

# Chapter : Introduction

Today is the day of the high school reunion. Honestly, it's not an event I really wanted to attend because during my school days, I didn't have close friends that I needed to meet. My days were filled with studying and competing for awards. I only had friends when we were grouped together for assignments, and back then, I was quite popular among everyone. To be honest, there wasn't any reason for me to come today because I didn't know who I would socialize or talk with.

But today, I have a reason to come.

A reason... that I've never told anyone before and no one else knows.

After arriving, all my friends turned to look at me with excitement. Their gazes made me feel shy and unsure of how to act. One of them shouted out joyfully:

"Our class star is here—Meena!"

There was applause and some playful whistling. I nodded to everyone and smiled slightly because a big smile might show too much emotion. It was surprising that my friends were so happy to see me, considering we barely spoke during school days. Their excitement made me feel a bit thrilled as well.

"Sit here!"

"Thank you."

Linda, one of my classmates, pulled out a chair for me to sit next to her and started chatting about random things.

"Everyone's been talking about you, Meena! We were wondering if you'd come, and here you are. You're even prettier now!"

"You're exaggerating. I'm not that pretty."

"How could someone not be pretty and still be the class star?"

Hearing such compliments only made me feel more awkward. Back in school, I was often appointed as the class star simply because I was the lead drum major of the school. My friends said I was the face of Class 6/4, representing both academic excellence and talent. But that didn't make me feel better. Instead, it pressured me to do even better, again and again.

As I chatted with my friends, who asked about how I was doing, I glanced at someone sitting in the back row. Today... she was here too. **Wan Yiwa.**

She... was the reason I came.

**Wan Yiwa:** "The classmates are having a reunion. Will you go?"

**Meena:** "Maybe."

When she invited me, I felt both shocked and surprised. Normally, I just followed her status updates on Facebook, never commenting, just occasionally liking. I kept up with her posts regularly. So, when she messaged me like that, I decided to come, even though I only said "maybe." She was the reason...

I've been watching her for a long time since high school. I've always wanted to know her, to talk to her. She was a captivating woman, the kind of mischievous character you'd find in a cartoon but with a strong sense of justice. I once saw her stand up to a senior who accused her friend of stealing her boyfriend—she wouldn't tolerate such injustice.

I admired her from that moment and have been watching her ever since. Even after ten years, I still thought about her, until she became an employee at my company. I even used some personal bias to get her hired. Even so, we never talked, as we worked in different departments. Today, I came to find an opportunity to speak to her. But how could I approach her while sitting at the head of the table?

As the conversation with my friends shifted to gossiping about a male teacher who used to flirt during our school days, I saw Wan Yiwa stand up and leave the table. Panicking, I felt a sense of urgency, worried she might leave. I quickly excused myself mid-conversation:

"Excuse me, I need to use the restroom."

I walked along the path she had taken. She had gone to the restroom, not left. I sighed in relief and stood in front of the mirror, pretending to adjust my makeup, but in reality, I was waiting for her to come out. This was the perfect chance to talk to her. After more than ten years of being in the same class and barely speaking, I couldn't let this opportunity pass.

*Click.*

The sound of the door opening signaled she was done. I leaned my arms on the sink and looked at her through the mirror. Trying to look cool, I raised an eyebrow and smiled casually.

"Wan Yiwa."

"Meena."

She looked just as surprised to see me. My heart was pounding so hard that I feared she might hear it. In the quiet bathroom, it was just the two of us. Would the silence reveal how nervous I was?

"How have you been?" Wan Yiwa broke the ice first. I nodded slightly.

"Good. We've never really talked before, have we? Except for that one group project back in school."

"That's true."

What should I say next? I wasn't good at making conversations and had never managed to keep one going unless it was work-related. Please, help me out. I wanted to talk to her longer, enough to follow her here for a private chat.

"We work in the same company but have never talked there either."

"That's true."

"Maybe it's because you're the boss. Talking to me as a friend might disrupt the balance."

"Well... perhaps."

Not at all! I didn't talk to her because I didn't know how to. Back in school, I was awkward around her, and now being her boss made things even more complicated. I wanted to be closer to her, but if I approached her using my position, it would feel wrong.

We fell silent, the kind of quiet that felt as though the conversation had ended. If we stayed like this, she would return to the table, and we would miss our chance. I had to take the lead.

"You're beautiful."

"Huh?"

What did I just blurt out? Complimenting her wasn't the plan! Wan Yiwa looked startled, her cheeks tinged with red as she tucked her hair behind her ear.

"You complimented me first. If I don't return the compliment, it'll seem rude."

"..."

"Honestly, I just wanted to start a conversation with you." She seemed shocked by my honesty, and I wasn't sure if her reaction was good or bad. I bit my lip, feeling like I'd said something wrong.

"You invited me to this reunion. If I came and didn't talk to you, it would have felt wrong."

"I'm glad you did."

"..."

"This is the longest conversation we've ever had. I feel good about using all my courage to message you that day. I was terrified you'd think I was trying to cozy up to my boss."

"You're overthinking. Being a boss is just one role. In another, we're friends."

"Thank you."

"No need for 'thank you,'" I quickly interrupted, waving my hand. "What kind of friends say 'thank you' like that?"

"I don't know," she said, scratching her neck awkwardly. "I see you as my boss, so speaking to you like a friend feels... strange."

"So you've never seen me as a friend, have you?"

I turned toward the bathroom mirror, almost sighing, but before I could, Wan Yiwa frantically waved her hands in denial.

"No, no! That's not it! Please don't think that way. Honestly, I admit I didn't know how to act around you. I'm just happy we're finally talking like this for the first time. We've never had a real conversation before, so I was afraid I might say something wrong and upset you."

"You can talk to me like you would with a close friend."

"..."

"But because we're not close, you didn't want to, right?"

"If that's what you want, we can talk like close friends. If that's what you prefer."

I couldn't help but smile when I heard her say that. Wan Yiwa pressed her lips tightly together, then said something that nearly made me fall backward in shock.

"I miss you."

"..."

"Is that too familiar?"

"A little."

"I talk to close friends like this. See? I told you—there are some people you just can't talk to this way."

"Then let's talk as if we're familiar but not too close. I miss you too."

I blurted it out and then clamped my mouth shut. Since she admitted missing me first, I decided to try saying it back. Now, there was a pause, a silence between us, but then, slowly, Wan Yiwa smiled and clasped her hands behind her back.

"You're much more fun to talk to than I thought."

"You're easy to talk to as well, even to someone boring like me."

"No, you're not boring. I enjoy talking to you. If we weren't sitting so far apart in the office, I'm sure we'd talk more. You seem... interesting."

"Huh?"

"Someone worth getting to know."

*Thump-thump...*

My heart skipped another beat at her words. At first, I didn't hear it wrong, but when I responded with "Huh?" she quickly corrected herself. I tried to act cool, like I didn't notice anything, turning to look at her through the mirror. Gathering all my courage, I decided to follow my instincts.

"If you think I'm fun to talk to and being in a group of classmates is making it hard to have a proper conversation, why don't we sneak out of this reunion together?"

"You're inviting me to run away?"

"Well... something like that."

Was it right to use the word "run away" in this situation? But it was already out. The sweetness of her smile made her brown eyes sparkle, and it was enough to melt me. It had always been like this, ever since high school. She never noticed that someone had been admiring her eyes from afar.

"If it's you inviting me... then I'll go."

I smiled and held out my hand.

"Let's go. I'll take you away."

She reached out, grabbed my hand, and squeezed it tightly, laughing softly as if she was enjoying the thrill of it.

"Alright. Let's go."

We held hands and quietly snuck out of the reunion, ensuring no one noticed. I hurriedly led her to my car, unlocked the doors with the remote, and we got inside. Driving off into the night, we didn't have any plans about where to go. All we knew was that we had escaped the boring social gathering, leaving behind classmates who only talked about themselves and their careers.

In the quiet of the car, after chatting endlessly in the restroom, we both fell silent again. The silence made the atmosphere thick with tension. I wasn't good at starting conversations unless it was work-related, so I gripped the steering wheel tightly, unsure of how to keep her entertained.

"Do you want to listen to some music? I can play something," I offered.

"Sure."

The music I played was instrumental. I've always preferred songs without lyrics because I found vocals distracting. Sometimes, I would sing along myself, pretending it was karaoke. Even though the music broke the silence, we still weren't talking. I bit my lip, frustrated that I couldn't make her enjoy herself more.

"Actually, I've wanted to talk to you for a long time, ever since high school."

Her sudden admission made me sit up straight with excitement. She had wanted to talk to me?

"Really? Why didn't you?"

"I don't know. Maybe because we seemed like different types of people. I was afraid that if I started a conversation, you'd find it strange."

"Why would I find it strange?"

"Like I said, we're different. You were the studious one, the class star, admired by everyone. I was just a nobody in the back of the class, always napping and with no future in sight," she laughed self-deprecatingly.

"That's not true at all. You've grown into someone incredible. I know this because I'm your boss, and I was the one who hired you."

"You were the one who hired me?" She looked surprised. "But you weren't the one who interviewed me."

"I approve every employee's hiring and salary. When I saw your application, I accepted it immediately."

"That sounds like favoritism."

"If you didn't have the qualifications, I wouldn't have hired you."

"It was favoritism, wasn't it? There must have been more qualified candidates, but you chose me," she said with a faint laugh. "But thank you. I wouldn't have thought I'd hear that from you."

"It's not favoritism if you prove yourself, which you've done. You've excelled as an assistant manager, and your work has been impeccable. That's all that matters."

She smiled softly, lowering her gaze. "Thank you for the encouragement. It means a lot to me."

"I've wanted to talk to you for a long time too," I admitted.

She turned her head sharply to look at me, her expression a mix of disbelief and curiosity.

"Really? Why?"

"I admired your courage."

"What courage?"

"You're small in stature, but when it comes to standing up against injustice or protecting your friends, you never hesitated. Like that time you confronted the seniors who bullied your friend."

"Oh, stop it! Let's not talk about that," she said, covering her face with her hands. "There are so many things to talk about, and you bring that up? I was such a troublemaker back then! See? That's why I said we're completely different types."

"While I didn't even have the courage to pick a university program, you were someone I admired. You were brave and strong. Even when seniors ganged up on you, you stood your ground and came out unscathed."

I confessed something that had been on my mind for years. "I've admired you since then. I've liked you... since that moment."

"You liked me?"

"I even thought you hated me," I admitted with a soft laugh.

"What? Why would you think that?" she exclaimed, her usual calm demeanor breaking for a moment before she quickly collected herself. "Sorry," she added, regaining her composure.

"Why are you apologizing? I liked seeing that side of you," I said with a chuckle. "Back in school, I'd often look at you, but you never looked back. I thought you must have hated me."

"I didn't look because I didn't dare meet your eyes," she said softly.

"Why not?"

"Because I knew."

"Knew what? That I was looking at you?"

"I wasn't sure, but I thought it was better not to look back. I was scared."

"Scared of what?"

"Scared that you'd find out how I felt about you," she said, her voice trembling slightly. Then she quickly changed the subject. "You've done so well for yourself. Look at you now, running a big company while the rest of us are just figuring things out."

Her attempt to divert the conversation didn't go unnoticed. I abruptly turned the car onto the side of the road and hit the hazard lights. She froze, looking at me in confusion. I unbuckled my seatbelt and turned to face her directly. As always, she avoided my gaze and looked away.

"What are you doing, suddenly pulling over like that?"

"You're avoiding the question. Finish what you were saying earlier. You said you were scared I'd find out... and then you stopped. What were you going to say?"

"I don't remember," she replied evasively.

"If you don't tell me, I'm not driving anywhere. When I want to know something, I won't stop until I get an answer. You've worked in my company long enough to know how persistent I am."

She pressed her lips together and sighed deeply, clearly uncomfortable. Her hands clenched tightly, and I could see the tension in her posture.

What could she possibly be so scared to say?

"I was afraid that if I said it out loud... things that are good right now might change. It might even affect my work."

"That's even more reason for me to know. I promise, whatever you say, it won't affect your job."

She glanced at me, her eyes filled with conflict.

"Can't we just drop it?"

"No."

"..."

"..."

"I was afraid you'd find out... that I like you."

*Thump-thump...*

*Thump-thump...*

My heart pounded so loudly I was sure she could hear it. If I hadn't been sitting down, my legs would have given out. I didn't say anything, just stared at her. Wan Yiwa bit her lip so hard it turned red.

"You like me?"

"Mm-hmm," she admitted with a small nod.

"As a friend or... something more?"

"Something more."

"..."

"I'm probably going to get fired. I'm your old classmate, and now I'm confessing that I like you... even though we're both women."

Her voice shook as if she were on the verge of tears, but she quickly placed a hand over her chest, trying to steady herself. With a wry smile, she added, "But at least I finally got it off my chest. I've been keeping it in for so long. Who would have thought I'd end up confessing at a class reunion? You pushed me to say it, so if it's awkward now, it's your fault."

We fell silent again. I turned back to face the steering wheel, gripping it tightly.

"Do you have a partner?" I asked, breaking the silence.

"Huh? No."

"Good."

"..."

"I don't have anyone either. I've never had anyone before."

***Thump-thump...***

***Thump-thump...***

I spoke carefully, trying to find the right words to say without showing how excited I was. When she confessed, I almost screamed in joy, but I kept it together. Cool people don't let their emotions show, but I wasn't about to let this chance slip away.

**"Well then... I wouldn't mind if you were my first."**

**Title : Little Bit Little More**

**By : Chao Planoy**

# Chapter 1: Teach Me

I dropped her off at her house, and that was the end of it—we didn't say anything more. We simply waved goodbye like we were just friends. She didn't even answer me, despite the fact that I had spoken my feelings aloud.

Before parting ways, we exchanged Line IDs so we could stay in touch. Though we already had each other's inboxes for messaging, having her Line made me feel more secure. For now, I decided not to overthink it. After all, I'd just learned something incredible—her feelings for me.

It wasn't just me who liked her. She liked me, too.

"Yippee!"

I screamed in joy inside my car, bouncing and wiggling in excitement as I drove home. The instrumental music I played became the background for my triumphant singing, loud and unabashed. Even though she hadn't outright answered me, the likelihood of our relationship changing had skyrocketed.

I once read that there's only a 12% chance of someone reciprocating your feelings. Well, I was the lucky 12%. She liked me back. Or wait—maybe she liked me first, and I returned the feeling?

But does it even matter? Either way, we liked each other.

What I once thought was an abnormality in myself, I now understood was love. Women could love other women—it was as simple as that. She thought the same way I did. And now, finally, I had a partner.

I had a girlfriend.

But... there was one small problem. She hadn't officially agreed yet. No matter—I was sure she had accepted me. All that was left was for us to get to know each other better. Ah, my heart felt like it was about to explode.

I spun my car keys and condo key card in my hand as I walked to the door, humming a tune. I stepped inside my apartment, greeted by the sight of furniture still wrapped in plastic. *Home sweet home.* This was my new place, and it felt like everything good in my life had started happening since I moved in.

Perhaps the guardian spirits of this place had blessed me with love. Soon enough, I'd have a warm and happy family here.

My imagination started running wild. I pictured Wan Yiwa sitting on my new sofa, beckoning me over.

"This sofa is so comfy, babe," she'd say.

"Well, of course," I'd reply. "I picked it out. Everything I choose is always the best."

"And what about me?"

"You're better than the sofa."

Wow. Just the thought of it gave me butterflies. Moving out on my own was definitely the right decision. Now I could bring my girlfriend over, cuddle up together, and watch scary movies—though we'd probably be scared out of our wits.

"Babe, I'm so scared!"

"I'm scared too—hold me!"

I squealed at the thought, throwing myself onto the brown leather sofa and rolling around in giddy happiness. Grabbing my phone, I opened Line and scrolled to Wan Yiwa's contact. She had been awfully quiet since we parted ways. The atmosphere in the car had been good; our hearts had been in sync. So why hadn't she messaged me?

No matter. She would message me eventually. Who wouldn't want to be my girlfriend?

"I've got a girlfriend now! And it's you, Wan Yiwa!"

**Three Days Later**

"I have a girlfriend... don't I?"

