. She was fun and unreserved, probably sensing Mom's displeasure and responding with a bit of sarcasm despite Mom arriving in a Rolls-Royce. Pae walked with his arm around Jane, ignoring Mom's glare, and greeted the elders in the house. When the mothers of both families locked eyes, they stood still like statues, with sparks flying between them.

"You must be Jane's mother," my mom said first. "I'm Nuan-anong."

"And you must be Pae's mother... I'm Nuan-anong."

As they introduced themselves, I placed a hand on my chest in disbelief. *How could three people have the same name?*

"Please come in and have some water."

"I hope the glasses are clean."

"Probably cleaner than the tartar in your mouth."

The mothers' verbal sparring was intense. They must've prepared well after talking to Pae, who looked troubled by the exchange. We all entered the house and sat facing each other with glasses of water lined up. Jane sat next to Pae, holding his hand tightly, her smile never fading. My brother, on the other hand, looked worried. Since no one else spoke, my brother started.

"I love Jane. I want to marry her as soon as possible before the baby is born."

Jane looked at her boyfriend, touched, and shook her head, patting his hand gently.

"Slow down."

"I can't. I have to take responsibility."

"You need to remove your braces first."

I put my hand on my forehead. At a time like this, she was worried about braces

"How can you be sure this is Pae's child?" my mom asked. prompting Jane's mom to respond sharply.

"She only slept with your son. Whose else could it be? But if you're not sure... we can terminate it. It's easier."

"Mom," Pae said, shocked, as was my dad.

My mom, however, smiled smugly. "It's just like you."

*Huh?*

"Alright then."

Jane's mom stood up, and everything felt like a déjà vu.

"Nuan-anong."

"What?"

"What's your plan tonight?

"Why do you ask? I'm going to Kor Mor 5, that's right."

Mom stood up abruptly, causing Dad to stand as well, looking around curiously.

"Why, you ask? What's there in store?"

"A gang awaits to bang me more!"

"Anong! You bitch!"

"Anooooooong!"

The two mothers jumped and hugged each other, almost merging into one. Pae, Dad, Jane, and I looked at each other in confusion. I was getting used to this atmosphere. I walked over to my brother, placed a hand on his shoulder, and smiled.

"You're safe now."

"Huh?"

"You'll definitely get married. I guarantee it."

Chapter 18

Then, the two mothers chatted away, reminiscing about their childhood. They even called Or's mom to come over by sending her the location and urging her to hurry. It was a reunion of the mothers, a friendship that would never fade. Dad, who'd arrived looking serious, had now loosened his tie and was sitting comfortably, sipping water with a bored expression. He'd come ready to confront, but now he was just sitting with his eyes closed like an old man who got sleepy easily. Pae, Dr. Jane, Dr. Or, who was on the phone because she couldn't get away from her shift, and I were all chatting excitedly. Everything seemed so easy now, and there was nothing to fear anymore, as our mothers were all close friends.

"So, this means there are no more obstacles, right? Congratulations to both of you," Or said with a smile. Even through the screen, her smile captivated me, and I couldn't help but blow her a kiss, which made Jane push my face away playfully.

"Keep it down a bit. You guys are here for me, not to flirt," Jane said, not showing much excitement. She seemed more at ease than anyone else from the start, as if she didn't care much. Whether they got married or not didn't matter to her, which made me worry for my brother.

"So, what's the plan?" Or asked.

"Get married. Her belly is getting bigger every day," my brother said confidently, but Jane shook her head in refusal.

"No."

"Huh?/Huh?/Huh?"

"Huh?"

Of course, our conversation reached the ears of our mothers. Marriage was a big deal, but Dr. Jane didn't see it as meaningful. Jane's mom immediately scolded her upon hearing this, frowning deeply.

"How can you not get married? You're pregnant... or are you afraid your mother-in-law will bully you?" Jane's mom glared at my mom fiercely. "Are you going to bully my daughter?" she asked.

"At first, I was going to. She took my Gong Yoo son," my mom said with a slightly arrogant look before smiling at her friend. "But seeing that she's your daughter, how could I bully her? She's the daughter of my dear friend."

"Everything's okay now. Why are you playing hard to get?" Jane's mom asked.

"I'll get married only when Pae takes off his braces."

"Are you nuts?" Jane's mom said, as it was an absurd reason. I nodded in agreement, and everyone else did, too, even Dad.

"I'm not. His teeth must be perfect first. It's a rule I made. My ideal guy must have perfect teeth."

"Once he takes off the braces, his teeth will be perfect."

"They must be perfect first."

"When will he take off the braces?"

"Probably in about two years."

"By then, you'll have given birth."

"So what? It's even better. I'll have my child scatter flowers at my wedding. It's quite romantic," Dr. Jane said, clasping her hands on her knees and swaying with a dreamy smile. "Right, honey?"

She smiled at my brother, who couldn't argue with his girlfriend and just smiled weakly. He desperately wanted to marry her, but she was confident with her own thoughts. If she didn't agree, there would be no wedding. This was Dr. Jane, cheerful but firm.

"Where did she get this trait from... Is it you, Anong?" my mom asked Jane's mom irritably. "You were so easygoing as a kid. Who did she get this from, your husband?"

"She's been obsessed with teeth for as long as I can remember. But I didn't think she'd be this obsessed."

"So, what now? Her belly is growing every day, and she won't get married... then move in together first. That way, they can take care of each other."

"Move in with you? That sounds good."

"No, I won't move," Jane spoke clearly, making my mom look puzzled.

"What now?"

"If we move, I want to live with Pae alone. I want to live together, just the two of us."

"What's wrong with living with me, your mother-in-law?" my mom referred to herself as 'mother-in-law' without any reluctance. But Jane's mom understood immediately and touched her friend's knee, sighing and explaining.

"Here's the thing... it's a reason that doesn't make much sense, but you have to try to understand."

"Just explain."

"My daughter won't eat with anyone."

"..."

"She won't use shared utensils with anyone. She won't share a table with anyone unless she's really close with them. She won't eat with anyone at all. So, if she's willing to have a husband, it means she's willing to kiss your son, to have a child with him, which means she's willing to eat together. So, they'll live together alone, eating together without anyone else."

"This is the reason?"

"Yes."

"This is the reason?!!!"

"Yes"

"My mouth is clean."

"My daughter never believes anyone's mouth is clean. I still have to get my teeth cleaned every three months. Some days, she won't even eat with me. So... If you can accept it, just let her. Let them live their life alone. Just don't overthink it."

"But Gong Yoo, my son... I love him."

"He has to have his own family."

"Mom," Gong Yoo, no, Pae finally spoke up after listening for a long time, trying hard to make Mom understand. "Please, let me live with Jane. I want to start a family."

"But..."

"Darling... our son wants his own life. If Poy can go live her life, Pae should be able to too. He's been obeying us for a long time. Now, he has a wife and a child. You can't keep him with you forever," Dad added, even though he didn't quite understand the crazy reason. Mom's shoulders slumped, and she looked like she was about to cry. Her friend patted her shoulder comfortingly.

"Come on, you still have me and Anong 4. What are you afraid of? Your life won't be that lonely. We're all back together now. You lose a son but gain a friend."

"What can I do? My son said this much. He wants to live his own life. If it weren't your daughter, the daughter-in-law would have been slapped by me."

"This is my daughter. Try me."

"I didn't because she's your daughter."

"Thank you, Mom." Jane smiled at my mom and crawled to prostrate in her lap, smiling beautifully. When my mom saw her perfect teeth, she sighed and complimented her.

"She's really adorable. No wonder my son loves her. Her teeth are really perfect."

"All thanks to me."

"Alright, go pick a condo. Your dad has plenty of condos. Choose wherever you want, but you have to let me visit you anytime I want. This is my request."

"Okay"

"Okay, Mom."

"After the baby is born, you must get married."

"Okay."

"Okay, Mom."

"Okay, then..."

Pae crawled to prostrate on Mom's lap and hugged Jane happily. I watched with tears in my eyes while Or, who was on the call, teased a bit.