I muttered to myself, staring at my computer screen with a scowl. The joy I'd felt three days ago now seemed like a distant dream. Or maybe it *was* a dream, and I'd confused it with reality.

No, that couldn't be it. How could anyone mistake dreams for reality to this extent? Still, why hadn't she sent me a message? Even just a sticker would suffice.

As I mulled it over, my eyes wandered to the glass office partition where I could see her working. Her sweet face was furrowed in concentration as she focused on her computer screen. She didn't look even remotely concerned about her phone, unlike me, who was constantly checking for messages.

Was it all in my head? Was it just wishful thinking? I had to test it.

I grabbed my phone, keeping my face expressionless as I navigated to her contact. Before I could send a sticker, her message popped up.

**Wan Yiwa:** *Hungry.*

The message was so short and straightforward that I almost doubted it was real. It wasn't even a full sentence—just a verb. Yet it filled me with joy. I nearly slapped myself to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

It was real! Three days ago, we talked. She said she liked me, and I told her we should be together because neither of us had anyone else. It happened— it actually happened!

It was lunchtime now, and most of the staff were leaving their desks to eat. I saw my chance. Once the office was quiet, I tiptoed over to where Wan Yiwa was still working. She was focused on her computer, furiously typing into an Excel sheet and muttering in frustration.

"Is it really that frustrating?"

She jumped, startled by my voice, and looked up at me in surprise. Her reaction made me grin, even though my heart wavered at the faint scent of her perfume.

"Boss!" she said, addressing me formally.

"Meena," I corrected with a slight frown.

"..."

"When we're alone, call me Meena... Wan Yiwa." I emphasized her name with a hint of displeasure. We were practically a couple now. Who calls their significant other 'Boss'?

"Okay..."

"Still too formal."

"All right. From now on, you can call me Yiwa or just Wan," she offered.

I smiled, satisfied. "Someone told me they were hungry. Were you just making a statement, or were you hinting at something?"

"..."

"Why haven't you gone to eat yet? It's already lunchtime."

"I still have work to do."

"Is it urgent?"

"Not really..."

"Then shut it down and go eat."

"..."

"This is an order from your boss."

Though I wanted to say, "This is an order from your girlfriend," I didn't have the confidence to declare it openly yet. Her lack of a clear response still left me uncertain. So, I fell back on my authority as her boss. Reluctantly, she put her computer to sleep, grabbed her bag, and stood up.

She stood, and I stepped back slightly, maintaining a respectful distance, but I couldn't help slipping my hands into my pockets, trying to appear composed.

"What do you like to eat?" I asked.

"Food."

*Seriously?* I barely resisted the urge to roll my eyes, but my irritation must have shown on my face because she quickly amended, "I mean, anything is fine."

"Then I'll choose," I replied, leading the way to the door.

As I reached for the handle, I noticed her hesitating. She lingered behind, glancing around nervously.

"What's wrong?" I asked, turning to her.

"If we go eat together, it might not look good," she said cautiously. "The other employees might suspect something about our... relationship."

*Relationship.* My heart skipped a beat at the word, thundering in my chest. She had acknowledged it, but I tilted my head to keep my cool.

"What would they suspect?" I asked, feigning innocence.

"How we suddenly got close, for one," she said, lowering her voice. "And they might think I'm... you know, trying to get ahead by sucking up to the boss."

I nearly snorted at the absurdity of it but managed to hold back. "And how do we prevent them from thinking that?"

"We should keep our distance... or eat somewhere else," she suggested.

"Fine, let's do that," I said, nodding thoughtfully. "I'll go down to B2 and wait by the car. You can come down after. No one will suspect a thing."

"..."

"Problem solved, right?"

"Uh... yeah."

Her tone was hesitant, her cheeks tinged pink. Was it embarrassment? Or something else? I couldn't tell. Either way, this was going to be our first meal together, and I was determined to make it special.

As I descended in the elevator, my mind raced, trying to think of a good restaurant. Normally, I ordered delivery and ate in the office, so I wasn't familiar with many dining spots. This was harder than I thought. Having a girlfriend required so much thought!

*Wait—I have a girlfriend!*

I hummed happily to myself as I skipped to my car, spinning the keys like a child with a secret. "Yiwa, Yiwa," I sang quietly to myself, her name a melody in my mind. I was about to surprise her—not just with a meal but with something better.

Soon, I saw her stepping out of the elevator. She glanced around nervously before quickly slipping into the car. As the faint scent of her perfume filled the air, my heart raced uncontrollably. I stole a glance at her through the corner of my eye.

"So, have you decided what to eat?" she asked, breaking the silence.

"Not exactly, but I know where we're going," I replied with a nonchalant tone, even though I was brimming with excitement.

I started the car and drove off quickly, heading toward my destination. "We might be back a little late," I warned. "It's a bit far from the office. Your work isn't urgent, is it... Yiwa?"

I deliberately tested out her nickname. Her reaction was priceless—her face turned bright red, and she fidgeted with her fingers on her lap.

"No, it's not urgent," she mumbled. "The team that requested the data isn't in a hurry."

"Good," I said, flashing a small smile as I turned onto the road leading to... my condo.

When we pulled into the parking garage, Yiwa looked puzzled but didn't say anything. Not until we took the elevator up and I unlocked the door to my apartment.

"This isn't a restaurant," she pointed out, her brow furrowing in confusion.

"It's my home," I said proudly.

I had two reasons for bringing her here. One, I wanted to show her a part of my world. Two, I wanted to fulfill my dream of bringing someone I loved into my space. Her wide eyes scanned the room, taking in the new furniture and the untouched plastic wraps still covering some items.

"This place is beautiful," she said, her voice filled with genuine admiration. "You must be so successful to have a place like this."

"It's not that impressive," I said modestly, but inside, I felt triumphant. I'd managed to impress her, and that was a win in my book.

"Take a seat," I said, motioning to the couch. "I'll order us some food to eat here."

"Okay... if you're sure it's okay," she replied, still looking a bit hesitant.

She chose the couch—the very one I had imagined her sitting on before.

She sat stiffly at first, her posture too formal, and I chuckled.

"You don't have to sit like that. Make yourself at home."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course."

With my encouragement, she finally leaned back and rested her head against the cushions. I smiled so wide I was glad she couldn't see my face. This moment was everything I had imagined.

"What do you feel like eating?" I asked, sitting down beside her at a respectful distance.

"Anything is fine," she said again.

"Even dirt?" I teased, earning a laugh from her.

"Is that even on the menu?"

After our playful exchange, I ordered Pad Thai from my favorite spot. It was a safe choice—everyone raved about it. I was the type to stick to dishes I knew were good rather than risk trying something new and being disappointed. Once the order was placed, I sat down on the couch beside her, leaning back to show her how to relax.

Keeping a little space between us, I stretched out casually, and it seemed to work. She followed my lead, leaning back and settling into the cushions with a bit more ease.

"Your apartment feels so new," she remarked, glancing around. "Everything looks untouched."

"Yeah, I just moved in," I explained. "Some of the furniture still has the plastic wrap on it."

"Doing it all on your own must've been tough," she said sympathetically.

"I've been busy, so I haven't gotten around to everything yet," I admitted. "But it's fine. I'm not in a rush to set everything up."

She nodded thoughtfully. "Still, it must be exhausting to do everything alone."

"You're saying that like you're offering to help," I teased with a playful smirk.

Her cheeks flushed a soft pink, and she hesitated before replying, "Well... if you need help, I could come over."

My heart leaped. I shot up from the couch, unable to contain my excitement. "Promise?"

She gave a shy smile and nodded. For a moment, our eyes met, and then, as usual, she quickly looked away.

"Don't look away," I said softly, leaning closer. "I like looking into your eyes."

She bit her lip, her voice barely audible. "You're saying such embarrassing things..."

"About the other day," I began, steering the conversation toward the topic that had been on my mind.

She froze, clearly knowing what I was referring to. Her eyes widened slightly, and she looked like a deer caught in headlights.

"What about it?" she asked, trying to feign innocence.

"You haven't given me an answer yet," I said, leaning in closer. "What are we? What's our relationship?"

She fidgeted, her fingers twining together nervously. She spoke so quietly I had to strain to hear her.

"Do I really have to say it out loud?"

"Yes," I said firmly. "In business, everything needs to be clear to avoid misunderstandings. This is no different."

She lifted her gaze to meet mine, her eyes filled with curiosity.

"So, our relationship is like a business deal?"

"Exactly," I replied with a confident nod.

"..."

"We're both getting something we want. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement."

Her mouth fell open slightly, her expression a mix of shock and confusion. Even I realized how awkward my phrasing had been. Getting something we want? That could be interpreted in so many ways.

Before I could correct myself, she let out a small laugh, breaking the tension. "Fine. If you insist on clarity... then yes, we're in a relationship."

I couldn't stop the grin from spreading across my face. She had finally said it. I reached out to take her hands, gently pulling them away from her face.

"Yes, we're in a relationship," I echoed, my voice filled with warmth. "You're my first girlfriend. I want you to know that."

She blinked at me, her cheeks flushing even deeper. "Well... you're not my first," she admitted hesitantly.

"Then that's even better."

"How so?"

"If I do something wrong, you can teach me."

"You're going too far. How could I teach you anything?" She laughed shyly.

I looked at her with determination and instinctively moved toward her quickly. Now that we're officially together, I needed to move things forward. Alright... this couch shall be the witness. I'm going to make my dream come true!

"Teach me how to kiss you."

# Chapter 2: Misunderstanding

When a person decides to do something, they must be resolute—that's my motto. And this situation was no exception. When she suddenly appeared in my room, sitting on my favorite sofa that I was so proud of, I couldn't help but seize the moment to chase my long-held dream—kissing her.

Her lips felt flat, and the scent of her skin reminded me of kiwi polished leather. I awkwardly leaned in, assuming that nature would guide me to the right spot despite my inexperience. But why did her lips have no gap? And what was this leathery smell...?

As I slowly opened my eyes, I realized my face was buried in the leather bag she had brought with her. The lips I questioned were clarified—it was the bag she held up to block her face. Yiwa was closing her eyes tightly, shielding herself with the bag, and stammered in a trembling voice, almost shouting:

"Stop! No!"

"..."

"If you brought me here to do *that,* why didn't you just tell me from the start?"

She pushed me off and ran to the bathroom in tears. I, who had envisioned a romantic moment together on the beloved sofa, was left frozen in place, stunned. The sweet-faced girl abandoned me in an awkward straddle position, disappearing into the bathroom with tears in her eyes. I was now no better than a heartbroken person—and worse, I looked like a creep who tried to force myself on her.

What should I do? I need to fix this mistake. Bringing her here only to act so inappropriately—what kind of person would she think I am now?

"Yiwa,"

I called her name softly at the bathroom door. She remained silent, locked inside without a word.

I'm sorry...

But the apology stuck in my throat, unable to come out. Instead, I awkwardly changed my words.

"Food has arrived. Once you're done, come out and eat with me."

After the food arrived, we sat down to eat, just as I had always dreamed. But the atmosphere was so depressing that nothing tasted good. Yiwa ate quietly, avoiding my gaze, and I was at a loss for words, still feeling guilty about what I'd done.

"The food is delicious. Thank you for the meal,"

She said softly, her voice barely audible but clear in the silence.

"Mm-hmm."

"What will we do after this?" she finally raised her eyes to meet mine for the first time since leaving the bathroom. I had been ready to apologize, but her question forced me to swallow it down.

"Let's go back to the office and continue work as usual."

"That's a long trip just for this," she laughed nervously, trying to keep the atmosphere light despite her evident discomfort. Now, I was the one who felt like crying. I shouldn't have been so hasty.

"Yiwa."

"..."

"I need to say something. I want to..."

"Let's just go back to work. The team is probably waiting for the data I promised them," she cut me off, glancing at the clock and deflecting my attempt to apologize.

"Y-yeah... You're right. Let's go."

The car ride back was silent and awkward, each of us lost in our thoughts. If I had to guess, hers were about how I crossed a line without asking her consent. To make things right, I knew I needed to apologize and ask for a second chance. But I'm not great with words. How could I even start this conversation without making things more uncomfortable?

"I wasn't finished earlier," I finally spoke, breaking the silence once more. "I need to tell you—"

"Today's weather is so hot, don't you think?" she interrupted again.

"The air conditioning's on," I replied.

"Still, it feels hot."

"Please, listen. I need to—"

"Bangkok traffic is surprisingly light today."

How long was she going to keep interrupting me? I gritted my teeth in frustration, gripping the steering wheel tightly. In just a few meters, we'd reach the office, and I still hadn't managed to apologize. I refused to let her interrupt again.

"I need to—"

"Let me get off here."

"What?" She interrupted again, reaching for the door handle while the car was still moving. Startled, I quickly hit the brakes and pulled over.

"You can't just open the door while the car is moving! What if you fall out? And why the sudden rush to get off?"

"If people see me getting out of your car, they might start asking questions. I think it's better if I get out here."

Her eyes were red, her voice trembling as if she were about to cry. I realized then that all her interruptions were an attempt to avoid discussing what had happened. It only deepened the pain in my chest, leaving me no choice but to respect her wishes.

"You're right. It's better this way."

"Thank you."

I unlocked the car, letting her out. Watching her walk away broke my heart. While she was upset, I felt no different. It seemed she was so angry that she didn't even want to think about it. I feared that this might be the beginning of a rough patch in our relationship.

Despondent...

Today, I felt utterly deflated. After momentarily basking in the fleeting comfort of warm, soapy bubbles, my impulsiveness dragged me back home, even though I'd already moved to a new place. In the end, nostalgia brought me back, thinking of Mom.

Just as I was stepping inside, my mischievous younger brother, Methas—or Mekk—emerged from the house with a girl in tow. They were in high spirits, and he smelled faintly of aftershave, as if freshly showered.

Wham!

I shot a piercing glare at my 18-year-old brother like an enraged older sister. Before he even noticed me, the girl nudged him and pointed in my direction. The little brother who used to trail behind me like a lost puppy froze, looking like he'd seen a ghost. He hurriedly shifted his arm away from his girlfriend's waist, trying to hide it behind his back.

"Min! What are you doing here?"

"I drove here. I should be asking you...what's going on?"

"..."

"Should I tell Mom about this?"

"Go inside! Quickly!"

In a panic, Mekk ushered his girlfriend away like a herder shooing livestock. He rubbed his hands nervously, clearly scrambling for an escape.

"Please don't tell Mom! You can hit me if you want."

Seeing my stern, unsmiling face only made him shrink further. He was barely an adult, already bringing girls home. Judging by his freshly showered appearance, it wasn't hard to guess what they had been up to.

"How old is she?"

"She's of legal age!"

"Dating someone older too?" I said, incredulously. "How did you manage to bring her home?"

"No money for a hotel."

"And she came willingly? Didn't she slap you or something?"

His wary glance told me he wasn't sure whether I was seriously angry or just curious.

"No...she agreed."

"How?"

"What?"

"Tell me what you did. Teach me."

Since both Mom and Dad were attending a relative's wedding, we sat down for a private sibling chat—the kind we couldn't have in front of our parents. Mekk started offering unsolicited dating advice, sharing tales of how he'd "tamed" girls and won their hearts.

"One thing's for sure: women love guys who pay attention and show they care. That's what matters...I give it my all when I like someone."

"Really?"

"Every woman starts from zero. You have to build her trust and show consistency. That's the key to approaching her gently."

"And how did you convince her to come home with you?"

"I told her we'd meet my parents."

"But you knew they weren't home."

"Of course! That's why I brought her here." Mekk replied slyly, rubbing the back of his neck. "Sorry."

"And how did you start?"

"What?"

"After she got here and realized your parents weren't home, how did you get her to...you know...agree?" I stumbled over my words, feeling awkward asking such a personal question.

"I kissed her."

"That's it? That simple?" I jumped up like a spring-loaded puppet. "She didn't run off to the bathroom crying?"

"What's wrong with you, Min? Why are you so angry? Don't hit me—I'm just answering your questions!"

I clenched my fists in frustration. I had done everything the same way, but my results were the exact opposite. Was it because we weren't at my parents' house? Maybe that's why she rejected me so harshly.

"Nothing...I was just curious."

"Why are you suddenly so curious? You're acting weird."