"Such a crybaby."

"Your friend is really a badass."

"That's what she is."

Actually, my brother had already picked a condo in mind, so there was no need to choose. But he still had to ask his future wife if she liked it. The condo was by the Chao Phraya River, a 155 sq.m. unit, essentially the entire floor, practically a penthouse. It was fully furnished, as it was a show unit for foreign buyers or VIP guests, but no one had bought it yet. Now, it'd become my brother's by default. It even had a private pool. Of course, Jane loved it. She smiled and leaned her head on her future husband's shoulder, praising him until my brother beamed.

"You have great taste."

"If you like it, I'm happy."

"The baby will be happy that his dad provides comfort even before he's born."

Or, who'd come along, sighed and shook her head at her friend's behavior. I laughed a bit, getting used to Jane's ways.

"She's very straightforward."

"She shows her true self from the start. If you can accept it, fine. If not, move on. And most guys who come to hit on her like her," Or said, piquing my interest

"More than you?"

"Of course. She has beautiful teeth and smiles at everyone, making guys think her smile is for them. So they bring flowers to court her, and those flowers end up with me."

"Or."

"What?"

"Nothing, just acknowledging. Not calling you"

"Just kidding," she said, linking her arm with mine affectionately. "You're an heir to a fortune. Why don't you live in a penthouse like this?"

"Do you want one? You can have it, but it might be far from your hospital."

"Just saying I like one, then I can have one?"

"Well, if my brother can have one, why can't I?"

"Being rich is nice."

"You said like you're poor. You're the daughter of a hospital owner."

"Not as rich as you, though. I'll stay in my room. I like small spaces. It's close to the hospital. I can get to my bed in three steps, then lie down, and sleep immediately."

"I won't let you sleep. We'll have fun first."

"Okay, fun first."

"What are you two whispering about? So, we're taking this unit, right? What does everyone think?"

"It's great," Or shouted to her friend. Jane smiled and told Pae, nodding that this was the one. Pae smiled gently and agreed before walking back to us.

"Before we leave, let's make a toast to celebrate the new place. I'd like to have dinner too, but..." Jane looked at me. Knowing her a bit, I laughed and waved my hand.

"It's okay. We'll have dinner together after I get my teeth cleaned with you."

"Okay, we 're on the same page."

"How can you drink? You're pregnant," my brother scolded sternly. Jane turned to him with an even sterner look as if to say, 'Don't you dare talk to me like that,' making my brother shrink back a bit. "I'm just worried," he muttered.

*Bro, this is just the beginning...*

"I'll just have a tiny sip. I know my limits, I'm not gonna drink the whole bottle. By the way, do you have any wine in your room?"

"No."

"Then go buy some."

"Alright, you stay with your friends for now."

"Do you want me to go with you?" I offered, but he declined with a laugh.

"No need. Stay with your friends and chat. I'll be back in a jiffy because I miss my wife."

Hearing that, Dr. Jane walked over and gave her husband a quick kiss on the cheek, making Or and I tum away in mock disgust. Pae couldn't stop smiling as he walked out. Once he was gone, Jane turned back to us and winked.

"See? I have him wrapped around my finger."

"Yeah," Or said, laughing, "But maybe you should be a bit more considerate of his sister."

"It's fine," I laughed too. "I never knew Pae was so in love."

"More than you can imagine. But honestly, I don't know who's more crazy. I miss him already," Jane said, looking at the door and clutching her chest. "I miss him so much."

"You're so dramatic," Or couldn't help but say. "And what was that about bossing him around earlier?"

"You have to keep control. Show your true self. He loves me, I love him, but in a household, you have to show that you won't just give in. Some men, when they have an edge over you, tend to overlook your importance. But I won't be like that. I got a lot of this from my mom. Your moms are the same, right? Are any of your moms afraid of their husbands?"

We shook our heads in unison. It was true. Our moms, both mine and Or's, never seemed afraid of our dads. In fact, our dads loved and cherished them, never causing any trouble with mistresses or anything like that.

"Because they kept control, and I intend to do the same. We love each other equally, but when it comes to running the household, I won't be beneath him just because he's richer. If he cheats, I won't forgive him. I'll only forgive him if I get a new husband first. Something like that."

"That's so you," Or laughed. "Now, how long are you going to stand there? You're pregnant. Come sit down."

Jane sat on the sofa and looked out at the sky from the tall building.

"Are you really not going to get married until he gets his braces off? Is your resolve that strong?"

"Yes, his teeth have to be perfect first."

"Can't you get married while he still has braces?

"The groom would look too much like a high schooler. A CEO with braces looks ridiculous. Besides, having kids throw flower petals is adorable... But what about you two? Don't you want to get married?"

"Hmm?/Hmm?"

Out of nowhere, Jane brought up the topic. I'd never thought about it before, and it made my heart race. *Why haven't I thought about it? People in love usually want to show their love, and marriage serves that purpose.* I looked at Or, about to ask her about it, but she changed the subject first.

"No need to get married. Just stay like this. Women don't need to get married."

*Huh?*

"Why do you think that?" Jane asked, intrigued. Meanwhile, I was left speechless, feeling disheartened. My thoughts and hers were different, and Jane probably noticed.

"Many couples stay together without getting married. Besides, I'm confident that even if we don't get married, we'll still love each other for a long time. Right, Poy?"

"If you say so."

"Also, I don't like having to prepare the ceremony. Why do we need to announce to everyone what we are?"

"So they know we're taken and won't mess with our partner."

"Oh, no one's going to approach Poy," Or laughed confidently.

I pouted and sarcastically retorted. "Don't be so sure. I'm cute, you know. Hmph." I turned away in mock anger, and Or playfully leaned over, scratching my chin like I was a little cat.

"You're cute, but we don't need to get married. It's too complicated. Let marriage be for hetero couples. We'll just watch couples like Jane and your brother getting married... Where's the bathroom? I need to pee."

"Try looking around. It's my first time here, too."

"What kind of room owner doesn't know where the bathroom is?"

Or got up and started looking for the bathroom, opening the doors until she found it and disappeared inside. Now, it was just Jane and me. Jane smiled knowingly at me.

"Feeling hurt, aren't you?"

"No." I lied, even though deep down, I was really hurt that my girlfriend didn't see the value in marriage or thought of me as a sure thing. "It's just... she thinks I'm too much of a sure thing."

"Or is very confident. So let's shake that confidence a bit."

"Huh?"

"Do you want to get married?"

"Not really."

"Then I won't help you."

"..."

"..."

"Please help me."

"Well...

"Hurry, before she comes out of the bathroom."

"It's a long story. I'll call you tonight. Just be brave. Don't let anyone think you're a sure thing. Show that you have the upper hand and use Or's weaknesses to your advantage."

Then, Or came out of the bathroom, ending our conversation. Shortly after, my brother returned, and we celebrated the new room.

"What makes you not want to get married?" I asked while Or was unhooking her bra from behind, getting ready to shower. I sat on the bed, pretending to ask casually, not looking at her.

"Nothing, really. I just think it's unnecessary. Why? Do you want to get married?"

"Just curious."

"What are you thinking?"

"Nothing."

"No, you must be thinking something. Otherwise, you wouldn't ask." Or took off her bra but kept her t-shirt on, making her chest visible through the fabric. She sat next to me on the bed. "Tell me, what are you thinking?"

"I was just wondering if you don't want to get married because you're keeping your options open. In case we don't work out, you can date someone else."

"That's not it."

"But I can't help thinking that."

"I just don't like making a big deal out of things. Besides, we're women. Have you seen the news? When gay couples or tomboys marry women, reporters cover it. I don't want that."

"We don't have to make it public."

"Do you want to get married?"

"It just crossed my mind."

"I don't want to."

"You're making me want to get married now," I started to speak angrily. "I want to show everyone that you're mine."

"If getting married means putting a bell around my neck like a pet, then forget it. I won't marry, ever. We're not talking anymore. We're fighting now."

This was our first argument. I wasn't backing down either. What started as a small issue turned into a big one. Or got up and headed to the bathroom. "I'm going to sleep at my mom's tonight."

"Don't do that. When we fight, we don't leave. That's the rule."

"When did you make that rule?"

"Just now. If we fight and you leave every time, we'll never fix things. We need to talk it out today. Or at least make up." "And sweep the problem under the rug?"

"How is leaving not sweeping it under the rug?"

"At least we won't see each other. We can think separately for a night and then talk when we're calmer."

"No. We can turn our backs to each other and think, but don't leave the house or the room."

Or breathed heavily. She seemed to agree that leaving was a stupid idea. So she chose to go into the bathroom and slam the door. I sat there, frustrated. Then my phone rang as if on cue. It was Jane calling. I answered with a cold tone, not realizing it, making Jane exclaim.

"Are you upset?"

"We're fighting."

"About the wedding, right?"

"Yeah."

"Or probably wants to win and has an old-fashioned perspective that women marrying women is embarrassing."

"This is the modern age. Even lesbian couples in TV shows get married."

"Or doesn't have time to watch those. Here's the thing. Where's she?" "Showering."

"I'll keep it short."

"Okay."

"Find a guy to flirt with you."

"What?"

"Yeah, find a guy to flirt with you."

"Where am I supposed to find one? if it were that easy, I'd have a boyfriend by now." I wanted to laugh out loud but couldn't because I was too upset.

"Didn't Or tell you that your dad once hired a model to flirt with you?"

"Oh."

"Do that. But this time, make it subtle. He doesn't have to be super handsome or rich. Just an average guy. Tell him to visit you in the morning and night, and you have to play along."

"Play along?"

"Yes, and her weaknesses will show themselves."

Chapter 19

Or did as she was told. Even though we'd fought, she didn't leave. We still slept in the same bed, but we turned our backs on each other and didn't speak. I couldn't sleep, tossing and turning. I didn't know if she'd fallen asleep yet, but she probably wasn't too bothered. She was likely tired from work and thought our fight was too trivial. She was probably already asleep.

*Trivial, huh? Of course, she thinks I'm a sure thing. I'm the one who liked her first, so I approached her first. I've always been like putty in her hands. No, I can't let her be like this. She needs to know that someone like me has options, too.*

Dr. Jane's advice sparked a strong desire in me to prove something. Part of me was afraid that if I really did it and got caught, it'd lead to a huge fight and a breakup. But I also wanted to know if Or could handle it and how she'd feel if someone else showed interest in me

*Fine, let's see. I won't be putty in her hands anymore.*

The next morning, Or left for work without saying a word to me. She didn't try to make up with me or give me a goodbye kiss before heading to work. She just ordered her coffee and went straight to the hospital. Even the staff at the coffee shop noticed something was off. I was in a foul mood, sleepdeprived, with dark circles under my eyes. As soon as she left, I called my dad.

"Dad, find me a guy."

"What the heck? You have a wife, and now you want me to find you a guy?"

Dad sounded surprised because when I introduced Or to him, I insisted I loved her with all my heart. But now I was asking him to find me a guy. So, I briefly explained that I wanted to get married, but Or didn't agree.

"That's ridiculous."

"Even you say that?"

"If she doesn't want to get married, why force her? Besides, why tie yourself down? One day, if you break up, you can easily find someone new. Women dating each other don't last long anyway."

"Why do people think like that? There are plenty of long- term relationships between women."

"You haven't been with Dr. Or for long, and now you want to test her love. Doing this, and if she finds out, it'll only lead to a breakup."

"I don't care. Just find someone for me. He doesn't have to be super handsome, just a decent-looking one who's good at acting. Find a good modeling agency and brief them well. You pay for it."

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Yes, I want to know if she really loves me. I'm always the one approaching her, flirting with her, writing songs for her, but I've never seen her show any affection for me."

"Fine, I warned you. You're just creating drama for yourself. When do you want this?"

"As soon as possible."

"How about this evening?"

"Sounds good. Arrange for him to meet me first. I want to get to know him and see his face so I can brief him properly."

"Alright, what's this about?"

"She's the one in the love song."

"There's even a title"

"You asked for it."

We hung up. I stood with my arms crossed. Honestly, I didn't feel great about doing this, but Or's indifference pushed me to want to win. I wanted to show her that I wasn't a sure thing, that men wanted me, too. Hmph.

Dad was quick to act. Within three hours, someone from the modeling agency sent over a good-looking guy, not a TV star handsome but attractive enough. We met at a coffee shop in a central Bangkok mall. I looked at him and sighed.

"You're too handsome."

"Thank you."

"I'm insulting you."

"That's a very nice insult."

"Why do you take this job?"

"Because I have no job right now. I consider it as a practice," he replied innocently. He was probably three to four years younger than me. I crossed my arms and interviewed him in detail.

"What's your name?"

"Gap."

"How old are you?"

"I'm 20."

"Wow, much younger than me," I said, rubbing my temples. "But if you want to enter the industry, being 24-25 is too late. Well, you need to tone down your looks a bit. Wear glasses to look nerdier, dress more shabbily, and carry a backpack with comic books. Can you play the role of a nerd?"

"I can."

"Can you awkwardly flirt with girls?"

"I'm not very good at flirting to begin with."

"So, you've never had a girlfriend?"

"I have, but usually, girls approach me."

*Damn, he was boasting. Unlike me, no guy ever approaches me. Is my face that unappealing? But whatever, I can't back out now.*

"Alright, let's go buy glasses and clothes. Dress more appropriately for a nerd. Try to win me over, baby boy."

"Yes,... By the way, what's your name? You haven't told me."

"If you want to flirt with me, you have to find out my name yourself. Play the role and try to get to know me. Okay?"

"You're right. When do I start?"

"This evening. Figure it out."

"Got it."

"Let's go buy clothes."

I took the handsome kid to transform him into a nerd. The glasses couldn't hide his good looks, so I made him use an eyebrow pencil to thicken his eyebrows and dress in plaid shirts, casual tees, old pants, sneakers, and a backpack for comic books. When choosing comics, he was quite skilled, probably because he was a boy and had his favorites. With someone else paying, he grabbed a bunch and happily stuffed them into his bag, smiling so brightly that his smile took me aback, as I often lost to people with beautiful smiles, just like I had with Or.

"Thanks for the comics. They suit my taste."

"Obviously, you're just a boy."

"I'm grown up now. I'm just an adult who likes comics"

"Actually, I like some of the ones you picked, too."

"Which ones?"

"Starving Anonymous."

"Wow, that's an awesome manga."

"Right? The author is amazing. We should chat about it."

"Sure, it's like finding a kindred spirit."

His endearing smile made me ruffle his hair until it was all messy. He looked at me briefly before quickly looking away. I didn't care about his gaze; it was just that his messy hair made him look more rugged.

"Yeah, keep your hair like this. It looks nerdy. Don't do anything with it. Keep it messy. From now on, wear glasses, read comics, and try to charm me."

"Got it."

"Alright, let's split up. See you this evening. Come however you want." "Okay"

Even though Or and I fought, I always tried not to let it last more than a day. Whether I was right or wrong, I'd be the one to make up. So, I went to see her at the hospital with flowers. It wasn't a big bouquet, just a single rose, like when I first courted her. Remembering this made me feel a bit guilty for not being as consistent as I thought. I'd imagined that if we became a couple, I'd still give her flowers, but once we were together, I forgot this thought. From now on, I'd give her flowers, whether it was a special day or not.

I did the same as always, waiting for her in front of the examination room, waiting for her to finish with patients, and peeking in there to let her know I was there. Or saw me but pretended not to. When she finished, instead of coming to me, she walked past, forcing me to half-walk, half-run to catch up and make up.

"Hey, don't be mad at me. I brought you flowers," I said, offering the flower, but she didn't take it. Her voice was nasal and annoyant as she asked indifferently.

"Why did you bring this?"

"To make up."

"What did you do wrong?"

"I asked you to marry me."

"Is that it?"

"If not, why are you mad?"

"Because you're stubborn."

"I admit it's my fault. I was being silly. Let's make up. Don't be mad for more than a day. I love you."