"I can't be curious?"

"No...I'm just saying...if something's bothering you, or if you need advice, you can talk to me about anything." His voice softened. "If there's someone you want to kiss but don't know how to start, just let me know—"

"Ow!"

I pinched Mekk's waist and glared at him like an evil older sister.

"I don't need your expert advice! And as for bringing girls home...don't do it again!"

"..."

"Or else...you're dead."

I grabbed my bag and headed back to my condo, reflecting on everything we'd discussed. Comparing Mekk's approach to mine made me realize where I had gone wrong.

I hadn't built any emotional connection or trust with her. We didn't have a foundation. She confessed her feelings, I accepted, and then I impulsively tried to kiss her without thinking it through. No wonder she pushed me away.

There had been no courtship, no getting to know each other, no emotional bonding—nothing. That was the difference between Mekk and me. If I wanted to move forward, I needed to start fresh—begin by apologizing and taking time to build a genuine relationship.

Determined, I resolved to send her flowers the next day, along with an apology. Even though she confessed her feelings first, I needed to tell her how I felt too—properly this time.

Genius!

But it seems that Genius forgot to think that there was something called Work from home.... Now I'm in a daze, my collected consciousness is that I will apologize to her with With sending a bouquet of flowers as a great consolation, it was all over. Today, Wan Yiwa didn't come to work and asked to be on standby to work from home because her work didn't require coming to the office. I used to admire her for being able to work from home, but diligently came to see me every day. That might be because she liked me, so coming to work felt good.

However, today was the first day she took leave to work from home after yesterday's incident! The extreme stress of being surprised like that, today I took a tantrum at all the employees who didn't work as expected, from the people in the warehouse who counted the wrong products to the salespeople who didn't achieve their goals.

"If you can't do this much work, I'll find someone else to do it instead."

It wasn't a shouting tone, but a cold tone that was half-displeased. Normally, I'm a more calm and collected person, but today was the first day that I felt that I was not professional. My work life was no longer balanced. When my heart is disturbed by you, Wan-Yiwa

I left the office and headed straight to her house immediately with anxiety. Even the sky was not cooperating. It was getting dark and then it started to drizzle. The music playing in the car that I used to think was beautiful, today I turned it off completely. There was only the sound of raindrops hitting the car window, making the left side of my chest even more lonely.

Today, I have to talk things out. I have to apologize to her. We just started dating. Why do we have to break up because of my soft shoulders? I won't accept it. I have to fix this mistake immediately.

When I arrived at her alley, I decided to park my car in the alley next to the construction site where the house was being extended. This place is a bit dangerous for my beautiful car. But I thought it would be better to park here. If I parked in front of Wan-Yiwa's house and she saw it, her anger might make her not even show her face.

The rain was still drizzling. I forgot to take my umbrella out of the car, but I was too lazy to walk. Go back and get it, head straight to her house quickly, but you have to stop when you see Wan-Yiwa standing in front of the house and talking to someone with a friendly smile. She is not sad as I thought. Her smile is still bright under the rain that falls for Nadoo. When I look closely, I see that the person she is laughing and having fun with is a handsome young man. They are talking very happily and I don't know if I should interrupt the conversation or not.

This may not be the right time. I'll wait in the car first. When you finish talking, I'll come back to you. Then I turn around and prepare to walk back to the car. Because it's raining, I walk quickly without noticing that there is a 3x4 placed across my waist. Its edge hits the mound in the middle of my torso with a loud sound.

Thud!

"Ugh!"

The excruciating pain I feel shoots from the middle of my torso and flows throughout my body from head to toe. No words can replace this pain when the prominent bone called "mound" hits. My tears flow down in the heavy rain. While I am unconscious and the pain reaches my heart, I hear Someone shouted behind me in shock.

"Meen!"

Wan-Yiwa's call made me not dare to turn around because of her face. I could only turn my back on her with a distorted face.

"You misunderstood."

"What misunderstanding?" I answered her without looking back. I wanted to grab my crotch so badly, but it wouldn't be cool.

"Turn around and talk to him first."

"No."

"Please."

Her plea made my heart melt. I didn't know what I misunderstood, but I still turned to look at her. The rain poured down and soaked me. My tears flowed down my cheeks because of the pain, and I thought they would turn green soon. Wan-Yiwa looked at me with a face that looked like her heart was breaking.

"You misunderstood. That guy, he..."

"What about him?"

"He's the bill collector. But he wrote down the wrong meter. We cleared up the misunderstanding a little bit and then he suddenly asked for my phone number and said he wanted to be friends with me, but he didn't give it to me."

"I see."

"Why are you speaking so briefly?"

"..."

"If something's wrong, just tell me." Still crying, I answered honestly.

"It hurts."

"It was all a misunderstanding. He let you go thinking I was talking to another guy...but I only like you!" I couldn't fully grasp what she meant because I was still in pain. Before I could react, she threw her arms around me in the pouring rain. Though startled, the ache I felt lingered, both physical and emotional.

I hurt... down there.

# Chapter 3: The Person of My Dreams

Wan-Yiwa took me into the house to clean myself because I was soaked from the rain outside. There was no one else in the house right now except her. Hot tea was served to me to warm up my body temperature to relieve the cold. Her fitted clothes were temporarily on me to replace the ones I had previously washed and dried.

From what I could see, she still seemed to misunderstand that the tears I cried were because I was upset about that electrician or something flirting with her. And I happened to see it. But in reality, I wasn't a petty person. That's because I'm a very confident person. I'm a good person, my looks are acceptable, I'm financially stable. Let's not even talk about my job. It's hard to have someone as a competitor or compare myself to other. So I've never felt inferior or felt inferior to anyone to the point of being so sad. But I didn't say anything to clear up the misunderstanding.

Who could tell her that I was hurt... my pussy

The angle of that three-by-four pierced my bone exactly in the right direction and angle. It was so offensive that I couldn't speak. I could understand how much those men felt when they got kicked in their sensitive area. I am no different, but now I am feeling better, but I still have pain and I will not change this misunderstanding from wrong to right.

Instead, I let it be, because watching her fret and worry over me was... oddly amusing.

"Are you not cold yet?"

Wan-Yiwa, who had been sitting quietly for a long time, stared at me with concern. I, who was sipping tea, nodded slightly and said briefly.

"Thank you."

"Why did you come here?"

"I have something to tell you."

"I don't want to talk about it."

She must know that I came here to say something. When it came to yesterday, she would always evade the conversation and refuse to talk, which made me angry.

"You have to listen. This is important to me."

"No..." She shook her head and looked away as if she was avoiding eye contact, swallowing the pain. "I don't want to talk about it, and I won't accept it."

"You have to accept it because it has already happened, and I know that what I did has created a rift between us. So listen carefully. I came here to ask for..."

"Not breaking up!"

"Huh?"

"I just became your girlfriend four days ago, not counting the days we didn't message each other on LINE. That means we've only been officially dating for a day, and now you're here to break up with me just because I didn't let you kiss me? I won't accept it!"

Who would break up with her? I came here to apologize to her and we'll start over from scratch. But the sweet-faced girl wouldn't listen to anything. Her tears started to well up in my eyes, and I had to quickly explain.

"Wait—you're avoiding me because you thought I came here to break up?"

"Yes! I couldn't bear the thought of it. About what happened that day... I ran away, not because I hated you or anything, but because I was embarrassed. I thought I might have hurt your feelings, but I didn't know how to fix it."

Oh, why did I end up with the wound? I stretched a little and put on a cold face. It seemed like the game had turned now. I wanted to hear what she understood, so I could follow her correctly.

"If you didn't despise me, why did you run away?"

"I..."

"Then why are you working from home today instead of going to the office like usual?"

I crossed my arms and pretended to be serious. Even though the truth is melted like wax burnt by a soft fire, she didn't hate me from that kiss. Let me hear what happened.

"That day... I hadn't eaten anything."

"..."

"My breath smelled bad."

I blinked.

"You suddenly leaned in to kiss me, and I panicked. If we kissed, and you caught a whiff of my breath, you'd hate kissing me forever. So I ran into the bathroom to brush my teeth and blurted out, 'Why didn't you tell me first?'" "You remember every detail," I teased, though her voice had grown shaky.

"And then, when we sat down for dinner, you were so quiet. I thought for sure you were mad at me. I was certain you'd break up with me, so I couldn't bear to face you."

No wonder... When I was about to say sorry, the word "blame" didn't even appear in the sentence. She cut me off, snap, snap, snap, not letting me finish my sentence. Oh... How can I stop loving you, my lovely girl? So adorable.

"As for working from home, your company has a work from home policy. They don't have to come into the office anyway, so today I took the opportunity to stop to avoid you."

"Because you were afraid that I would break up with you, right?"

"But you still showed up here, to find me talking to an electricity worker who was asking for my number. I saw you crying... I must have hurt you a lot. Look, no matter what I do it seems to be wrong. Even though I want to keep you, but..."

I moved closer to her who was sitting not far away and put both hands on her cheeks, staring into her light brown eyes.

"Have you eaten yet?"

"Huh? I have."

"Then you can kiss me now, right?"

Again...

I heard her swallowing saliva as if she was stunned. This time, I suddenly attacked her again, but it was a warning before doing so. Not as reckless as that day. The sweet-faced one lowered her eyes a little and pursed her lips before she pounced forward to kiss me. My face flinched a little.

Kiss... I was kissed.

Although it wasn't a passionate kiss, it was a meaningful kiss. She was the first person to touch my lips like this. That softness and sweetness was a feeling that made my heart flutter. My face became hot and I almost tensed up. I couldn't be normal anymore.

"I kissed you."

"Is this called a kiss?"

"..."

"It's fine. I'll accept your apology with this kiss."

"You won't break up with me, will you?"

"You already kissed me, why would I break up with you?"

I didn't have the word "break up" in my head for a second. I chewed my cheek a little and used both hands to pull her cheek until it was like a slingshot.

"From now on, let's talk about it honestly. Otherwise, we'll create misunderstandings and worry ourselves for nothing. And... About your work from home." "Why?"

"It makes me irritated."

"Why is it irritated?"

"Not seeing you at work makes me nervous." I said, being honest after she had confessed her feelings for me for so long. "From now on, you can't take time off unless you're sick or busy, understand?"

She gasped as if she was stunned. I pulled away from her and sat back down in my original position before clearing my throat.

"I didn't come here today to break up with you, but to see you because you took time off work. It made me worried."

And I wanted to apologize, but I didn't say it because it seemed like it would clear things up. There's a misunderstanding.

"Ah... Um, I didn't really want to stay home either."

"..."

"Actually, I like going to work because I want to see you every day too." "Do you like me that much?"

"Um, you're like..."

"Like?" "A dream."

Thump-thump...

Thump-thump...

My heart beats fast while still holding her face. She likes me this much? Without her knowing that I like her too but never tell her. And to repay her for liking me this much, I use all my courage again, but not too softly, and slowly lean forward to see if she agrees. However, Wan-Yiwa closes her eyes and willingly lets me press my lips on hers, and this is the second time we've kissed.

Her arms wrapped around my neck, our bodies leaned against the sofa with me straddling her body on top, her soft skin pressed against mine, her rapid heartbeat echoed and I could feel how excited she was. We didn't do anything more than just press our lips together to kiss her. I pulled away from her and stared at her face, brushing her messy hair and tidying it up before talking to her in the most intimate way I've ever done.

"You're not the only one who likes me, that's what I want you to know."

"Meen..."

"From now on, if I'm going to do anything, I'll ask for your permission first. We'll take it slow to get to know each other. Be patient and wait for the sweet."

"I understand." She smiled shyly.

"Then can I kiss you again? This time... Use your tongue."

"Some things don't need permission, it's straightforward."

And we tried it like that. It was the beginning of our relationship... I'm your dream. She is my dream.

We are a 12% couple who secretly love each other and are loved back. It's great.

"By the way, when you cried in the rain and said it hurt, what did you mean?"

"What?"

Wan Yiwa seemed to have realized something. I pulled away from her for a moment and rolled my eyes in the Thai figure eight because I couldn't think of an excuse. Just as I was about to form words about what hurt me, her mother's voice, who had just come back from outside, suddenly rang out.

"Yiwa, help me carry something quickly."

"Ouch!"

The shock made her push me away until I rolled off the sofa. To make matters worse, the table hit me right where the original pain was and hit me hard. I screamed until her mother ran in to see me and found me lying on the floor pretending to be dead.

"What happened, Yiwa... Why is your friend lying there?"

I can't move anymore. The old wound hasn't faded yet. The new wound is hitting the same place again. Now all I can do is pretend to be dead. Tears flow, I want to leave this world because I really can't tell anyone.

That my pussy hurts...

The pain is excruciating, lying down, tears flowing from my eyes... This is how it is. Now I'm back home to get treatment. I remember how much I had to twist my body when I walked to make everything look normal. By the time I got to my room, I felt so exhausted from tensing up my body that I had to lie down on my favorite sofa in the middle of the room. But before I could rest, someone pressed the code to open my door and came in. I jumped up and sat up, looked at the guests who came in, and sighed.

"Mom, you didn't call to tell me first."

"Have you become a different person now?" Mom, who was carrying food, put it on the counter. As for me, I lay down as before, still numb because I was hurt. "I heard you went back home."

"I figured Mek would tell you,"

"What mood are you in when you go home? Is there something bothering you? I saw you struggling to get out. No matter how much anyone objected, you wouldn't listen. There must be something wrong."

"The abnormality has been fixed," I told my mother the truth. "Don't worry,

Mom."

"I didn't come to worry, I came for something else."

I immediately sat up, knowing what my mom was going to say.

"You're not trying to set me up again, are you?"

"Just go for a bit, meen. At this age, you're pretty, and your career is good. If you have a partner, you'll be fine too."

"I have one."

"What?"

"I have one, a good match." I told my mom and shrugged. "Don't try to force any man onto me. The reason I don't have a boyfriend is because I don't want one myself, not because men don't want me. But now I have one."

"If you have one, why don't you bring it to me so I can meet you and know who the son of a rich family is? Otherwise, we'll be tricked."

"Don't you trust my ability to judge people?" I looked at my mom with sharp eyes. "If I've chosen one, that means he's excellent."

"Then bring them over."

"I'm not ready yet."

"Then that means you're lying."

My family is Chinese. Although not ancient Chinese, we have a lineage that when it comes to any festival, we must worship the gods, give yang pao, and lai see. But if you ask what religion we follow, we are all Buddhists. So, the fact that my daughter is not married makes my parents a little upset because they are afraid that when I get old, I will be alone, with no grandchildren to hold, no children to take care of, or anything like that.

"Then what do I have to do for you to believe that I am telling the truth?"

"Just bring them over so I can meet them,"

"We've only just started seeing each other. Why would I scare them off by introducing them to my parents so soon?"

"How will they know that we are serious and sincere? Mom and Dad are good at judging people. Plus, they will stop giving advice on dating."

"Give me a little more time. Right now, my business is not settled yet. My heart has to take things slowly. You should worry about your son instead. Be careful that he will get women pregnant before marriage."

"Don't say things like that. Your brother is such a well-behaved kid,"

"Hohoho," I laughed up my nose and shook my head. "I don't know anything."

"If you know anything, tell me."

"Why don't you ask your precious son yourself?" I teased. "Anyway, don't worry about me. If this relationship becomes serious, I promise you'll meet them the next time you walk through that door."

Suddenly, an idea sparked. I pursed my lips a little, feeling a little embarrassed when I thought about inviting her to live together here.

"Are you going to live together before marriage?"

"It's a guarantee that things in bed won't be a problem. Oh, Mom, why did you hit me? It hurts." I twisted my body and puffed out my cheeks, pouting.

"Why would you say something like that? You're a grown woman!"

"Are you saying you waited until after marriage with Dad?"

"..."

"Oops, just kidding. Is this for real?" I covered my mouth and laughed. "Come on, Mom should know better than anyone that being compatible in life and in that way is important. Besides, it's not that long ago. We just started dating. I'll introduce you to them. Mom, believe me, the person I choose is a good person."

"..."