She paused for a moment when she heard my confession and turned to look at me. I blinked rapidly, making her sigh.

"Don't use that trick."

"What should I say then? I really love you. Take the flower. I was wrong... After your shift, let's go eat. I'll treat you to omakase."

"Don't try to buy me delicious food. Hmph."

Hearing her say, 'Hmph,' I smiled in victory. She was probably just as troubled by our fight as I was. Since we started dating, we'd never raised our voices at each other. But last night, we turned our backs and didn't talk, make up, or cuddle like usual.

"Let's make up."

"Last night, you didn't cuddle me."

"When I tried, you pushed me away."

"Yes, but if you insisted, I'd have let you. I can't resist your persistence."

"I was feeling down. Who wouldn't be? Asking someone to marry you and getting rejected. Everyone else would be happy to hear that. But... if you don't want to get married, it's okay. I give up. We'll stay like this, doing whatever you want."

"Don't be sarcastic."

"I'm not. This is pure love. If I didn't love you, would I bring you flowers? Come on... let's make up. Let's have omakase, your favorite."

"No more running this time."

"Why would you run? That's my dad's restaurant."

"Alright, Crazy Rich Girl."

I linked my arm with hers, knowing I could. Or shook her arm a bit, but when she saw I'd locked my arm with hers, she let me do it and smiled.

"Fine. I'm done being mad at you."

"Then let's change clothes. Today, we're going to have an omakase course. And tonight, we'll make up by having some fun ourselves. I'll lick you from your toes to the last strand of your hair."

"You're so naughty... but really?"

"Really."

"Okay, wait a bit while I change, then we'll go eat."

Being a grown-up had its perks. We didn't stay mad at each other for long. While waiting for Or to get dressed, everything was in Jane's sight. The person who loved to stir things up and enjoyed our relationship popped in, hands in her lab coat pockets, nudging me with a wink.

"So, you two made up? Guess we don't need my plan anymore."

"No, we're still using it."

"But you made up already."

"Yeah, but that's just for now. I want to see how much Or loves me. It's always been me showing love to her, but never the other way around."

"Sometimes, being stubborn is cute."

"You suggested it to me."

"Because it's so much fun."

"What are you two talking about?" Or, now out of her gown coat, she saw Jane and me chatting and greeted us with a smile. Jane waved at her friend and answered in her usual cheerful manner.

"Just saying hi. Oh, flowers! But don't bring them too close." Jane pinched her nose immediately because of her allergy, speaking in a muffled voice, "You two are so sweet."

"I brought them to make up. We had a little fight. We're off now; we have an omakase date." I boasted. Or raised an eyebrow at Jane, signaling that we were in for a treat. Jane looked excited and jumped up and down.

"Take me with you!"

"No way! We're going on a date. You have work to do, and you're still jumping around, huh?"

"Fine, I'll let my hubby treat me."

"Good. Let's go." Or reached out to touch my back, stuck her tongue out at her friend, and smiled at me cheerfully. I waved goodbye to Jane knowingly and went to hail a taxi to the restaurant as planned, wondering what would happen that day. How would Gap, the boy we hired, handle this evening, and how would Or react, I wondered.

"I'm soooo full."

Or rubbed her belly as we walked out of the restaurant, looking a bit sleepy from being so full. I watched her relaxed demeanor fondly and pinched her cheek lovingly.

"You really like Japanese food, don't you?"

"I'm dating you because you're rich, just so you know."

"Should we eat it every day then?"

"No, because it'd get boring. It's better to have it occasionally. And I was joking about you being rich. Don't take it seriously. I'm not Jane."

"I know."

"Let's call a taxi. I want to go home and sleep."

"Are we going to have fun ourselves?"

"After sleeping, we'll have fun in the shower. It's more exciting when wet."

"Oh, you're quite the planner, Doctor." I giggled at Or's cheekiness. As I was about to hail a taxi, I bumped into someone, causing their belongings to scatter into a puddle. Comic books fell face down into the water, getting soaked. I felt a bit guilty but was surprised to see it was Gap. *Did he follow us here? How did he know?*

"My comics... oh no."

"S... sorry."

I quickly apologized. Or, seeing what happened, came over to help pick up the scattered items and handed them to Gap. Most of them were comic books and textbooks. I picked up a comic and said, "Starving Anonymous... this one's really good."

"You read this too?"

"Yes, I'm really sorry for getting your comic book wet. How much are they? I'll pay for them." I handed him a hundred-baht note. He took it willingly and looked at me in awe. Of course, everything was in Or's sight. "How much are comics these days?"

"A hundred is enough. I'm just touched to meet someone who doesn't think reading comics is silly."

"Is it really that touching?"

"What's your name?"

"Let's go."

Or interrupted, pulling me up and hailing a taxi that arrived just in time. I barely had time to apologize again before getting into the taxi quickly. Or gave directions back to the shop in an unusually cold tone. As the car moved, I saw Gap watching us until we were out of sight. Or saw it too and crossed her arms.

Seeing her like that, I teased, "What's wrong with you?"

"Why did you have to talk to him for so long just because you bumped into him?"

"Because I damaged his stuff."

"Taking responsibility is good, but you talked too long. And that boy didn't look at you normally."

"He's nearsighted. How could he look normally?"

"Don't be annoying."

"Oh, my doctor has such a sharp tongue and uses bad words. Hehe." I giggled. Or looked more annoyed but then laughed lightly. "Why? Are you jealous? He's just a kid."

"When did you start reading comics?"

"I've been reading them for a long time."

"I never knew."

"What do you know about me?"

"..."

"Just kidding."

"You're right. You know everything about me, but I don't know much about you." Suddenly, she went quiet, thinking to herself. The atmosphere became intense, but it strangely made me feel good.

*That boy really made things better. Dr Jane's plan actually worked.*

Chapter 20

"What are you doing?"

I peeked over to see Or watching a YouTube video about cooking. The sweet-faced girl was intently watching the screen and jotting down notes before she shyly flipped her phone face down.

"You just popped up out of nowhere. That's rude."

"Do I need to be polite to you now?"

"Politeness is something everyone should have."

"But with your wife, you don't need to be."

"Are you my wife? I always thought you were the husband."

"Sometimes we switch roles," I said with a sly smile before changing the subject. "What are you watching? What are you jotting down? Let me see... a cooking recipe? Why are you writing that down?"

"I'm planning to learn how to cook."

"Why do you want to learn?"

"So I can try cooking for you."

"Hmm?" I made a face like I'd seen a ghost. "What mood is this?"

"It's the mood of wanting to please you. I've never done anything nice for you," she said, pouting. "Thinking about it, it's always you who takes care of me. I'm just on the receiving end."

"Are you still thinking about today? What's this about?" I laughed and hugged her from behind while she was still sitting. "You don't need to do anything. Your work is already overwhelming. Just being here and looking pretty is enough motivation for me."

"No, I want to do something for you. In the future, if we argue, you can't say I never did anything nice for you."

"So, what are you cooking?"

"Stir-fried morning glory."

"I don't eat vegetables."

"Oh, really? I'll quit this then."

"But if you cook it, I'll try to eat vegetables. It's good for health," I winked at her. "Anything made by my lover is delicious. Oh, a customer is here. Keep studying, I'll go greet them."

"Go ahead."

She continued her work, focusing intently on jotting down the recipe. I watched her with affection. Seeing her so determined, I decided I'd learn to eat vegetables for her, even though my body resisted all kinds of greens.

"Hello, welcome..." As soon as I saw who it was, I was a bit taken aback. Gap, who'd just walked into the coffee shop, smiled and greeted me as if he'd coincidentally run into me.

"What a coincidence. What are you doing here?"

*He's an actor, so being smooth is his job. It's me who's awkward and not used to acting, so I have to go along with it, though clumsily.*

"I'm the owner of this place. Isn't this too much of a coincidence?"

"Really? Is this your coffee shop?"

"Yeah."

"Treat me to coffee, and then we're squared for the comic.

"I already paid for that."

"I want free coffee."