"I've been watching this person for ten years. They're like the person of my dreams"

# Chapter 4: Moving In

Today, I returned to work as usual. After returning from the warehouse to check the stock of goods sent by ship, I rushed back to the company with a heart that was eager to meet someone, just like everyone who has fallen in love with a senior or a friend from another class who was inspired to go to school to meet the person they liked. And today, my heart was as warm as ever when I found that Wan Yiwa had returned to work at the company as usual, sitting in the same position and was busy keying in data codes to send to various departments that needed sales or sales data as requested by each department. Throughout the work, I kept glancing at her work without hiding anything. Of course, Wan Yiwa knew that she was being looked at, so she stared back. We exchanged affectionate glances and raised our eyebrows to playfully flirt with each other, without having to hide any feelings.

**Meena:** You put on a pretty lipstick today.

**Wan Yiwa:** I usually put on this color every day. Just noticed?

**Meena:** What does this lipstick taste like?

**Wan Yiwa:** you have to try it.

The flirting and teasing made me tremble while working. My heart was so happy and I wanted to jump up and drag her away. Somewhere with just the two of us, but I had to hide it. Her kiss mark was still imprinted in my brain and heart. I wanted to kiss her again.

**Meena:** Let's meet at the fire escape.

After I finished speaking, I got up and walked out of the room first without fail, sending her an inviting look. After I walked ahead for about five minutes, Wan Yiwa followed me to the fire escape and crossed her arms, looking at me as I stood looking at the view outside with an awkward expression like I was playing an MV.

"Are you this kind of person?"

She said before coming down the stairs to me. I put my hands in my pockets and tilted my head to look at her, not feeling anything.

"You have to accept it. Your girlfriend is a curious person and seems to want to know everything except kissing.

"Then what's the point of calling me here?"

She asked even though she already knew. As soon as she got down the stairs to the same step, I immediately pounced on her, and she accepted my attack without any sign of rejection. The two of us kissed passionately, yearning, as if we had been thinking about the same thing all along, and wanted to reach this point so badly. Our lips pressed together, our tongues intertwined, and it seemed like I was getting better at it.

"I missed you." I pulled away from her and rested my forehead on hers, teasing her with my nose.

"I missed you too."

**Creak!**

The sound of the door opening from the fire escape made us both quickly separate. Our postures changed immediately and we acted like we were scolding each other, talking about our work with the faces of our boss and subordinates. The employee who was going to come down to smoke a cigarette, when he saw me standing there with a proud expression, ready to attack any face that came up, he quickly shrunk his neck and retreated, afraid of getting hit by a stray bullet. We both sighed in relief that no one saw us until Wan Yiwa laughed.

"You're good at acting."

"You're good at taking jokes."

"It's exciting, huh?"

"Not exciting."

"Oh really..." She was a little disappointed that we disagreed on this matter.

"I don't want to make this too exciting. I want to do it with you comfortably without anyone interfering.

"But what can I do? My boss called me to do something like this on the fire escape. If it's not exciting, how can I feel? Isn't there any safer place?

"In my place."

"Because if I go to your house, your mom will show up again." I pursed my lips and licked my lips excitedly to bring this up. It was something I had been thinking about all night and I thought I should try to persuade her. "What do you think about going to my place?"

"It's a bit far to drive to your place to do something like this, and then we have to rush back to work. It takes half an hour to drive there and then, and then we have to eat lunch. It's a waste of time, don't you think?"

"Is there any way to save time?"

"It's probably only on holidays, when we have time to be alone together," she said shyly. "Why do we have to talk about this so directly? Do other couples have agreements and plans to do things like this?"

"I don't know about other couples, but we have to plan. How about this?"

"Huh?"

I hesitated to say it, but I wanted to try.

"Can you work from home? At your job?"

"Yes, but didn't you say you wanted to see me every day?"

As she spoke, she put her hands behind her back and kicked the floor shyly. I thought it was cute. Like that, I wanted to rush in and fan her to relieve my longing, but I could only pretend and say what I had prepared.

"There is a way for us to avoid people's eyes and see each other all day long. I want to do whatever we want as a newlywed couple."

"What?"

"Move in with me to my condo."

Wan Yiwa almost flinched when she heard that. She made a face of shock, not wanting to believe what she heard. I quickly waved my hands because I was afraid that she would think too far ahead.

"Don't think too far ahead. I just think it's a convenient place for us to see each other every day. I want to do whatever I want without having to avoid anyone's eyes."

"But we've only just started dating. You want me to move in with you..."

"I know it's too soon."

"..."

"But I'm hot-tempered."

"From what I've seen, you're really hot-tempered. But I didn't think you'd be this hot-tempered. And moving in with you is..."

"It's a quick way to learn each other's habits." I tried to persuade her in every way to let her move in with me. "Because we're working age, you want me to send you love letters. Or sending a pager with a poem to you, it seems a bit childish."

"Not only is it childish, it's also very old-fashioned. What pages are there these days?" Wan Yiwa laughed before quickly looking at me slyly. "Do you have other plans besides kissing?"

I was a little taken aback because I hadn't thought about it that far, but being together leads to other things, right?

"I want to spend time with you. Getting to know you so well for so many years doesn't take much time. And now that we've come back to meet again, and we're both adults... Let's just live like normal people do. But if you're afraid that it'll go too far and too fast, I promised that while we're together, besides kissing, I won't do anything to you."

Wan Yiwa opened her mouth as if she wanted to say something, but swallowed it.

"Do you want to say something?" I couldn't help but ask because I saw her strange behavior. She shook her head and pouted.

"Are you sure you won't do anything else besides kissing?"

"If you don't give in, what can I do? The first time I kissed you, you ran away and went to the bathroom. I won't dare to do anything to you anymore. So you can rest assured, safe and sound. I will never do anything to you. As long as we can be together, I will be happy."

This was the most I could do to express my love without the word love. Wan Yiwai still did not reply, even though her face was now pink with blood because of embarrassment.

"Give me some time to think about it. This is quite a big deal for me. If one day I fight with you and get kicked out, I will not know where I will go to live."

"I will never kick you out. That is our agreement."

"It seems like our agreements are too many."

"I can have a hundred terms. I just want to have time to be with you without having to hide or get kicked out when Kor comes in. And I don't have to pretend to be dead."

When I said this, she laughed fondly and understood why I wanted her to move in with me so much. I put on a serious face and pretended not to want it too much. The sweet-faced person glanced at me and reached out to pinch my cheek. Tighten until it becomes like a rubber band.

"You act all cool. I already know your personality and you're the cool type."

"Only you can pull my face like that."

"Let's just think about it."

"Three days."

"Is there even a deadline?"

"Even work has a deadline."

"What kind of work is this?"

"I don't know. You have to give me an answer within three days. That's it."

I put my hands in my pockets and walked up each flight of stairs with a smile on my face, which of course she didn't see. Every step I took was filled with excitement and suspense that she would be able to move in with me. From now on, we will see each other every day. I could kiss her whenever I wanted. What could be better than that? "What if I don't move in with you after three days?"

I stopped my legs and slowly turned to look at her.

"That's fine. It's your decision."

"..."

"Then we'll end up kissing on the fire escape like this forever."

I said that and walked back out. I was a little worried that she might not come with me and it would make me really sad. Not only would I not be able to kiss her as I wanted all the time, my mom would have to take me to see her. Over and over again

Please, Move In... I Want to Be With You, Wan Yiwa

The time given was not too much but not too little either. But for someone like me who is waiting for an answer, it feels like an eternity. It's only been a few hours, and I've been staring at my phone to see if she's made up her mind and waiting for her to send a message or call, but everything is still empty. Right now, I'm walking around in my condo room anxiously, afraid that she'll hesitate and eventually reject me. I want to pressure her, but that's not what lovers do. Everything has to be willing.

**Beep...**

My phone vibrated and rang. My nerves made me quickly pick it up, press the answer button without looking at who was calling, and answer back cheerfully.

"What's up? Have you made up your mind yet?"

[What did you decide?] My mother's voice on the line made me, who was grinning widely, shut my mouth immediately.

"Is it you, Mom?"

[Yes, it's me.]

I left the screen and looked at the caller's name before I made a poke sound. My mother called me at the right time. I became an ungrateful child when I felt annoyed by the caller because I wasn't the one I was waiting for.

"What's up, mom?"

[I've already made an appointment for you to meet someone. Make yourself free. Let's meet at my house tomorrow afternoon.]

"I already told you, Mom, that I have a partner."

[Don't pretend to have a boyfriend. We just avoid meeting this person all the time. Are you going to die alone and make your parents worry?]

"I'm not alone. I'm going to die with a really good partner. You don't have to worry about that."

[I don't care. You have to come tomorrow. Your father and I have already arranged for them to visit us at home. If you really have a partner, then bring them home tomorrow, and we'll back off.]

"Mom, why don't you listen to me?"

[Oh, I won't listen. I'm your mom. I can control everything.]

My mom said that and hung up. That meant she didn't give me any chance to refuse. Anyway, I had to go to the private viewing that my parents had arranged for me tomorrow. I walked over to sit on my favorite brown leather sofa and threw myself on my arms and legs, feeling exhausted. I waited for someone to respond, but it seemed like they were giving me too much time. If I squeezed it into just one day, I would have found an excuse not to go to the private viewing this time.

Butt...

The phone rang again. This time, I answered the call with a dejected heart. I didn't even look to see who was calling and answered in a sluggish tone.

"What?"

[Uh... no, not really.]

I immediately sat up because I recognized her voice, even though it was coming from the speakerphone.

"Yiwa?"

[Yes, it's me... Did I bother you?]

"Not at all. But I'm surprised you're calling at this time. Or have you already made up your mind?"

I asked her excitedly and nervously. When she actually called, I felt a bit scared because it seemed like such a quick and urgent decision. Maybe she was calling to say that she couldn't move in because of a million reasons. Could she really decide that quickly in just a few hours?

[I can't say that I've already made up my mind.]

"So what's the answer?"

[Well... I'm downstairs at your condo right now. I brought my clothes with me. Would it be okay if I moved in today?]

"Just a sec."

I replied in a calm and composed tone before turning off the phone. After coming to my senses, I jumped and screamed on the sofa, doing a tuk-tuk dance like a cartoon character wearing a four-colored bear costume with a pole on his head. Before I hung up, I spoke in a calm tone again.

"Are you downstairs right now? I'll go downstairs to pick you up."

[Okay.]

After hanging up I almost felt like flying. If I could jump off the balcony and end up in the lobby of Khum Puk, I would have done it already. While waiting for the elevator to arrive, I watched it move down floor by floor. My heart was worried that she would change her mind every second. But when I got down, I found Wan Yiwa with only a large backpack. I guessed that she only carried necessary clothes.

"Yiwa"

I called her and walked over to her, trying not to show that I was too excited. "You only brought this much?"

"I don't have many things. Plus, I carried a lot of things. I was afraid of the owner of the room."

"Why should you be afraid? We're lovers. But it's okay. If there's anything missing, we can buy it later."

"Hmm."

"Then let's go." I went to carry the bag for her myself, but she bought it first.

"It's okay, I'll carry it myself."

"Let me do what I want to do for you. You've decided to come live with me."

"Okay."

She accepted timidly and let me carry the backpack weighing several kilograms up the elevator with her. The entire way the elevator moved up, we were both silent. I glanced at her, who didn't say anything until I had to break the silence.

"I didn't think you'd decide so fast."

"I was hesitating whether it was too fast, but... You're the type who thinks and acts fast. If I'm slow, there'll be more problems."

"Did I force you?"

"No, I came willingly."

"What about your mom? Doesn't she mind?"

"Of course, what else? Mom kept saying I was rebellious, moving out to live with a partner and leaving her to be alone at home. So, I had to make a deal that I'd come back and stay over on weekends. And I didn't say I was staying with my partner either."

"You lied to your mom."

"It's hard to explain. Saying I'm staying at a friend's place is easier. And it becomes even easier when I say I'm staying with you."

"How would your mom feel if she found out later what we were?"

"It's better not to let her know."

"That's the opposite of me."

"What do you mean?"

*Set*

The elevator arrived at my floor. We walked down the hallway until we reached my door, where we pressed the code to enter. We paused for a moment before letting her look at the code openly.

"Remember this number. From now on, this is your home."

Wan Yiwa blushed a little and nodded before looking at the code and reciting it in her mind. As soon as the door opened, the air from inside the room was so cold that both of our faces felt like our room was still the same. The only difference was that... there was going to be a new member coming to stay with us.

"May I?"

"Why do you even need to ask? This is your home now... Welcome."

I said shyly and pursed my lips. Wan Yiwa nodded and walked in, putting her backpack on the floor. Then she looked around like the first time she came.

"It feels strange. The second time I came, I could move in right away. Am I too easy?" She said with a smile, but her smile was also frightening, afraid that I would look at her badly. I shook my head and rejected her thoughts. "No, I don't think you're easy. Couples should stay together."

"..."

"But I also want to ask you why you decided so quickly. I thought you would give an answer on the last day." When asked about this, the sweetfaced person pursed her lips a little, not knowing what to say, so I had to walk over to face her and look into her sweet eyes, as I liked to stare into her light brown eyes like marbles without getting tired.

"I..."

"Huh?"

"I thought about it and it's true. If we are in a private place together, we don't have to hide." She added a little more and scratched her neck. "No need to hide at the fire escape and be worried that someone will see."

"Yiwa..."

"Actually, I like kissing you a lot, so I made a quick decision."

Her answer made me unable to hold it in and smiled until my eyes closed. The sweet-faced one smiled back when she saw me smiling like that and squinted.

"Smiling about what?"

"We think the same thing." I used both hands to support her face and leaned down to her. "I also like kissing you a lot."

The two of us kissed passionately. I felt that I had improved a lot after kissing her a few times. However, the sweet-faced one pushed me away to get some air.

"But I'm not easy. I moved here because your room's atmosphere is good. I can work from home and concentrate without thinking about anything else."

"I don't think about anything else."

"Are you sure?"

"I think about it a little bit," I confessed honestly. "But as I said before, if you're not willing, he won't do anything."

Wan Yiwa opened her mouth to say something and then shut it abruptly. She bared her teeth a little, as if she was dissatisfied.

"Did I say something wrong?"

"No."

"Of course I must have."

"Let's take it slow. This is already very fast for our situation."

"That's fine." I could have insisted on telling her to talk, but I didn't want to act like a dictator. Just asking her to move here successfully is a good thing. "But since we're at it anyway."

"Hmm."

"Can I kiss you again?"

"I said..." She made a serious face and put both hands around my neck and pulled me closer. "No need to ask, if you want to do it, just do it." "..."

"No matter what."

She just said that and kissed me instead. We were both cuddling like that, barely talking because we were intoxicated by our new love, both of us were infatuated with each other. But what did she mean?

No matter what it is....this is it.

# Chapter 5: The First Night

Finally, today has come. The day I get to share a roof with someone who is not my family, like my parents. Now I am kneeling on the bed, looking at the mattress that I sleep on every day, starting to have strange imaginations. Tonight, I will not have to sleep alone, but 'her', the person who is known as my girlfriend, will sleep over with me. Just thinking about it makes me not know what to do.

I'm a little worried. Am I a restless sleeper? Do I sleepwalk or snore to the point that the person next to me is annoyed? When I sleep, it's the time when I'm the least aware. If I do that and she gets annoyed and runs away home, I'll probably go crazy. The only way to avoid making mistakes is to not sleep.

But I probably won't be able to sleep tonight. I'm too excited.

"Ahem. You can toss your clothes into the laundry basket by the bathroom door. The maid will take care of them."

"Maid?" She looked like she was haunted by what she heard. "Do you have a maid?"

"I hire her weekly. The maid will come to clean and mop for you. You can throw your clothes in the basket. Why do you want to keep them in your bag? This is your home."

When I said the last sentence, I felt a little embarrassed. The sweet-faced one must have felt the same because she pursed her lips and lowered her head in acknowledgement before agreeing to put the clothes in the basket as

I asked. After she finished her business, she still stood there without moving, looking confusedly between the sofa and the mezzanine where I was waiting.

"What's wrong? What are you thinking about?"

"I'm thinking about where to sleep."

"Here." I pointed my thumb at the mezzanine. "On the bed."

"Uh... um."