Our conversation was entirely in Or's sight. Seeing Gap talking so casually, I shrugged and smiled at him before acting naturally.

"Sure, order whatever you want. It's on me. Did you buy a new one?"

"Yes, I did."

"Sorry again for making that one wet."

"I got a new one, so no need to apologize."

"Go sit down. I'll have someone bring it to you."

Gap intentionally sat at the table next to Or and pulled out a comic to read while waiting for his drink, which he ordered at the counter. I pretended to walk over to Or and spoke in a surprised tone.

"Guess who this is? The kid we met today. What a coincidence."

"There are no coincidences." Or replied coldly. She put away her phone, stopped jotting down notes, and rested her chin on her hand, looking at Gap. "The restaurant and this coffee shop aren't close to each other. How did you end up here?"

"I live around here. Looks like I'll be coming to this shop often. Might get free coffee frequently, hehe," he said, acting like a typical teenager, but I cleared my throat a bit.

"No way. If you keep getting free stuff, I'll go bankrupt. This one's on the house as a get-to-know-you gesture. What's your name?"

"Gap. And you?"

"I'm Poy, and this is Or."

Or looked displeased that I introduced her, but she didn't say much. She started observing closely and then spoke as if catching something.

"Your eyesight isn't bad. Why wear glasses?"

I swallowed hard. The disguise was over. *What excuse should I use now? I went out of my way to buy glasses to tone down his aura a bit. Or was very observant, huh?*

But then, Gap responded nonchalantly. "I wear them to be less noticeable. I get annoyed by people staring. Since you pointed it out, I'll take them off."

With that, he took off his glasses, revealing a face full of handsome features that stunned the staff serving the drinks. I closed my eyes, unsure whether to feel relieved or annoyed that he'd managed to get away with it. Without the glasses, he looked like Superman, shedding his disguise and becoming even more handsome. *Well, he came from a modeling agency. How could he not be handsome?*

Or, seeing this, frowned even more, seemingly displeased. "You're quite good-looking."

"I'm a model, but I don't like mingling with people. I prefer being alone and reading comics. So, I disguise myself a bit. The glasses help tone down my looks."

*Besides being annoying, he's also confident in his looks.*

"Are you going to stand there forever? Sit with me for a bit."

"Huh?" I, standing between Or's table and Gap's table, pointed at myself. When he said that, I pulled up a chair but chose to sit at Or's table instead because she seemed to be getting annoyed. "I guess I've been standing for a while."

"Stunned by my looks, huh?"

"Hey. Not everyone is mesmerized by your looks."

"I haven't seen anyone not stunned by my looks."

"Me," Or said flatly. "I didn't care about your looks at all."

"I don't care about you either."

When he retorted, Or's face tightened, and she straightened up. Seeing things weren't going well, I quickly cut in.

"Finish your drink and head home. It's late. If you stay out too late, your parents might worry."

"I'm twenty."

I bared my teeth, signaling him to leave. The handsome guy, seeing my expression, pouted a bit, feeling like he was having fun but had to leave. He quickly drank half of his drink, grabbed his bag and comic, and left.

"Alright. I was having a good chat with you. Meeting you feels like fate. I'll come back to chat about comics."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Bye-bye." He waved cheerfully and left.

I stood with my hands on my hips, watching him leave the shop, shaking my head and laughing before turning to Or and speaking cheerfully.

"That kid is funny, huh?" I quickly stopped smiling when I saw her face, which looked like a titan ready to devour someone.

"What so funny," she said, getting up and storming upstairs without a word. From being in a good mood, she was now in a bad mood again. I had to run after her, smiling and scratching my head because I felt like I had to deal with her ever-changing moods, which were making me dizzy.

"What's wrong with you? You were fine just now."

"Annoyed."

"Hey, why are you suddenly annoyed with me?"

"You seem very happy."

"Why should I be unhappy?"

"Aren't you happy that the kid likes you?"

"What kid?"

"The good-looking kid who mentioned 'fate.' I can tell you're happy that the kid likes you. Why? Is it exciting to have someone like you?"

I pretended to be clueless, scratching my cheek a bit, acting innocent.

"I don't see how he likes me at all. We just had a good conversation. We both like comics. Besides, it really was a coincidence. We met once today in front of the restaurant, and now we meet at the coffee shop. At first, I didn't even think he was that handsome. If you hadn't pointed out for him to take off his glasses."

"You!"

"Hey, why are you raising your voice? You asked me first." I used my charm to walk over and hug her, but she shrugged me off a bit. Still, I persisted until I managed to hug her because she liked persistent people. "Come on, don't let someone we just met ruin things. We just made up today. Don't let other things spoil it."

"How can it not spoil things when someone is bothering you?"

"Bothering? He just came for coffee."

"It's obvious that kid is interested in you."

"So, someone can't be interested in me? Should my life only revolve around you? And if he's interested but I'm not, why do you care?"

"..."

"Come on, calm down. Be in a good mood. We got this. I already go along with everything you want. You don't want to get married, neither do I. If you want to do something, I'll go along with it. I love only you. Remember that."

"You won't ever change your mind about me, right?"

"Why would I?"

"Even if someone better comes along, you won't change, right?"

"I'm the one who came on to you. How could I love or like anyone else? Geez, you're so jealous. Come here," I pulled her into a hug. She resisted a bit but eventually gave in and hugged me tightly. "I love you a lot. Remember that."

"I love you too."

"That's all there is to it."

"Don't change your mind about me." "Never, jealous girl.

"If you change your mind, I'll kill you."

"That's harsh. Just don't hit me with a brick. Mom said the body won't look good if I die."

"Still joking around, huh?"

"Since we made up, let's play."

"Play what?"

"Playing with ourselves."

"Eek!"

The situation was still under control and seemed to be going well.

*It looks like Or loves me quite a bit. Maybe we don't need to get married after all I just want to know how much she truly loves me. Perhaps it'd be better to stop here, but just a little more. I still enjoy seeing her get jealous. Just a couple more days, and I'll stop this. There's no need for marriage, I guess.*

That morning, I woke up in a cheerful mood. The thought of marriage could go to hell. If we didn't get married, so be it. It was just an event to show everyone that she was mine and I was hers. That was all. If we both knew and trusted that we belonged to each other, there wouldn't be any problem. There were many couples, whether male-female, female-female, or malemale, who lived together without such ceremonies and stayed together until old age.

*I shouldn't have gotten so worked up with Dr. Jane. I should cancel the arrangements with the modeling agency and with Gap. The kid did his job well.*

While I was in a good mood, singing softly as I went down to the coffee shop early in the morning because I was so happy last night, I was surprised to see Gap there so early. Today, he came in a model look-a fashionable shirt, jeans, sneakers, and cool hair, not messy like I'd styled it the day before. No glasses, no backpack. He was sitting by the window at the same table Or usually sat at. As soon as he saw me, he waved.

"Hey! Hello!"

"You're here so early?" I looked around and quickly headed towards him.

"Aren't you being a bit too diligent?"

Even though he came looking cool, he still brought his comic book as if to kill time. I glanced at the comic with interest, picked it up, opened it, and quickly closed it, afraid of spoiling it for myself.

"Better not read it. I'll buy my own."

"Afraid of spoilers, huh? Take it; It's yours, along with this beautiful flower."

Then, a red rose was placed on the book. I looked at the flower, puzzled.

"An extra gift? Playing the role well, I see."

"No, this is for real."

"What mood are you in?"

"Why do guys give flowers to girls?"

"To worship them, maybe?"

"Are you a monk?"

"Well, why else would you give it to me? Are you saying you like me?" I laughed, thinking it was impossible. I hired him. Meeting someone for a day and saying you like them was even more impossible.

"Yes, I like you."

"Ha ha ha! Get out of here!"

"Why are you laughing? I'm serious."

"Are you insane? I hired you to act, and now you're saying you like me? Who would believe that? Besides, I was going to cancel the contract. No need to do this anymore. I'm tired of playing."

"Why?"

"It's pointless."

"Good, if we stop playing, I can seriously pursue you."

"You! Are you deaf? I said..."

"I really like you."

"..."

"You seem caring. We like the same things, like cornics. You don't think they're silly."

"Everyone reads comics. Besides, I'm much older than you."

"I like older people."

"But I have a girlfriend."

"That girlfriend of yours? You'll break up soon."

"Why do you think we'll break up?"

"Women dating each other never last. I've never seen anyone stay together until old age."

"I'll show you. Now go back." I started to get upset. He was cursing my relationship with Or. He was just an employee. How dare he? "I don't like you doing this. It's beyond your duty. I have a girlfriend. I don't like men."

"I don't care. I like you. Having a girlfriend doesn't mean you won't break up."

"Hey!"

"You can break up. As long as you're not married, I have a chance."

"We're getting married." Or's voice came from the stairs. She walked with her hands in her jeans pockets, looking ready for work, and confidently walked towards us. My eyes widened when I heard her say that. She wrapped her arm around my waist to show possession. "Listen carefully. We're getting married soon. No matter how you come in, in what status, in what form, by coincidence, fate, or being hired."

*Shit... She heard everything.*

"But we're getting married."

Chapter 21

Or made me freeze. She glanced at both of us with cold eyes before leaving a final sentence and walking away without ordering even a single cup of coffee this morning.

"Clear things up today. Finish it."

"Or!"

I ran after her. She walked briskly, ignoring my calls like she was really mad. She must've heard everything—that I hired someone to make her jealous or to force her into marriage. Guilt overwhelmed me. I grabbed her arm to make her turn and talk.

"I'm sorry."

"Go talk to him first. We'll talk later."

"You—"

"Don't mess things up. I need to think alone."

She twisted her wrist free and walked away. I knew that if I insisted, she'd get even angrier, so I let her go and just watched her walk away until she disappeared. As I was about to walk back to the shop to clear things up, Gap, who'd followed me out, called my name with a guilty look on his face, as if he knew he'd done something wrong.

"Hey."

"You little rascal," I said, rubbing my temples. "She knows everything now.

Our contract is over. From now on, you don't need to come anymore. Stop acting. The show ends here."

"But what I said wasn't acting."

"Even if it wasn't, it has to end. I don't know what you're thinking but stop it. I have a girlfriend."

"Having a girlfriend who's a woman isn't going to last long."

"I don't care what you think. For me, this feeling is real, and I'll stay with her until we both decide if it's real or not. Gap, we've only known each other for two days... just two days. How can you say you love me? You're too young. Your life still has many people to meet. You're good-looking. Don't get stuck with someone who hired you to get attention from her girlfriend."

"How many days did it take for you to like her?"

"..."

"A month? A week? Three days? Two days? Or just one day?"

"..."

"You liked her the first time you saw her, right? Can time really decide how many days it takes to like someone? So why am I wrong for meeting someone I like and saying I like them?"

"You're not wrong, but you arrived at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Most importantly, I like women. Even without me, we couldn't be together."

"I don't believe that."

"Don't be so sure of yourself. Go back to where you belong, take the money, and don't come back. I don't want to see you anymore. This is the end of our encounter. Our fate ends here."

I said coldly. Gap grabbed my wrist, but I shook it off and glared at him. "If you don't understand, I'll ruin the modeling agency you're with."

Gap let go because he knew I could do it, and he left with a downcast look, understanding. I hoped he truly understood and wouldn't come back...

With no one left to talk to, I called Dr. Jane, the mastermind, to tell her everything had fallen apart quickly. Or found out the plan sooner than expected, and now I didn't know what she had decided. Jane didn't say much; she just said that she would handle it and then hung up. I couldn't focus all day. Sitting idle seemed too useless, so I sat in the studio writing songs. Songs... that had no substance, no melody, nothing because I had no focus or inspiration.

She was truly my inspiration.

Time moved slowly until it was time to leave work. The sound of the door opening upstairs indicated that Or had returned from work. I quickly put away all the music equipment and rushed upstairs. I saw Or opening the wardrobe, taking things out, and folding clothes neatly. My heart sank. Some dangerous signal told me this wasn't normal.

"What are you doing?"

"Can't you see?"

"No, don't do this."

"What?"

"Don't go."

I hugged her from behind on the bed. My heart felt like it was breaking into pieces. I started crying. Or froze, not saying anything, waiting to hear what I had to say. I took this chance to explain myself immediately.

"Everything I did was wrong. I saw my brother getting married and got jealous. I wanted you to be mine and mine alone. I wanted to see you in a beautiful dress, wanted to announce to everyone that you are mine. So, I came up with this crazy plan. I know it was childish and wrong. Please forgive me. Don't leave me."

"..."

"Whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. We don't have to get married. We can stay like this. Whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. I'll be whatever you want. I loved you from the first time we met. I...I..."

"You're spoiling me rotten, you know."

"H... huh?"

"That's why people think I don't care about you. You make others think I love you less than you love me."

"Isn't that true...?"

"Not at all. I love you to death. There's no need to hire someone to make me jealous. I didn't want to get married because it was annoying. But if you want to get married so much, we'll get married. Are you happy now?"

"No."

"No, what?"

"No marriage," I said, smiling through my tears. "I won't force you anymore. I said I'd do whatever you want. You don't want to get married, don't want to meet people, don't want to be in the news, and I won't make you. So, I won't marry you."

"But I will."

"And I won't. I'll do whatever you want. You don't have to force yourself."

"I said we're getting married. Don't make me angry again. I was looking for a dress to wear to our wedding. I was looking for a shop to try on dresses with you and talking to my mom about how to arrange the wedding." "But..."

"What now?"

"But you don't want to get married, right?"

"I love you. I've never done anything for you. If getting married shows ownership, keeps others from bothering you, lets people know you're already taken, and stops them from flirting like that kid said, then we'll get married. Jane said we should get married at the same time as her, so we don't have to arrange many events. It'll be fun."

"You're not just saying this to please me, right?"

"To please you, and because I love you."

"You said you love me."

"I always say I love you."

"I thought you were just saying it."

"You underestimate my love too much."

"It's not that. It's just... just feels like... how to say it."

"It feels like I love you less than you love me, right?" She concluded accurately and sighed. "I need to show more affection. My flaw is not showing feelings much. From now on, I'll fix that."

"And you weren't packing to leave and break up with me?"

"Are you crazy? Seeing you hire someone to make me jealous because you want to get married so much, who'd want to leave you?"

"Then why were you folding clothes?"

"Just wanted to do something nice for you. You do all the housework alonewashing, ironing, folding clothes, cooking. I have no time. From now on, I'll help you, even just a little"

"Not only are you not angry, but you're also being nice. What's going on...?"

"Jane explained everything. I scolded her a lot, but it was also understandable. Oh, why are you crying?"

"I'm touched. How can you be so reasonable? Wah."

Seeing me cry harder, Or quickly hugged and comforted me, then laughed. She wiped my tears and pulled my cheeks playfully.

"I rarely see you cry. When you cry, you look ugly but still cute." She kissed me once and again and pushed me onto the bed. I was a bit confused and tried to protest, but she growled softly. "Even if I'm not angry, you still have to make up for it. Today, I'll show you how much I love you."

"Can I shower first?"

"No. I'm in the mood."

She didn't let me resist for even a second. My clothes were removed piece by piece while she was still fully dressed. Everything happened quickly, and I was the only one on the receiving end. She touched, she kissed, she knew where I liked It. Her mouth dominated every part until I arched and cried out. From crying, I turned to moaning. Then, the most sensitive part was taken over by her mouth and fingers.

Usually, Or was a calm but passionate one. Today, she was gentle, maybe because she wanted to comfort me, seeing I was upset. She moved her fingers slowly while using her mouth, making my mind go blank. I covered my face and my mouth, not knowing what to do. I climaxed repeatedly, more than three times. Even though I asked her to stop, she seemed to enjoy seeing me in agony. "I love you."

"I believe you."

"I love you a lot."

"I know."

"I'm possessive, too."

"I know."

"Let's get married."

"Okay."