I think I've been using a too much of a bossy tone lately. It's like I've picked up the bossy habit from work and applied it to my love life. This is something I need to fix, but sometimes if I don't use that tone of voice, Wan Yiwa won't move around much. To be honest, I don't know how to act either.

She walked up to the mezzanine and looked at the clean, wide bed covered with white sheets, just like a hotel. This room was designed and decorated by a famous interior designer. After the design was finished, she gave me a tip that if you want the room to look spacious and not stuffy, you should use only white sheets. And I never change any colors because I want the room to look good.

"Which side should I sleep on?"

"Whichever side is convenient for you." I tried to twist and practice which side I was more comfortable with. "You can sleep on your left side."

"Okay."

Because when I hug her, I'm more comfortable facing that way. I smiled to myself without saying anything and walked ahead to lay down as an example for her to see first. When Wan Yiwa saw that I was crawling under the covers, she followed suit.

*Thump, Thump...*

What is this new feeling? I've always slept alone in my life. At most, I slept with my mother. But the feeling was different from now. She was my lover who slept next to me. I couldn't explain how excited I was and didn't know what to do with the smell of soap from someone who had just showered. And the lotion that smelled the same as the one I used. In a hundred years, I've never felt that my body lotion smelled so good. Today, I wanted to snuggle up and smell it, but I didn't have the courage because I was afraid that she would run away like that day again.

"How does it feel to sleep at your girlfriend's house for the first time?"

"Exciting," she answered honestly. The two of us lay on our backs, looking at the ceiling. The room with dim light like that.

"He was also excited."

"Is it true that you've never had a boyfriend or girlfriend before?"

"It is true."

"You don't seem to have a bad personality. You look good. Has no one courted you?"

"What do you mean by 'court'? Like what you did? If it means coming up to someone and saying, *'I've liked you for a long time,'* no, that's never happened to me before."

"You idiot. Is it necessary to bring this up?"

She kicked my shin a little when she felt that she was being teased. I didn't think to bring this up, but it was the truth. No one had ever said it directly to me before. What is courting? I can't tell and don't know it at all.

"If someone else confessed to you the way I did, would you have said yes to dating them?" she asked cautiously, her fingers fidgeting nervously. "No, because I already liked you. Everything just fell into place."

"And if I hadn't said anything that night? Would we still have made it here?"

"I don't know, but I was looking for a way to talk to you. Otherwise, I wouldn't have met you in the bathroom."

"Then I'm lucky to have decided to speak my mind."

"It's not luck. Our feelings are mutual." I squinted at her. It was the moment she squinted at me as well. And then the enormous attraction made us both jump and kiss on the king-sized bed. We exchanged sweet, soft kisses through our lips. My hands and feet didn't know where they should be, so they were placed haphazardly on her waist. She put her arms under my neck and pulled me close. We did just that and then parted ways. Wan Yiwa's eyes were sweet like someone who was filled with love.

"Wow."

"Wow."

I exclaimed in surprise because this kiss was different from the others. It was like there was some kind of driving force inside that gave him more feelings, but I didn't know what it was. My hands were still on her waist. My fingers accidentally touched her bare skin, her shirt accidentally lifted up, and it felt like an electric shock. And because I wanted to know more, I crawled my fingers under the collar of her shirt, but her hand caught mine before I could go further.

"What did you do?" She asked with a sly smile. I was acting a little cool, pretending not to know.

"Nothing."

"Then what about the hand that crawled in?"

"It just happened to touch."

"You are someone who never admits anything. If you dare to admit what you did," She pulled my hand to place it on her bare stomach. "You might be able to crawl more."

"..."

"But that's enough for today. Consider it a punishment for a liar. Hehe."

She laughed cutely while I wanted to make a face like I was crying. Just touching her waist made me tremble. If I just admitted the truth a little, that I wanted to try touching other parts of her, I would have gotten some of her body already. Wan Yiwan lay back on her back and lifted my hand from her waist, closing her eyes.

"Good night.

"Good night."

I told her that, but my eyes were wide open. I changed my sleeping position to lying on my back, but I still looked at the ceiling, seduced by the scent of her perfume that did not fade away. I did not know how much time passed, I tossed and turned like someone who could not sleep, until finally I bounced up and sat up, at the same time that Wan Yiwa also sat up.

"Oh, you're not sleeping yet?"

"Because you toss and turn, who can sleep?

"Sorry."

"No, I'm too excited to sleep in a new house.

"What should we do?"

"..."

"How about we kiss again?"

"If we kiss until our lips are numb, we won't be able to sleep. It might even make our eyes wide open even more."

I pouted when she said that. Oh... At least kissing is something good. I'd rather wake up with a numb mouth and go to the warehouse if she'd let me kiss her all day and night.

"What should I do? I can't sleep like this."

"Let's talk about us."

"Our stories?"

"They say we know each other too little. When we were students, we barely knew each other. When we grew up and met, I confessed my love to you. You accepted my love easily, without knowing my background before. I wanted to know you in other aspects, such as... what you like to eat, what color you like, where you like to go, what kind of habits you don't like to be done like that. Think of it as a night to get to know each other, slowly learning about each other.

"..."

"Since we're going to live together anyway."

The word living together made me twist my body a little shy, to the point that I had to lower my head and put my hair behind my ear. That's right. We just liked each other. Everything happened so quickly without getting to know each other much. We used our feelings as the only guide. So, besides kissing, we should talk a bit. What do you like or not like?

"Who will start telling about themselves first?"

"Rock, paper, scissors."

"You're acting like a child." I raised my hand and took out the scissors while she took out the paper. I giggled because I played the game without letting her know.

"Then you say I'm a child."

"You lost. Tell me about yourself first."

"What are you going to tell me all of a sudden?... You ask first and then the story will follow."

"Your family starts there. Then tell me whatever comes to mind. When you finish telling me, I'll tell you about myself."

"Me?... Not much. I'm the only daughter. I came with my mother..."

Wan Yiwa told me about her past from when she was little. She was born and raised by a single mother whose father passed away when she was three years old. Her mother raised her by working as a civil servant. She raised her like any other child. She said that she wasn't good or outstanding in any way. She didn't have any dreams. She only thought about how to survive each day. When she was a child, she was a bit naughty because she didn't want to be bullied. She had a rather wild personality, so she hung out with a group of friends who had similar personalities.

"And as you can see... I slapped my senior in the bathroom, so naughty."

"You're not naughty at all, you love justice. I like you for that."

"Why did you agree to date me?" She turned sideways to look at me directly, but I was too shy to look back, so I just stared at the ceiling.

"People date because they like each other."

"Do you like me?"

This time, I turned sideways to look at her.

"If I didn't, why would I date you?"

"You might just date me because you feel sorry for me. If you reject a friend who comes to say thank you, you might be afraid that I will be hurt."

"There are many people in the world who are hurt because of me. I don't have to be afraid."

"Didn't you say that no one courts you?"

"I mean when I scolded my subordinates at work, scolded them for their wrong doings, how many of them went out crying... But it's true that no one courted me."

"How is that possible? You're so perfect, your looks, your status, your abilities, you have it all... If those people don't court you, there's only one reason: you're not brave enough.

"Then where did you get the courage to confess your love to them?"

"Probably drunk," she laughed a little. "But I thank myself for saying it that day, or else I wouldn't be sleeping in the same bed as you tonight.

"Thank you for confessing your feelings." I ran to her, hoping to kiss her one more time, but the sweet-faced girl had enough tricks to not make it too easy by covering her mouth and shaking her head.

"Don't skip steps. You have to tell me about yourself, so I can get to know you a little bit."

So I changed from running to her, rolling over and lying on top of her, and talking to her face to face.

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything about you, what made you become who you are today, how many relatives do you have in your family, what dreams do you want to achieve? What do you dislike and what do you like the most?"

"I... have both parents and a younger brother who was born to parents and had a stray child..."

I was born into a middle-class family. Not rich but not poor either. I am a smart person. No, I can easily understand everything. Maybe because my mindset tells me that there is nothing in this world that I cannot do. I am the pride of my parents. Everything I do is pleasing to them. If you ask about my dreams, I want to be an illustrator, an artist. I can draw a little, but I am not as good as in math. So I turned to study academics instead.

"You and me are like heaven and earth. Do you still want to draw now?"

"If you want to draw, draw in a notebook. It's a hobby, nothing special."

"Draw something for me to see sometime."

"I'll show it to you."

"What do you like and dislike?"

"I like you." "..."

"Not sure if I've told you before, but if I haven't, I'll tell you that I like you... You're another dream I have been watching since I was a student."

*Thump thump...*

*Thump thump...*

My heart was beating wildly and it must have been so hard that I had to raise my hand and place it on my left chest. I flinched a little because I wasn't wearing any underwear, but I didn't pull away. I just tensed up from being used to it.

"You can make me die by your feet if you say that."

"You don't have to die. Just letting me touch you is an honor." I leaned down to her, but she turned her face away and smiled.

"Not yet. You didn't answer all the questions. What do you dislike?"

"I don't like you turning your face away because I can't kiss you."

"Sly, is that the kind of person you are?"

"Let me touch you."

It was a request with many hidden meanings. Besides kissing, there were many other things I wanted to do with her, and this was it.

# Chapter 6: The Matchmaking Meeting

In conclusion, the night that should have been romantic ended with us going back to sleep together as if nothing had happened. Wan Yiwa's face clearly lost confidence, so I couldn't help but pull her in for a hug. The sweet-faced one was a little bit too strong at first because she still felt insecure, but when she saw that I wouldn't let go of her hug, she slowly relaxed and hugged me back without fail, speaking in a cute tone from her chest.

"I'm sorry..."

"For what?"

"For ruining what could've been a perfect night by letting this happen."

"Is it something that I have to be that upset about?" I laughed a little and stretched my legs to make my body more comfortable. "It's not like this will be our last day together."

"Aren't you upset?"

"You act like you don't know that I am also someone who knows menstruation very well. Don't think too much. Just being able to cuddle you makes me happy."

When I told her to relax, Wan Yiwa hugged me tighter and said in a husky voice.

"Thank you."

"Actually, I likes to hug you like this. It wasn't bad at all."

And that night, we cuddled until dawn without anything happening. Even though I felt curious, the hug helped relieve the heat inside me and I fell asleep. Before I knew it, it was morning already...

The sunlight outside the window filtered through the curtains and stung my eyes a little. I moved a little when I saw the light, but then I had to stop when I saw Wan Yiwa still hugging me in the same position. Her body scent, which was filled with mild soap, was still lingering in my head. Instead of getting up to take a shower, drink coffee, and do my daily routine as I always do, I hugged her in the same position, cherishing this wonderful moment. I watched her breathe slowly like a deep sleeper. I couldn't help but smile and kept asking myself if this was true.

The person I had been watching since I was a student, the woman who sat at the back of the classroom with sunlight streaming through the classroom window, the person we rarely made eye contact with, and rarely talked to, was now hugging me on the bed. She was sleeping soundly like a little child. I pulled her in to hug her tighter. Let's put today's work on hold for now. Even though today I have to go out to check on the goods that have been sent by ship at the warehouse, three containers, I think I'll let my subordinates handle it. Is there anything happier than a good time like this? A time that I never dreamed I would receive, liking someone and they liking me back is like a dream. I have to scoop up my luck.

"No..."

Wan Yihua, who seemed to have realized it, moved her body like she was stretching lazily. I pretended to close my eyes as if I hadn't woken up yet, and the person I was hugging became still. Yes...she herself didn't dare to move either, and instead squeezed her body into my arms, afraid that she would wake me up.

She herself likes to cuddle up with me like this, doesn't she?

Her fingers touched my entire arm like a crab until they reached my face. She looked up and pulled away to see more clearly. There was a muttering sound, like she was talking to herself, but because it was quiet, I could hear it a little.

"It's like a dream."

"Then don't wake up yet."

"..."

I slowly opened my eyelids and stared at her as well. The sweet-faced person who didn't think I was awake had a slight blush when she saw that I was smiling.

"Did I wake you up?"

"No, I woke up a while ago but didn't want to move."

"Why?"

"I want to hold you like this."

We stared at each other before I lunged at her and kissed her, but she pushed my face away with her hands and quickly covered her mouth with the blanket.

"That's the rule."

"Since when did we have a rule?"

"Now."

"What rule?"

"We don't kiss when we wake up."

"Because?"

"My breath stinks. I should brush my teeth first."

I pursed my lips and pulled the blanket over my mouth. She spoke so nicely and reasonably, I completely forgot about this. Many dramas where the main couple wake up and hug, kiss, and caress each other, forgetting the reality that saliva will sour in the morning. This is a reasonable rule. I accept it.

"Okay, no kissing, but what can I do? I don't want to get out of bed yet. I want to hug you like this."

"Then let's just hug for now."

We snuggled together again without doing anything against the rules. It took almost an hour to get out of bed because we were hugging each other and chatting a little bit. Until I felt that the sun was really blinding me. And then there was the phone call from my subordinate at the warehouse who called me to go count the stock at the port and urged me to get up. I couldn't help but get up. My daily routine on the first morning we were together had changed. We stood in front of the bathroom mirror brushing our teeth together and smiling at each other. No matter what she did, I would always look at her and smile because it was filled with happiness.

Now I'm not alone. I have a girlfriend. That's what happened.

In addition to brushing my teeth, Wan Yiwa also prepared breakfast for me by Fry a simple fried egg with whatever is in the fridge to cook for me. I am not the type who eats only one cup of coffee. When I try to refuse, she makes a sulky face.

"Are you going to reject my love and goodwill?"

When she says that, I can do anything but follow her wishes. No one can force me to do anything in my life, not even my parents. No matter how good a child I am, if I don't want to do it, I don't want to do it if there is coercion. But with her, just by making a slightly sulky face, I relented and agreed to touch the fried egg a little bit, choosing to eat only the yolk.

"We are halfway. I don't eat breakfast, but because of you... I will eat it, but I won't finish it."

"That's good enough."

"Are you working from home today?"

"You don't have to hide from anyone anymore," she replied, bowing her head shyly. "Just go to work as usual."

"Oh, but I didn't go to the office today."

"Oh," her tone was clearly dejected. I smiled a little and got up to grab my bag, preparing to go to a warehouse outside the city. "That means I won't see you today, huh? Then I can work from home."

Home... She called this place home. I looked at her and felt it was so itchy that I had to reach out and pull her cheek to make the person who was feeling depressed groan.

"It hurts."

"Actually, you like me a lot."

"Don't try to be nice. Why are you inferior?"

"Then I'll work from home today. I'll come back as soon as possible."

"No need to rush like that."

"I can't. Someone's waiting." I turned around to leave the room and suddenly remembered something. "This is the rule."

"Hmm?" Wan Yiwa didn't seem sure what I meant. So I rushed over to her and grabbed her lips. "What is this?"

"From now on, every morning, Before going to work, we kiss every day."

"How much do you like kissing?"

"I like it as much as you do. Bye... I'll hurry back before noon."

"No rush, drive slowly."

"Wait for me, okay?"

"I'm in your house. If I'm not waiting for you, who else would I be waiting for—a dog or a cat?"

"I'll hurry back and come back. Bye."

"Bye."

I was putting on my shoes and getting ready to go out when I was called by the sweet-faced person again.

"Hey"

"Huh?"

"I've had my period for three days. Go to work safely."

She said just that and waved goodbye. I was a little stunned, my mouth hung open, then I smiled and held up two fingers.

"And this is the second day. I've been waiting."

"Looking at you like that, you think about that kind of thing. You're crazy about studying and working." She squinted at me with a sly smile. So I gave her the same look, turned around, and raised one eyebrow.

"You're the one who told me my period ended first."

"Let's go to work!"

I came to work with a cheerful heart. Actually, I had to come here since dark to check if the stock of goods that had been shipped was okay. Exercise equipment, one of my main businesses, is currently generating a huge income. I used to do it as a small business, but after the COVID-19 outbreak, the trend of health-conscious people who couldn't go out turned to buying exercise equipment. That's what made my income increase so much that I started expanding my business from one warehouse to two, three, four. Now, I have eight warehouses, thirty-something employees, and thirty branches that sell exercise equipment to stores nationwide, not to mention neighboring countries. But even though the business is getting bigger and better, there's never been a day when I've been as happy as today. Even the admin who takes videos to update customers standing next to me couldn't help but say,

"Boss, you look in a good mood today."