"Don't bring anyone between us again. You're not just a sure thing. You're my everything."

It was the sweetest love confession I'd ever heard and the most sincere I'd ever felt. From now on, I'd never doubt her again.

"Can I join Pae's wedding?" I asked as we all sat down for dinner at home. Today, Or wasn't with us because she'd gone back home to discuss the same matter.

"Of course, you have to come to my wedding," Pae replied.

"I mean, can I get married too?"

"Huh?"

"I want to get married to Or. As soon as you get your dentures off, I'll also get married. I hope you don't mind sharing your wedding day with your

little sister."

Everyone at the table looked at each other in surprise. Hearing that I wanted to get married wasn't shocking, but the fact that I wanted to do it on the same day as Pae's wedding was unexpected.

"Why not have separate weddings? You'd get more envelopes and be richer," Mom said, clearly more concerned about the financial aspect than the idea of her daughter marrying another woman.

"Or said having separate weddings would be too chaotic. Doing it together is more economical."

"You're stealing my spotlight. You already took our parents' love, and now you want to steal my wedding day too?" Pae pouted. "I can't even have my own special day?"

"What's the big deal? If your sister wants to get married too, what's the harm? Is it going to shrink your manhood?" Dad sided with me completely. I turned to him and started massaging his shoulders.

"Dad, you're the best. Or and I are going to try on dresses soon. If you and Mom don't mind, can we get married on the same day as him?"

"But it'll take two years if you wait for him to get his dentures off." Mom said.

"Braces!" Pae stomped his foot like a three-year-old. "Fine, do whatever you want. I have no say in this anyway."

"But Dr. Jane already agreed. If you aren't okay with it, I'll just tell her that you don't want us to get married on the same day."

"Whatever Jane says goes," Pae said.

"Bleh," I stuck my tongue out at him and laughed. "Thank you, big bro. Thank you, Mom and Dad. I'm so happy to be part of this family. Everyone supports me in everything."

"Of course, we support our lovely daughter. But won't Or's family be upset about not getting separate envelopes? Probably not, since they're as rich as us. Whatever their daughter wants, they'll agree to."

"I don't think it'll be a problem," I said.

"Then it's settled."

"Thank you!"

Dad had someone drive me back at the same time Or arrive in a taxi. As soon as we got out of our cars, we smiled at each other. Instead of heading to the coffee shop, we decided to take a walk..

"Want to watch the sunset?" I asked. Or nodded in agreement.

"I was going to suggest that."

We walked side by side on the sidewalk, occasionally passing other people. We talked about our conversations with our parents, which had gone well. Or's parents had no issues since the wedding was two years away, and my parents were okay with it, too. Everything was falling into place perfectly, with no obstacles in our way. It was a good time to prepare ourselves, try on dresses, and get ready to be brides. We also needed time to be together and understand each other better.

"Honestly, I think it's still too long. I want to get married soon. There's no need to wait any longer, but two years is a reasonable time to prepare. Pae's wedding will be quite grand, even if you don't want it to be," I said.

"Maybe we made a mistake planning it with Jane. The more we want a small wedding, the bigger it gets. If we did it ourselves, it might just be our families and friends... but whatever, big is big. We've already told the elders."

"We have plenty of time to prepare. If you want to get married sooner, we can tell our parents. They won't have a problem with it."

"Our love is so good, isn't it? No obstacles at all."

"It's quite idyllic. Maybe because I'm so charming," I suggested.

"Can you compliment yourself like that?"

"You're charming, too."

"Okay, we're both charming. And here's a reward for charming people." Or pulled something out of her pocket and pretended to look away. The velvet box, clearly containing a wedding ring, made my heart race.

"When did you sneak off to buy this?"

"As soon as we talked about getting married, I went to buy it. I guessed your ring size."

"Guessed from what?"

"Your... you know."

"You're joking," I laughed, placing my hand on my chest. Or laughed, too, blushing. "It's rare to see you being so cheeky."

"Well, my partner is cheeky. The first time we met, you said your dad taught you to lick clams."

"How much do we love each other to think alike?" I pulled out a blue velvet box and handed it to her. We exchanged boxes, smiling without opening them. We later opened them together, and Or handed me a beautiful diamond ring while I gave her a simpler diamond ring, explaining, "I chose this style because your job requires a lot of handwork. If the diamond falls into a patient's liver, it'd be a disaster. So, I chose something simple."

"I chose something more prominent for you so guys won't hit on you."

"Still jealous, huh?"

"Everyone is protective of what's theirs."

"Since you licked my... you know, I've been yours."

"Just when things were getting good, you had to say that."

"Love you."

I hugged her without caring about anyone watching. Or hugged me back, laughing under the setting sun. It was a romantic moment for a proposal. We were the perfect couple, one calm and one cheeky, completing each other.

"Let's grow old together," I said.

Or nodded before delivering her punchline. "But you die first, okay?"

*Sigh...*

Chapter 22

Two years was neither too fast nor too slow...

A lot had happened during that time. We'd been through so much together, yet our love remained as strong as ever. Our careers were also going well. As for me, my music label started to gain traction after releasing the song "You Are the One in My Love Song." Although it didn't hit a hundred million views like some others, it became well-known. We got hired to perform at various events, and we'd officially start signing singers for our label. My father, who initially wanted me to join his business, ended up supporting me by providing a substantial fund to expand my operations. I used the money to improve our sound equipment and musical instruments. Everything was going great.

Musicians had steady work, the band had gigs, and the label had singers. I was no longer an unknown label owner.

As for Or, I heard she was planning to specialize in some field related to bones. Though I didn't quite understand it, I supported her wholeheartedly. Everything was going smoothly-our relationship, our careers. If this were a novel, it'd be a happy ending.

"What? Are you leaving already?"

I was at the shoot for our label's first music video but had to leave early for a wedding dress fitting. I raised an eyebrow slightly. Even though the shoot was important, trying on the dress was equally crucial.

"Take care of things here. I can only watch it anyway. The director is talented, I trust him."

"But this is your label's first song. Don't you want to stay and see your pride and joy?"

"I've already seen it. Whether it succeeds or not depends on the director. Please take care of it."

I insisted, watching the actors perform a rain scene with two water trucks spraying them for a dramatic effect. My team had grown significantly. This was our first project, a music video commissioned by a novelist who wanted to try making a music video for their book. It was a new experience, and I hoped the song would do well.

"Send my regards to Dr. Or."

Yak, knowing where I was headed, whispered to avoid disrupting the shoot. I elbowed him playfully for teasing me.

"Stop it."

"Honestly, I'm a bit sad. My friend is getting married."

"Why sad?"

"Because I used to like you."

"Still being silly, huh?"

"There's a handsome guy right here, but you fell for a woman. But it's okay. Seeing my friend happy makes me happy, too. You're doing great in both work and love. You're really lucky."

"It's not luck; it's all hard work. I gotta go, or I'll be late."

"Alright, alright."

"Take care of things here."

I hailed a taxi and directed it to the studio. On the way, I texted Or to let her know I was on my way. She was already at the studio, trying on dresses.

When I arrived, Or was in front of the mirror. Seeing me, she turned and smiled. I was slightly stunned by her beauty and charm.

"What do you think of this dress?"

We were at the wedding studio trying on outfits for our upcoming wedding, We'd debated who'd wear what. I wanted to wear a fitted women's suit for its practicality, but Or wanted to wear one too. So, I opted for a skirt. We could've worn the same thing, but I thought a bit of contrast would be perfect. Honestly, I didn't mind what I wore.

"You're slaying it."

"What does that mean?"

"licking clams, I guess."

"Hey! Stop being silly."

"It means you look amazing. You look like a beautiful, charming woman worth a billion dollars."

"That's a bit much. This shop really knows how to tailor dresses. No need for adjustments."

"It's a perfect fit."

"You should try on your dress."

"Okay"

I tried on a simple white dress with a bit of lace on the shoulders. It was elegant and not too fussy. When I opened the curtain and spun around for Or to see, she looked at me in awe. I raised an eyebrow and smiled broadly.

"How do you like it?" I asked.