"Can you tell? What makes you think that?"

"The boss always smiles."

I closed my mouth when I was greeted like that. My serious and demure attitude made my subordinates obey me. But after a while, I couldn't help but smile again and asked the person next to me.

"Is smiling good or bad?"

"It must be good."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, I like it."

"If you like it, then..."

Yiwa probably likes it too. Today, I will smile when I open the door to the house. When I see her, it will make her feel as good as my subordinates feel. While I was daydreaming about how happy I would be when I got back, what would the two of us do? The sound of a phone ringing interrupted me. My smile was cut off like a circuit breaker when I saw that it was my mother's number.

Actually, I didn't have a problem with my mother's number, but when I saw it, I remembered that I had an appointment with my family today. I bit my lip a little before pressing the answer button and then snorted.

"Yes, Mom."

[When will you come home? We have an appointment at 1:00 PM.]

"Mom, I'm the only one making an appointment. I haven't agreed to anything yet. Besides, I have stocks and products to check. I can't just leave."

[You can't just skip out on an appointment with Mom like this. Our partner is here too. It's rude to make him wait like this.]

"Are you this afraid that I won't have a partner? What's with the partner? We've never even met before."

[I don't know. We have to come now or Mom will call me every three minutes.)

Actually, I could just turn off my phone and not go, but even if I don't answer today or tomorrow, Mom will still call me. So I decided to go on a date as Mom ordered me to. This isn't the first time Mom has called me to meet a guy, a friend's son, an acquaintance's son, a friend's friend's son. I've gone on a date ten times and it hasn't worked out. I've never had a relationship with anyone and it doesn't seem like anyone wants to continue with me. This guy must be the same. Let's just leave so Mom can stop buying from me.

It took me about thirty minutes to get home from the warehouse, excluding traffic jams. There were two strange European cars parked in front of the house. When I stepped inside, the adults who were waiting for me smiled at me. No one was angry. I don't know if they were pretending to be polite or if they weren't really angry. To be honest, I intentionally came late to make them feel bad. I really expected someone to be displeased and stand up and say, *"I can't accept a daughter-in-law like this. Let's just say it once and for all."*

"Hello."

"Finally, you're here. Making adults wait for so long is very rude... This is my daughter. She said she was the owner of the exercise equipment empire, The Muscle..."

My mother introduced me again. I guess she had advertised before. I smiled wrongly because I was bored and wanted to go home. I didn't know what Wan Yiwa was doing at this time. I missed her so much.

"As for Niw San, your son, Mayom."

"Is there anyone in the world named Mayom?" I blurted out without thinking. Everyone fell silent until I had to add more forces. "It's a unique name, it stands out, it has a lifestyle."

When I explained it like that, the owner of the name who seemed to be the mother of the man frowned as if she wasn't very pleased.

"Thank you for liking the name."

It seems like I've caused dissatisfaction since the first time we met. Mom glared at me, as if she knew I had intentionally said it before quickly changing the subject.

"Today, Ms. Mayom came to get to know us. Min, everyone has heard our reputation and our talents and is eager to see the real us. How about this? Let's go get to know each other outside first. The adults over here will talk about random things."

Wasan stood up dutifully and smiled at me.

"Let's go out. The adults are talking."

I didn't respond but stood up and followed him out and let the adults talk about the two of us. When we were alone, I lifted my watch and looked at the time. It was already three in the afternoon. Wan Yi Wan must be working alone now. If I hurried back home, she would be very happy. Plus, I would be in time to take her out for dinner. Coming here is not only useless, but it also annoys me. So I had to cut him off.

"Let me be honest, Mr. Wasan," I said, calling him by his full name as if to show some distance. "I have a partner."

"You said that because you were looking for an excuse to go back, right? Actually, I don't like the way the adults acted, but seeing you deny it like this makes me really irritated."

The handsome man looked at me with real irritation. So I could only sigh, take a deep breath, and tell him the truth.

"I have a boyfriend."

"If you had a boyfriend, why did your mom arrange for us to meet?"

"My mom doesn't believe that I have a boyfriend. And I don't want to say much. Let's just say I don't like you, you don't like me, we don't like each other. Let's agree... Let's go our separate ways. You go back and tell the adults directly that it doesn't work. We have nothing else to talk about. That's it."

I nodded slightly at him and asked to leave. However, the handsome man spoke after me with a short sentence that I couldn't interpret.

"Not really."

"Not what?"

"It's not that I don't like it."

I shrugged because I didn't know what he meant because the meaning was ambiguous. In the end, I walked straight to start the car and left the house without saying goodbye to any adults. It's a good thing that the other party's parents don't like me. I don't need to explain much. Besides, I don't want to waste any more time. My heart flew back home perfectly. All that's left is to take my physical body back.

In less than thirty minutes, I arrived at my room. When I pressed the code to open the door, I found Wan Yiwa busy in the kitchen preparing food. But what was even stranger was that the things that were once scattered because they hadn't been organized were now starting to get organized. I looked and exclaimed a little in amazement.

"Did you do it all yourself?"

"It annoys me to see it. There's so much plastic wrapped around it, so I'll take care of it. You don't mind, right?"

"Why do I care? The house looks so much cleaner and tidier."

"Hearing you compliment me makes me feel a bit better. Come here... come and try it. I tried making green chicken curry. I don't know if it'll suit your taste. Do I need to add anything else?" She beckoned me over and took a spoonful and blew on it, afraid that I might be hot. Her thoughtfulness made me look at her with longing eyes. She was so nice that I wanted to pull her in for a hug, but I had to try the food first. "It's not hot anymore. Try it."

I opened my mouth to taste the curry a little, then opened my mouth to let in some air to cool down the spiciness. The sweet-faced girl giggled in thanks.

"Is it too spicy?"

"Spicy but delicious."

"The spicier it is, the tastier it is. Next time I'll make it less spicy. I don't really know your tongue."

"You don't know my tongue?" I looked at her with a sly smile because I meant something else. Wan Yiwa raised her leg and kicked my shin a little, then bared her fangs.

"Idiot."

"Can you do this to your boss?"

"Do you want to be my boss or my girlfriend? Choose one."

She mentioned teasing, which made me blush and reply shyly.

"Be my girlfriend."

After replying like that, she smiled happily.

"I kicked you because we were teasing each other like a couple... Oh, you."

I kicked her too, causing her body to fly and hit the sink. The sweet-faced one bared her fangs, "You kicked me."

"Isn't this how couples tease each other?"

"I believe now that you've never had a partner. Do you even know what teasing means?"

Her tone was abrupt and she stomped her feet in front of the pot to continue stirring the green curry with coconut milk. I saw that she had gone quiet, so I poked her shoulder and asked in fear.

"Are you really angry?"

"..."

"I was just joking."

"You teased too much. If you're going to apologize, you have to apologize hard. Let me tell you."

I didn't know what to do, so I rested my chin on her shoulder from behind. She dodged it, but I still did that and whispered in her ear.

"If I ask you to marry me, will you stop being angry?"

"What?"

She tensed up a little, wanting to listen again. I, who had just come back from seeing her and thought that I couldn't marry anyone but her, said it simply.

"Marry me."

# Chapter 7: Flirting

My marriage proposal was full of seriousness and sincerity, but the person in front of me turned her face and put both of her hands on my cheeks.

"You can get over it if you try to make up with me like this."

"Huh?"

"I didn't expect this trick. Go sit at the dining table. I'll serve the food there. You're in the way, and I can't do anything properly if you stay here."

She didn't pay any attention to my marriage proposal at all. She acted as if what I said was just a way to make up or a joke to get out of the situation. I made a pouty face and walked over to sit at the dining table, resting my chin on my hand and looking at her. She said something sarcastic.

"If you don't marry me, someone else might snatch me away."

"You said it as a joke." She still didn't seem upset. She put the food in a bowl and served it with hot rice in front of me. "Why? Did you just cook something so heartwarming that you'd propose?"

"Don't you want to marry me?" I didn't answer her question but asked her back. The sweet-faced person smiled and thought. "I don't really want to get married that much."

"Then you'll regret not accepting my proposal today."

Having seen me repeat this repeatedly, Wan Yiwa fell silent for a moment, then asked with interest.

"What happened? Is there something I don't know?"

"Nothing." I scooped some food onto the rice before putting it in my mouth. I'll be a little sloppy.

"Of course it is. You seemed to be talking about marriage so seriously that It was surprising."

"It's already in the past, huh?"

When I pretended not to care, she changed the subject.

"By the way, what did you do today? You didn't tell me anything."

"A lot."

"So what else is there besides your marriage proposal?"

"I just worked as usual and thought about you," I replied in a teasing tone. Wan Yiwa smiled and scratched her neck a little.

"I thought about you too."

"Well, I thought about you so much that I asked you to marry me but you said no, you don't want to get married."

"What do you think marriage is? But just having a ceremony and then it's over?"

"Isn't marriage a ritual?" I asked back like someone who really doesn't know anything. All I know is that if marriage will allow me to be with her forever, I don't care how big the ceremony is.

"It's true that it's a ritual, but it's something that shows that two people truly love each other and want to be together forever, sharing happiness and sorrow, tying things together even when things get tough."

"So we think the same way. I want to be with you forever. What's wrong with that?"

"It's wrong because we don't know each other very well. It's true that we like each other but we don't know each other's depth."

"Didn't we talk about our backgrounds last night? I know that you're an only child who grew up with your mother. You know I have parents and a younger brother. There must be something more to it."

"I don't know you well enough. You don't know me well enough. Like this dish... I just found out that you can't eat spicy food. This is how we learn about each other step by step."

"Can't we just learn about each other after getting married?"

"We like each other a lot now," she said, trying to reason, as if I was a twoyear-old. "But loving each other isn't enough. What if we get bored of each other in the future?"

"Will you get bored of me?"

"The only certainty is uncertainty. Today you like me a lot. Tomorrow you might think you were wrong. Most married couples live together first to get to know each other, to see if they're compatible. And we're that kind of couple." She lifted her leg and kicked my shin under the table when she saw that I was still upset about being rejected. "Have you forgotten that I was the one who confessed my love to you first? The marriage you proposed made me happy, but I knew it couldn't be that easy."

"Why do we have to make it so difficult? Can't we just finish everything at once? "

"Can't your family accept your daughter marrying another woman? Have you told your parents that you have a girlfriend?"

When she mentioned this, I suddenly thought of something. That's right.

Actually, today I can tell everyone that I have a partner, and she's a girl. But I've been keeping it a secret because I know deep down that it won't be accepted. When Wan Yiwa saw that I was starting to agree, she added, "Even my mother isn't sure what she thinks about this."

"Why do people who love each other care so much about the people around them?"

"A wedding is an event for the people around you. Do you understand why we can't get married yet? Besides, I don't have any problems. I can stay with you like this for the rest of my life without having to have a wedding. I'm okay with it."

"I thought every woman had a dream of getting married."

"Is it your dream?" She asked back. I shook my head slightly.

"No, but I think you should have a dream and I can give it to you."

"I do, but it's not as important as getting to know you more. When we get to know each other better, then you can ask me again. My answer might change. On the contrary... you might regret asking me to marry you in the past. Today and feel bad mouth"

I still remain silent and chew my rice. The sweet-faced person who used a hundred and eight reasons, trying to convince me to follow her, lifted her leg up my shin from under the table until it crawled to my right crotch. I was shocked and quickly closed my legs because no one had ever invaded this secret realm before except me to clean up.

"What?"

"Two more days."

When Wan Yiwa mentioned this, my eyes widened and I smiled involuntarily, forgetting that I was being flirtatious.

"You're so easy to coax, huh? Why do you want me that much?"

"Not at all!" I pursed my lips and lowered my head, pretending to have eaten, and said in a husky voice, "But I admit that... I really want to do something like that."

"I also want to do it with you." I looked up and met Wan Yiwa's eyes. She tilted her head slightly shyly before saying a sentence that made me forget about the marriage. "This matter is more important than marriage. Don't you think so?"

"Who's the one who's being cheeky?"

"Because it shows how compatible we are. Just wait a little longer, and if it works out, I'll think about getting married again."

Wan Yiwa decided not to work from home anymore, with a super cute reason that made my heart melt. "Working and not seeing you is tiring." So we left the house together and went to the company, with her request to get off along the way so that no one would question if someone happened to see why she got off my car.

"One more day."

"You're really counting down... but there might be delays."

"I don't care."

I just told her that and waved goodbye to each other as if we would meet again next year, even though in reality, we would meet at the company again as boss and employee in less than five minutes. Another day that I was looking forward to, trying to do something to make it not go to waste, such as browsing the internet to study how to make love between women. Google took me to a website full of spam and a lot of dirty pictures. I had to use my skills to pull my face to show no emotion when I opened the clip, and sketched with a pen in the notebook I just bought and recorded it.

Fingers can do more than we think. Oh my, we can use our mouths to do this and that. And wow, oh, it's not just for riding, is it?

Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

**Wan Yiwa:** What are you doing? Why are you so pale?

The sound of a LINE message popped up. I jumped a little as if I was caught. I saw her message and glanced out of the glass room. Wan Yiwa was still looking at the computer screen. I guessed that she was typing from the computer screen. Her face did not show any emotion, like someone who was working smoothly.

**Meena:** I was checking the stock.

**Wan Yiwa:** What is it?

**Meena:** It's wet.

**Wan Yiwa:** What's wet?

**Meena:** Water.

What could be wet? The word wet is a liquid that makes it dirty. I tried to stay upright and focused on sketching. Did I use the ability I learned from drawing to draw this? But if it makes our love wetter, er, our love more lubricated, no, smoother, I'm happy to do it.

There's only one more day. I have to study and practice diligently, even in my imagination.

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

While I was searching for other websites to see more gestures, the secretary knocked on the door and smiled. I had to turn off the screen and change it to a blank screen, looking at the secretary with a serious face like a company owner.

"Boss, I have something to deliver."

"Item?" I leaned forward to see a delivery man carrying a large bouquet of flowers waiting in front of the room. I nodded slightly, allowing him to enter. A bunch of blue hydrangeas were placed on the table. I picked up the card and read it, my eyes widening when I saw who it was.

*I want you to have this*

*Wasan*

The short message and the flowers made me not quite understand why they were sent. Before I could clarify my doubts, a message from LINE popped up. Again from the current partner who saw the whole thing

**Wan Yiwa:** Who sent it?

**Meena:** Wasan

**Wan Yiwa:** Who is he?

**Meena:** The person my mother invited to meet him

**Wan Yiwa:** You never mentioned this before.

I could feel the darkness in that message, but because I was pure, my heart was as pure as if I could plant lemongrass and it wouldn't rain, so I replied without thinking

**Meena:** It's not important

**Wan Yiwa:** Are you saying *he* isn't important?

I looked up at her who was still staring at the computer like someone who was determined and focused. I was working and the word "Shit" was floating in the air everywhere. Why did she interpret it like that? If it's not important, it must not be her.

**Meena:** I'll tell you later

**Wan Yiwa:** You should have told me sooner. I don't want to know anymore.

She's really angry. I stuck out my tongue and licked my slightly chapped lips, baring my fangs at the owner of the flowers. Not long after that, a strange phone number appeared on the screen. When I answered the call, it was a man's voice that I could guess who it was.

[Are the flowers pretty?]

"They're not pretty. Why did you send them to me?"

[Why do people send flowers to each other?]

"Congratulations on getting your diploma."

[You're funny. I'm downstairs at the company right now. Can you come down and see me?]

"I've been wanting to see you. You're causing me trouble."

I grabbed the flowers and walked out of the room in a huff. Before I left, I hesitated for a moment and called Wan Yiwa in a boss's tone.

"Ms. Wan Yiwa, please come with me. We need to talk."

"Yes."

Even though she wanted to refuse in a sullen tone, in front of a crowd of people, she couldn't do that. In the end, she had to leave the computer screen and follow me. When we were in the elevator together, she just stayed silent and didn't say anything, so I had to start it.

"Mom saw that I still wouldn't date anyone seriously, so she made an appointment for him to go on a date yesterday."

"Yesterday, I asked you what you've been doing, but you didn't mention it."