"I want to lick clams, too."

"You're just as bad as me. So, do you like it or not?"

"It's perfect. I didn't force you, right? But it's really beautiful."

"As long as you like it, I'll wear anything. You wear a suit, and I wear a pure white wedding dress. We'll walk side by side. How perfect is that?"

Or hugged me tightly in front of the staff without caring about being watched. I was the one who felt awkward and shy. This dress must be really beautiful; she seemed to love it, and it made me not want to take it off.

"Thank you for approaching me that day and deciding to pursue me. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't know how to love anyone."

"You're so sentimental," I hugged and patted her back. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be able to write songs or know how to love anyone, either."

We pulled away, and I saw Or's eyes welling up with tears like a crybaby, making me laugh. I wiped her tears with my finger.

"What's with you? This dress must be really beautiful for you to be this emotional."

"It's truly beautiful. Seeing it makes me want to take it off. Let's have some fun tonight."

"You're getting more straightforward."

"We have nothing to hide anymore."

"True. You even said you wanted me to die first. What kind of person are you?"

"If I die first, you'll be sad. It's better for me to be the one who takes care of you when you're sick and the one who mourns alone when you're gone. That's what I mean. Do you understand?" she said.

She was too deep. At first, I thought she was joking, but her words were filled with meaning. They made me emotional, too, but I couldn't help but lighten the mood.

"I think I'll die before you," I replied.

"Because I'm a doctor?"

"Because I have kidney disease."

"Why?"

"Too much salty food."

"Where did you get all that salt from?"

"Licking your pussy every day. You take so long to climax. How could I not have kidney failure... *Ouch*, why did you pinch me? Haha."

"You're such a killjoy."

We laughed together. From tears of sentiment, it turned into tears of joy. The dress fitting ended, and we agreed on the outfits, just waiting for the big day.

And then the big day arrived. Two years of waiting. It was the day my brother got his braces off and was ready to be a groom. It was a good decision. My brother's teeth were perfectly aligned, and his face was long and oval-shaped, more handsome than ever. In his groom's suit, he stood out even more. The bride was equally stunning. The guest list wasn't as extensive as expected because Or requested only close friends and family. It slightly disappointed my parents, who wanted a grand affair, but Jane agreed. Having strangers at the wedding wouldn't make us any happier.

"Having only people we know is nice. We can be ourselves," my mom said to the other two moms with a peculiar smile, which made me shiver.

I whispered to Or. "Did you see that smile? It's weird."

"I feel it too, but... it should be fine. Even if something happens, it's just family and close friends."

There were fewer than a hundred guests, all people we knew. Everyone genuinely congratulated us because they were close friends and family. We took photos together, and I was sure that when we looked at the album later, it'd be filled with familiar faces that would make us smile.

After welcoming the guests, it was time to watch the presentation video. As we watched, Or and I had tears in our eyes. We'd been through so much together, both good and bad, but mostly good. We held hands while watching the video. My brother was already crying, and Dr. Jane was wiping his tears.

"Don't cry, my love. Our kid is watching."

"I'm so lucky to have met you and that you love me. *Boohoo*."

*My brother is really sensitive... Oh, I forgot to mention Jane is pregnant again. My brother is quite diligent.*

The ceremony proceeded as usual, with my father giving a speech to bless the bride and groom, which included Or and me. No one found our love strange; they saw it as a beautiful form of love, which I deeply appreciated. Everyone applauded my father's heartfelt speech, and he eventually cried.

"My daughter has a family now. Waah... my little pussy cat."

I covered my face, and Or turned away, stifling her laughter. My dad was still my dad, loving me more than anyone in the world. Everyone in the hall laughed affectionately and applauded. My mom pulled him down, and then the four of us went on stage to throw the bouquet. Our friends and my old school friends rushed to catch it. The one who caught it screamed with joy because there were three thousand-baht bills inside.

"I don't need a husband! Yay!"

Dad definitely sneaked someone in to make the event more fun. Once the formalities were over, it was time for the after-party. My band played in the background, performing the song I wrote for Or. Certainly, the stars of the ceremony, like me, took the stage to sing live. Or and Jane cheered us on from below as we sang "You Are the One in My Love Song." Everyone got up and danced joyfully. As soon as the song ended, the crowd erupted in applause and cheers. Then a new song started playing, but it wasn't from my band. The moms, dressed in sequined dresses of red, blue, and white, marched in and shooed us off the stage.

"What's this?"

I ran to Or and grabbed her arm tightly.

"I had no idea this was going to happen," Yak said, looking confused.

"I'm scared," Or said sincerely.

"This must be the reason for their smile earlier."

"There's got to be something unexpected. Mom's going to sing..."

"Nuan-anong, what's your plan tonight?" My mom, standing in the center, began to sing. At that moment, Or and I stepped back immediately, feeling weak in the knees. This wedding was anything but ordinary.

"Why do you ask? I'm going to Kor Mor 1, that's right," Or's mom sang in response.

"What will you do? What's there in store?" Jane's mom continued, knowing her part well.

"At Kor Mor 1, A gang awaits to bang me moooooore!" the three moms sang together, dancing as if they'd rehearsed perfectly. Everyone who didn't understand the song's meaning clapped along.

"What should we do, darling?" Even Pae, who knew the song lyrics and his own fate, held Jane's arm. But Jane didn't seem to mind; she just signaled the nanny to come closer and gave a quick order. "Take the baby out of this first."

"Yes."

Jane stood there, unfazed, even enjoying herself. I whispered to Or about how to handle this.

"Good thing they started at Kor Mor 1. By the time they reach Kor Mor 4, everyone will be stunned."

"Once they pass Kor Mor 4, it should be fine," Or said, looking pale and biting her lip as she glanced at her fellow doctor friends. "Mom, why, Mom, meeting old friends with the same habits? What do we do? This is your daughter's wedding."

"Kor Mor 4 is nothing. I have a bad feeling about another."

"Which one?"

"Kor Mor 7."

The moms kept singing until they reached Kor Mor 4. At that point, everyone in the event exclaimed, "Oh!" Some turned to whisper, while others laughed. My dad, who was getting tipsy, clapped and cheered loudly for his wife.

"Go for it, darling! Go all out and stop at Kor Mor 7," Dad said, bouncing up and down. I looked at Dad and then held Or's hand tightly.

"When they start Kor Mor 6, we'll walk to the door and slowly move out. Okay?"

"What do you think will happen at Kor Mor 7?"

"I haven't heard it, but I have a bad gut feeling," I said.

As the song progressed, we slowly moved towards the exit, unnoticed. I held the door tightly until Mom started the Kor Mor 7 verse. "Nuan-anong, what's your plan tonight?"

"Why do you ask? Kor Mor 7 in sight."

"But why go there, you ask? To do the horizontal tango, that's right..."

"Let's go."

I pushed the door open and stepped out immediately, knowing what would be the rest. Or's face turned bright red, unable to handle this either. Despite the embarrassment, she laughed, massaging her temples as she walked briskly as if running away from the world.

"How will I go to work at the hospital tomorrow? I'll be teased about this all day."

"I told you I had a bad gut feeling, and it was true. I have a sense," I laughed. "What a creative song... let's go."

"Where?"

"Kor Mor 7."

"Still joking around, huh?"

"I'm not. We have to have fun tonight anyway. Let's go to Kor Mor 7, and let's go to heaven."

"You're... talking nonsense. What heaven?"

"Then what should I say?"

"Fuck"

"Gosh, Or, you said it yourself."

"If you're going to say it, just say it," Or jumped on my back and pointed forward. "Let's go to the bridal suite at Kor Mor 7. Screw it. Tomorrow, whoever teases, let them. I'm going to fu..."

"Ha ha ha!"

I laughed at my wife, who tried to be as cheeky as possible to fit in with the new family. We ran and laughed together while the people at the event were left to their own devices. I hoped everyone enjoyed the song my mom had practiced so hard to sing and dance to.

*May everyone be happy.*

*And I'm going to be happy at Kor Mor 7, too.*

*Bye-bye.*

**The End.**