"As I said, it's because it's not important... which means that the owner of this flower doesn't mean anything, so I don't know if I should tell you or not. I'm afraid you'll be upset."

"I'll be the one to decide if I'm upset, but you should tell me if there's something. If a guy courts me and I don't tell you, will you be mad?"

"What courting? He just sent you flowers."

"Sending flowers is a form of courting."

"Wow, there are so many people courting me in the world... Every guy I courts sends flowers to." I answered honestly. Wan Yihua glanced at me and smirked.

"Are you going to show off that you have so many people courting you?"

"I told you before that no one has ever courted me. You are the first person who confessed your love... you should be the first person who courted me."

Wan Yiwa frowned slightly and looked at me seriously.

"Or do you really not know what courting is?"

"Yes, courting is when you come and tell me you like me."

"You are only good at studying, right? That's why I can't tell why someone is approaching you." She raised her hand to hold her temple, but I still didn't understand. "The flowers that the seller sends to a woman mean that he is interested in you."

"You think too much. When I graduated, I received a lot of flowers from my family."

"I'm going crazy."

I felt that the tension was starting to disappear, but I didn't know why. "By the way, what did you ask me to follow you for?"

"Bringing you to introduce to the owner of the flowers."

"Huh?"

She made a face like she was haunted. When the elevator door opened, I walked straight to Lee Abby's central office. Vasan, who was wearing a fine silk suit, smiled at me from afar. I handed him the flowers back and immediately spoke in a way that cut off all ties with the friendliness.

"I don't know why you gave me flowers, but don't do this again. It makes someone important to me feel bad."

"Someone important."

"Let's be clear. This is my girlfriend... Wan Yiwa," I introduced. Wan Yiwa, who still looked like she was haunted, immediately said, "She doesn't like it that you sent me flowers, even though I explained that you're not important at all."

Wan Yiwa raised her hand to cover her face as if she didn't want anyone to recognize her face, especially Wasan who was staring at us. The young man's smile looked at my girlfriend with interest.

"I know you're a straightforward person, but I didn't think you'd be this straightforward. It's hard to handle, right?" He asked Wan Yiwa who covered her face with her hand. She nodded slightly, and that made Wasan laugh. "That's good. Straightforward. No need to pretend to give the other person hope."

"I've never given anyone hope."

Because no one has ever given me a chance to give hope. They only sent flowers. They sent them and then disappeared. I don't know why they were congratulating me so much. I graduated a long time ago.

"Good." Wasan put his hands in his pockets and leaned down until our eyes were level. "The harder you are, the more I like you."

"Huh?"

"But I don't plan on stealing anyone's partner. Let's just say I'll slowly make you waver and come to me."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm telling you I like you."

"..."

"Even though our parents are setting us up for a courting, you're the most impressive courting partner I've ever met. If you waver... call me back. I'll be waiting."

He returned the flowers to me and smiled at Wan Yi Wa. There was no threatening gesture like the villain in the soap opera. There was no smirking like he had an advantage because he was a man. He clearly showed that he liked me with his words and was manly enough not to steal me if I didn't waver myself.

"Now you know that I'm being courted," Wan Yi Wa said as she walked back in. Still in the elevator and ran up alone, leaving me standing there, stunned, my heart beating. It's worth it.

Two people have confessed their love to me. We're both pretty.

# Chapter 8: Flowers for the Woman I Love

I never knew that giving flowers was another form of flirting. Now, I counted how many people had given me flowers, not including my graduation day. Most of the people who sent me flowers were men and they didn't give me any congratulations. It's just that I never knew that it was flirting, so I never bothered to reply or flirt with them. One is that I didn't care. Two is that I really didn't know.

While I was intoxicated by the number of people who had approached me, the sound of 'huh' from Wan Yiwa woke me up from my reverie. The sweetfaced girl looked at me and smiled sarcastically after we had dinner together at our house.

"You look so happy with the flowers you received."

"Of course I'm happy," I replied without feeling anything because I really thought that way. "I just found out that when men send flowers, it's flirting."

"Where have you been?"

"I thought flowers were just for congratulations and condolences at funerals. In fact, they can be flirted with... This means that in the past There are a lot of people courting me."

"Maybe he sent you flowers to congratulate you on opening a company."

Wan Yiwa's tone didn't have any joy in it, to the point that I started to notice it. When I turned to look at her, the sweet-faced one turned away as if to make a "tsk" gesture. Now that we were alone, there was no need to act like a boss and an employee anymore. So I stretched out my leg to kick her who was sitting on the sofa next to me and asked, not knowing for sure.

"What's wrong with you? Your tone doesn't sound good today."

"I've been like this for a long time."

"No, your tone used to be better, but you look in a bad mood today. But it's understandable. Your period isn't over yet."

"It's not because of my period!"

She turned to snap at me without thinking. When I raised my eyebrows, she quickly adjusted her attitude. "Maybe it's because of my period after all."

"Then, to make you feel better, should I treat you to dinner?"

"I'm not hungry."

"Then how should I make you feel better? I've never had a girlfriend before. What do you do to make someone in a bad mood because of their period feel better?" I glanced around, my eyes landing on the flowers in my hand. I extended them to her and said,

"Women like flowers, right? Here, these are for you. Maybe they'll cheer you up."

"What kind of person would give flowers given by another man to their girlfriend?"

"Don't think about who gave them. Just think of them as flowers. They didn't do anything wrong."

"Sigh." She sighed and rubbed her temples. "Getting upset at someone as clueless as you is completely pointless."

I pursed my lips because I didn't know what she meant.

"Let's eat. I might feel better."

"Okay, I'll take you out for a fancy meal."

"But would it be okay if we went out to eat? What if the other employees found out?"

"By now, they'd all probably have gone home to sleep. Plus, the restaurant we were going to had to be booked and the prices were quite high. Company employees wouldn't go there unless it was a special occasion or if they have a wealthy partner like you do."

"Showing off," she said with an annoyed tone. "If it's not delicious, I'll throw a tantrum."

She looked at the flower again and crushed it until it was partially destroyed.

"I'm annoyed!"

Wan Yiwa wasn't that angry. Even though she had mood swings, it was understandable because it was her hormones. Now I brought her to have dinner on the rooftop of a hotel decorated with colorful lights. The wind blowing from above and the food served as hors d'oeuvres were enough to make the sweet-faced person feel better.

"Success, you've made me smile."

I said as I started eating. Wan Yiwa looked at me and leaned forward a little.

"Seriously, don't you know what I'm upset about?"

"I don't know."

"I'm upset because someone is courting you."

"Oh, can we be upset about something like this? I don't know." I put on a really surprised face. "I thought we could only be angry when we made the other person upset. But I didn't think an outsider could make us fight." "You're right... If someone courts you, why should I be angry?"

"That's right."

"But you looked too happy to receive the flowers, so I didn't like it very much."

"No matter how much I like flowers, I don't like them as much as you do." I picked up the champagne, took a sip, and smiled at her with all my heart.

"Crazy, suddenly being sweet-talking."

"No, seriously, I was so happy because I thought all my life that no one had ever courted me. In the end, I misunderstood everything. It means that I am also charming."

"That's why I'm even more annoyed."

"Mena, it's you." Someone's voice rang out while our conversation was going well. Wasan, who we just met today, walked over to greet me at my table. I was a little embarrassed when I saw him after finding out that he was courting me.

"I was also surprised to see you here. What are you doing here?"

"I came with a client to discuss work and have a little party. You must be here on a date." Wasan turned to look at Wan Yiwa slightly and nodded.

"Hello."

"Hello."

Wan Yiwa kept her expression well-hidden even though she had just said that she was irritated that someone was flirting with me and that person was already standing in front of her.

"It's a pity that I didn't get to talk to you for long today, but this time, I consider it destiny. There are so many things, why did we have to coincidentally meet? Don't you think so?"

Destiny... Those sweet words almost made me squirt. I could only give him a small smile and nodded without thinking.

"Go back to your business. The guests will be waiting for a long time."

"I'll come and greet you from time to time."

He winked at me a little and walked back to the table. Now, Wan Yiwa was looking at me with teeth-grinding in irritation after her raging temper had died down. Wasan was no different from Chi who had come to ignite the fire, making it even more intense.

"You knew he was coming here, didn't you?" The sweet-faced one said, looking for trouble, and that made me shake my head.

"I just said that it was destiny."

"Does there really exist coincidences in this world?"

"It really is coincidence. Don't be so unreasonable. Your period makes you swing."

She opened her mouth to argue before closing it and puffing out her cheeks.

"Yeah, I'm unreasonable. Everything I do is wrong." Her eyes welled up with tears from her hormones that were still raging. I could only sigh. I understood, but I couldn't help but criticize her.

"You have to control your emotions a bit. Coincidences do exist and I still insist that I only likes you."

"But you were shy when he said hi."

"He said he was courting me. It would be too out of character to not be embarrassed."

"You didn't make any excuses. It's better to lie and say that you didn't feel anything." She started to whine. However, something happened at the next table when the waiter brought the drinks but accidentally dropped them.

Everyone in the restaurant turned to look at each other. It was the same spot, even Wan Yiwa.

"Ouch! It's all dirty. How could you serve like this? Do you know that my dress... How much is it?"

The customer who was spilled wine got up and started yelling loudly in the shop, almost drowning out the music coming from the speakers. The atmosphere was quiet at the moment. Everyone was interested in what would happen next.

"I have to apologize. I'll bring it back for you."

"Who's going to take responsibility for my clothes?"

"I'll wash them."

"Wash them? Do you want me to take off my clothes here and wash them? What am I going to wear? Go call the manager right now. I'm going to take action."

Wan Yiwa, who was watching the incident, slowly turned back and closed her eyes, so I had to whisper and ask.

"Are you sleepy?"

"Do I look sleepy?"

How would I know? I was meditating all of a sudden. Who could have guessed? Not long after, the shop managers came in a procession to apologize and take responsibility for everything. But even so, the customers continued to rant as if they didn't want the matter to be too short.

"I won't accept it. You can't end things like this so easily. You have to show me that you feel extremely guilty. I don't know. Kick her out and buy me a new set. This meal should be free."

"Don't kick me out. The high heels on my shoes just broke. I didn't mean to let it happen."

"If apologizing would fix it, why do we have police?"

"You're even going to scold someone for peeling off their skin."

A voice interrupted the group. Wan Yiwa, who had been meditating for a long time, spoke up amidst the anger of the customers who were endlessly taking action against the female employee.

"What?"

"She already apologized and accepted responsibility for everything. Can't you just let it go? You've ruined the atmosphere for everyone in the restaurant. The food isn't delicious anymore."

"So is it my fault? It's this girl's fault... Why are you interfering? It's none of your business."

"Hearing you makes me irritated. Your shrill voice is piercing my eardrums. The atmosphere that should have been full of jazz music has to have the sound of squawking like Ah Sum selling fish in the market. It's not right. The outfit is very expensive, right? Doesn't that mean you're rich?"

"Yes, why?"

"Do rich people care about the price of clothes this much? Or are they not really rich? They borrowed money to buy clothes to wear tonight." I raised my hand to cover my mouth until I almost laughed. Everyone in the shop turned to whisper as if they agreed with Wan Yiwa's words. "Rich people don't care about something like this. Why do you know? Because their parents raised them well. They don't scream and make a scene, showing off their power like this."

"Then if it were you, would you say the same thing?"

"I won't press charges if the person who did it didn't mean it."

"Good. I also want to know how true what you said is." Then that customer took her friend's wine and threw it at Wan Yiwa's face, who was already irritated from having her period. As soon as the red wine poured on her, Wan Yiwa immediately rushed in and grabbed her head and slapped her without a care in the world. Everyone nearby, including me, rushed in to stop the situation from getting any worse. The manager separated us and bowed and begged for everything to end.

"Please, don't fight anymore....

Wan Yiwa pushed the manager's face away and raised her hand to hit the customer with the skill of a famous slapper from her school days. I raised my hand to cover my mouth because I was shocked. Part of me wanted to stop her but another part of me wanted her to win. In the end, when I couldn't stop her, I cheered instead.

"You have to win. If you lose, I won't love you."

"Ahhh! Let me go!"

Wan Yiwa dragged that customer to the edge of the glass balcony of the building and was about to throw her off the eighty-story building like someone who was going crazy. Wasan, who had been watching the event for a long time, quickly ran to hide behind Wan Yiha to get away from her opponent and laughed.

"That's enough. She already lost."

"She didn't lose yet. That girl didn't fall off the building."

"Darling, did you see? I won." Wan Yiha shouted to someone, "Darling." At first, I was confused because I didn't know who she meant until Wasan nodded at me.

"She means you," he said.

"Darling?" I gasped awkwardly. "Huh... I see."

"I won."

"Yes, you won."

"Do you love me now?"

"I love you the most in the world."

"Good. That's all I needed."

We all went to the police station to settle the matter and compromised because it seemed like the other party was sober. The serious matter was caused by Wan Yiwa, who was irritated and loudly displeasing the other party, and the other party who was drunk and arrogant, until in the end, they fought and made the shop a mess. I even had to call the company's lawyer to help in case there were any problems, but in the end, everything was cleared up.

On the way back, Wan Yiwa cried the whole way, as if her emotions were returning, grieving after doing something like that.

"That's not good. I shouldn't have done that. How do you feel about me now?"

"You look so cool."

"Really?"

"Really, because I'm annoyed by that girl too. She can't make a scene. Your reasoning makes sense. Rich people don't care about something so small. That girl is fake rich and has fake boobs."

"How did you know about boobs?"

"I saw the tissue slip out when you slapped her."

"Crazy."

From sobbing, she turned into laughing with tears. Both of us were silent until Wan Yiwa quietly looked at me.

"You're not upset that I embarrassed you, are you?"

"If you had lost, maybe I'd hold it against you. But I believed in you—I knew you'd win."

"No... I mean when I called you... *my dear*."

I pursed my lips and smiled a little in embarrassment, then shook my head.

"I don't care. I like it even more than when you win. It's a good word. When it comes out of your mouth, it makes me feel like being loved."

"Shit. I'm done so many shameful things because of these crazy hormones." She covered her face with her hands. I, who was driving, reached out one hand to grab her wrist, to pull her hand away.

"It's not crazy. From now on, if you call me like this, I'll call you too... baby."

"That sounds ticklish."

"Don't you like it?"

"I do."

"Then from now on, you'll call me baby."

"If you call me baby, it'll be repetitive."

"Then I'll call you baby."

"Eww."

"Or would you prefer *my precious darling*?"

"Let's stick with *baby*."

We laughed at each other again and drove home, with only a little bit of food left in my stomach. In the end, Wan Yiwa had to cook something simple for me to eat, as usual, but this time she was in a good mood.

There was only one day left...it would be our D-Day. The next morning, Wan Yiwa and I went to work as usual, but I dropped her off first and then went to do some errands at the warehouse. It was almost eleven o'clock when we got back to the office. And just like before, there were flowers delivered by a delivery guy. I looked at the flowers with a strange sense of pride. They must be from Wasan. He never gave up. Even though I told him I had a girlfriend, he still kept buying them.

I pretended to be serious, walked over to the delivery guy, and took the flowers in my hand, but the delivery guy held them back.

"Isn't it my flower? Give it to me."

"Are you named Wan Yiwa?"

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

Wan Yiwa groaned as she looked at the flower with a surprised expression.

"No, Wan Yiwa is that person."

"Thank you."

Then the young man who delivered the flower gave it to Wan Yiwa and took a picture to confirm that the item had been delivered. I blinked because I was still dazed. Wan Yiwa had an equally surprised expression.

"Thank you. Here's the card."

Before Wan Yiwa could open it, I walked over to her and stared at her, pressuring her. "Open it."

"Yes, yes."

She stuttered, not because she was scared but because she was dazed. And as soon as she opened it, both of our eyes widened because the person who sent it was the same person who sent me the flower yesterday, with a different message.

*But, fighting girl, I'm impressed by you.*

*Wasan*

# Chapter 9: Flowers

Flowers... a symbol that I just learned that in addition to expressing congratulations and condolences, it can also be used to flirt. And now, my first and only girlfriend is receiving them from the man who just gave me flowers yesterday. Some feelings are erupting inside and it makes me irritated all day long, keeping quiet. The employees in the company who could notice my symptoms are all silent. If I walk past the room, I will immediately turn around or run past because I don't dare to face them. I'm not angry that the flowers came from anyone, but angry that why did they go to her... Wan Yi Wa

While I was checking the stock through the program, my mobile phone's message sounded once. Since Wan Yi Wa received the flowers, she hasn't texted or talked to me until now.

**Wan Yiwa :** Are you angry?

I glanced at her desk for a moment and typed a reply with a blank face.

**Meena :** No

**Wan Yiwa :** It's good that you're not angry, because you're so kind and reasonable.

*Beep!*

Her calling me kind and reasonable made a vein pop on my temple as if my patience had finally reached its limit. I clenched my fists, bit my teeth until they became prominent on my jaw. I squinted at the person who was typing nonchalantly, clearly showing that I was not happy. So I pressed the screen off and got up to walk out of the room, heading straight to the elevator outside to get some air. I was going to go have lunch. However, not long after, Wan Yiwa hurriedly followed me without me knowing how she avoided the other staff. It was like she guessed that I would go downstairs, so she took the elevator after me.

"Where are you going?"

"To get lunch."

"Without inviting me?"

"I thought you were full from the flowers." I walked straight to the car. Wan Yiwa still followed me and grabbed my arm, staring at me, starting to get angry.

"This? This is what *not being mad* looks like to you? You're clearly angry."

"I'm not ! Why would I be mad?"I gasped like someone who could not control my emotions and accidentally let out a loud voice. Wan Yiwa crossed her arms and explained her condition.

"I'm trying to figure out why you're upset—whether it's because the guy who's courting you ended up sending flowers to me, or..."

"Or what?"

"You're jealous."

"Jealous?" I pointed at myself and laughed. "Why do I have to be jealous? I'm so confident and perfect. No one can steal you from me."

"Then it must be the first one—you're upset because the guy should've sent the flowers to you in the first place, and now that he sent them to me, it made you lose confidence."

"That's even more impossible. Wasan doesn't mean anything to me. Plus, it's just flowers. Just him sending them shouldn't make you waver that much, right?"

"Actually... a little waver."

"Wan Yiwa!"

As soon as I raised my voice, the sweet-faced girl smiled and narrowed her eyes at me, telling me she liked it.

"There it is—you're jealous."

"What is jealousy? I don't know. It only happens to people who are not confident in themselves."

"It only happens to people you hold dear. No matter how confident you are, you don't want anyone to mess with your beloved things." She explained further. Added more and that made me speechless. I've never been like this before. Maybe I'm what you said, but it sounds so stupid. I can't accept it. It's not cool.

"You misunderstood."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Then you're going to eat. Don't you think of inviting me at all?" Wan Yiwa asked without showing any emotion, as if asking casually.

"I was thinking of going to eat alone sometimes. If I go with you every day, the staff will be suspicious. Never mind."

"No one sees that we're together. We're always careful... You're good at hiding your emotions. When you lose your temper, you become unreasonable."

"I'm not unreasonable!"

"Apologize."

"..."

"Apologize."

"Why are you trying to make up with me?" I calmed down when she made a cute face. Suddenly, she said that she was trying to make up with me even though she didn't do anything wrong, and it made me feel weak and weak. "'Apologizing' means you've done something wrong."

"'Apologizing' means you're trying to make up with me even though you didn't do anything wrong. How is that because you love me?" She walked closer to me and made a cute and adorable gesture. "My period is over today."

"..."

"Are you really not going to invite me to dinner in my room?"

I looked at her for a moment, feeling my heart beating fast. But then her face overlapped with the flowers that Wasan sent me. My mood that had started to cool down now became even more irritated. Do you think that just trying to make up with me will make me stop being angry that easily?

Using this kind of thing to trick me, hoping that I'll forget about everything? No way. I'm not that easy.

"What do you take me for?"

"Huh?"

"Do you think that talking about this kind of thing will make me go along with you? The more I see you like this, the more irritated I become. Like someone who has done something wrong and is being taken advantage of. That kind of thing is a cover-up to make up."

"Can you stop being silly? I thought we were talking and understanding each other."

"If you didn't do anything to give Wasan hope, why would he keep sending flowers?"

"Because he's shameless."

"No matter how many times you clap with one hand, it won't make a sound. If there's no bridge to cross, who would dare to cross over?"

"You're really starting to annoy me. Why don't you make any sense?"

"If you can't talk incoherently, then don't bother talking to me."

"Well then, forget about my period ending today!"

Wan Yiwa's temper completely covered up my irritation. She turned around, preparing to walk back to the elevator. I looked at her back and shouted after her, not wanting to give up either.

"Even if your period never comes again for the rest of your life, I won't do anything to you. It doesn't mean anything to me. Just know that."

"You said it yourself." The sweet-faced one turned to make an angry face. "Remember your words."

"Okay."

She pressed the elevator button and went back upstairs, leaving me standing alone beside the car. I acted cool by kicking her own car tire before screaming in pain. Why didn't even my car tire help? In the drama, everyone looks cool doing it, but when it's me, my big toe hurts.

Today was just one frustrating thing after another. Ugh!

I stopped by my house and was surprised to see that Methas didn't go to school on a weekday. Suspicious, I peeked around to see if he'd smuggled someone else's fingers into the house again. But it seemed he was just sick today—his face was red, and he was coughing non-stop.

"Are you pretending to be sick?"

"When I got there, you started picking on me. Cough... I'm really sick. I have a bad cold." Methas, who had come down to drink water, walked to the refrigerator and poured water into a glass before turning to me. With a slanted gaze, "What about you? Why did you come here?"

"Can't I come home?"

"I asked you nicely, why are you being sarcastic?"

"Huh?" I raised my voice at my younger brother, starting to get annoyed. I was already in a bad mood to begin with, and then my younger brother annoyed me, making me even angrier. "How am I being sarcastic? I was just asking if I'm not allowed to come home!"

"Because every time you come home, it's because something's bothering you. So what is it this time?"

"I just stopped by. I don't know where to go."

"Keep this up, and Mom's going to set you up for another date. You keep coming home too often."

"Can you stop talking too much? It's annoying." I made a deep voice, really annoyed. Methas, who was already afraid of me, shut his mouth. And my younger brother's silence surprised me the most. "I told you to be quiet, so you're quiet?"

"You ordered me to."

"Don't be sarcastic."

"Wow, you seem really moody today. Are you on your period?"

"How would you even know what a period is? If you don't know, stop talking."

"Sure, I've never had blood come out of me like you, but I know your habits well enough. Every time you're on your period, you get grumpy—just like today."

"Not true. If I were on my period, I'd know—" I was silent for a moment because I felt so funny. Before I rushed to the bathroom, the blood that was flowing out of my body showed itself through my underwear and spread to my work slacks.

I'm on my period... No wonder my mood is so moody today.

Because there were no sanitary pads in the bathroom, I intended to go get some in my old bedroom, which should have some. Methas, who was standing at the foot of the stairs, asked me and smiled even though his face was blurry.

"So, is it your period?"

"Don't bother me. This is a woman's business."

"It's definitely my period. I told you I know better than anyone. Whenever I get scolded, I assume that you're on your period because you can't control your facial expressions."

"Is it obvious?" Although I was annoyed to hear my younger brother say that, I couldn't help but ask curiously, "What does my face look like right now?"

"Like crazy."

I returned to work at around 2 pm, but Wan Yiwa was not there. When I subtly asked her nearby coworker, under the guise of needing some 'important documents,' I learned that she had taken the afternoon off to work from home.

She must be upset.

Now I know my mistake, it was a bit too unreasonable. Being on my period made my mood swing, and just flowers from someone Wan Yiwa didn't even know didn't matter at all. But I still picked a fight with her. Even when she said today was her last day of period, I still threw a tantrum. It seemed like this job would require a lot of coaxing.

Knowing she wasn't at work, I pretended to stay at work for another hour and then said goodbye. Of course, Wan Yiwa was still in my room. To be honest, I felt a bit relieved because when I drove here, I imagined her being so angry that she would run home or something. But no... She was still sitting at the coffee table working on her own laptop. When I opened the door, she glanced up briefly but didn't say anything.

This is bad...

I didn't know what to do, so I pretended to sit next to her and put my head on her shoulder. But the sweet-faced one just remained silent, not saying anything. In fact, she was scarier than acting angry and throwing a tantrum.

"Why did you come back so early today?"

"Because you can endure a cramped space, but not a cramped heart. My boss was being insufferable, so I didn't want to see their face. But even after running away, I ended up seeing them again."

"Your boss really has a bad personality, huh?." I continued to be coy, then smoothly explained why I was like that. "But there must be reasons for that, like... having my period."

Wan Yiwa glanced at me and laughed

"Excuse."

"I really am on my period!"

"So what?"

"Well... it made me a little moody. I didn't even realize it myself. Usually, this doesn't happen. But, you know, they say that when women spend a lot of time together, their cycles sync up. Oh wow, it's true! Mine started right after yours ended. But..." I hugged her, putting on my best puppy-dog eyes. "It's not a problem now, right? Because yours is over."

"So what?"

"We'll get to do something." I slid my crab finger down her arm coquettishly and licked my lips. "We've been waiting for this day for so long."

*Snap!*

The laptop screen folded shut like someone was annoyed. Wan Yiwa got up so abruptly that I almost fell. She walked to the kitchen area and poured herself some water to drink, putting her hands on her hips like someone who was about to get into trouble.

"What are you waiting for?"

"The day your period ended." I got up and walked over to her, but Wan Yiwa dodged her.

Oh, she's *really* mad.

"So what if it's over? Nothing changes."

"I know you're mad." I used my killer move by hugging her from behind and resting my head on her shoulder. "But people make mistakes. When you're on your period, your mood swings. Now it's my turn, and mine's swinging. We're both women. You should understand this best."

"People can have mood swings on their periods, but it has to be based on common sense."

"..."

"You can't use this as an excuse to do something wrong and then try to make up with me to get over your anger. It's too easy." She pushed my head away and walked to the other side, crossing her arms. I looked at the person who was trying to make up with me and started to feel irritated again, but that's it. I had to calm down. My hormones were making me hot-blooded. It wasn't her fault that she was mad. I was the one who started this.

"What do I have to do to make you stop being mad?"

"You don't have to do anything."

"Then that means we're back together."

"We live together because of love." She smiled sweetly at me, but I could feel that it was Just the words because of that smile seemed too sarcastic and cruel. "So, just stay together because of love."

"What do you mean?"

"Just stay together."

"..."

"We won't have anything like you want, and even if you want it again...

you'll never have it!"

# Chapter 10: Life Of a Couple Who Likes Shopping

Alright, relationships are supposed to be like this, right? There's happiness and there's hardship. And now... we've had our first fight. Looking on the bright side, maybe this will bring us closer together. Look at other couples —sometimes the more they fight, the more kids they have. For us, though, it's not kids that are falling...

What's 'falling,' then?

I tossed and turned on the bed for what felt like two hours. The space next to me was empty because someone had claimed she had too much work and wanted to finish it before coming to bed. When she still didn't come up, I decided to crawl over to the mezzanine balcony and peek. There she was— sleeping on the sofa.

She ran to sleep on the sofa because she was in a bad mood.

Even though she was the one who courted me first. When she was in a bad mood, she didn't care about anything. How should I feel? And why do I

have to get so worked up? Don't you like me more than I like you? That's why you confessed your love? But now, my heart is burning with excitement when I see you lying on the sofa like that. I've tried to coax you, but it's still not good.

Okay! Let's see how much she can endure. She said she wouldn't do that anymore. I'll be the one to make her unable to endure it.

The next morning...

I woke up before Wan Yiwa on purpose. She was still lying on the sofa, completely unmoved. So I took this opportunity to take a shower and do something. I estimated when she would wake up and came out with just a towel and a tube top. It was as I thought. She had already woken up and was standing in the kitchen drinking water. Her hair was slightly damp, and my bare shoulders, confident in my fair skin, greeted her as if nothing had happened, even though my hand was still holding the towel.

"Are you awake?"

"Hmm."

She still replied coldly. I turned my face to bar my fangs slightly and turned to keep a straight face.

"You're quite an early riser today."

And then—*whoosh!*

The towel I'd wrapped around myself suddenly slipped and fell to the floor.

Wan Yiwa, who was mid-sip of water, promptly spat it out with a loud *"Pfft!"* I feigned shock, slowly bent down to pick up the towel, and calmly rewrapped it around myself as if nothing had happened.

"Oh, whoops, how clumsy of me. My towel slipped."

"What are you doing?"

"What?"

"Nothing."

"I really didn't mean to."

My bare white skin is the pride that my parents gave me since birth. My mother said that I have skin like a taro on the inside with pinkish-orange nipples that indicate that I have good skin. I used this advantage to seduce her and glanced at her a little.

"Don't mind me; I just didn't tie the towel tight enough."

She squinted at me and bared her fangs. I slowly walked back to the dressing room and closed the door, smiling at what I did even though I felt embarrassed. Go ahead, endure it if you can. I'll keep teasing you like this until you can't resist anymore and come to me.

'Forever?' No such thing exists.

However, Wan Yiwa was able to counter the game. In the evening after returning from work, today she asked to go shopping with her work friends, causing me to come back alone in the room. Walking around irritably, wondering where she had been all day. When she came back around 8 pm, I acted like I didn't care about anything, unlike before. The good girl came back carrying a bunch of bags. I wanted to know what she bought, but I was too formal to ask anything except for a superficial question.

"You're back?"

"Hmm."

Tonight, she slept next to me like usual, but today, the sweet-faced one was wearing a thin red nightgown, which is called a nightgown for sleeping. I looked at her in shock, almost licking my lips, but I had to hide it. I secretly thought to myself that the fact that I had slipped off my clothes when I entered might have caused her to buy this kind of nightgown to wear. When she slipped under the covers, I took this opportunity to lie on my side and turn to hug her, but the sweet-faced one pulled my hand away. "It's hot."

Being rejected made me frown. She didn't wear this to seduce me, did she?

So I lay on my side, turned to the other side, and pouted and crossed my arms. Do you think this kind of nightgown will make me horny? But it did make me restless. Wan Yiwa moved slightly and sat up. I squinted at her to see what she was going to do and was shocked when she took off her clothes over her head, leaving her completely naked, leaving her nightgown on the bedside table.

"Much better,"

She laid down and covered herself with the blanket. As for me, who was lying on my side, I could only grit my teeth and endure. It was a fitting revenge. I had taken off the blanket, so she took it off and let everyone know. This was a game and a competition. Whoever couldn't hold it in first would lose.

She's ruthless!!

After tossing and turning for a while, I realized that I had dozed off for a moment before waking up in the middle of the night. There was a dim light downstairs. I slowly crawled out of bed and peeked out to see what was going on. I found Wan Yiwan sleeping on the sofa, but in a t-shirt and shorts. It wasn't pajamas anymore.

I sat on the bed with my arms crossed and thought about what to do with this kind of relationship. If I let it go and let it go, how many days would it take? But if I apologized now, everything would likely resolve much faster.

Fine... I'll apologize. This time, I really am at fault.

When I thought about that, I walked down from the mezzanine and stood staring at her lying on the sofa. I poked her arm twice as a nudge.

"Hello... It's me."

"..."

*Even channeling Adele didn't work.* She didn't stir at all. I frowned at how difficult she was making this and gave her shoulder a stronger shake.

"Hey... wake up. Let's go sleep upstairs."

"..."

Pretending to sleep, shaking her until the earth shook like this, she still wouldn't move. I looked at the sulking person who couldn't get over it no matter what I did, and decided to lie down, squeezing her against the inside of the sofa. This time, it worked. Wan Yiwa moved and bounced up, sitting up and looking at me with a sullen face.

"Why do you have to come and lie down next to me? Oops."

I reached out my arm and swept her around to get her to lie down in the same position before using my legs to lock her body so she couldn't move.

"Because you didn't want to go upstairs to sleep. So now, I've come down here to sleep with you."

"I was just napping. Once I'm done working, I'll go up."

"You were sulking so much that you wouldn't come up on your own, so I had to come down and make amends until you forgave me. Then, I'll invite you to come up with me. If you're still upset, I'll just stay here and cuddle you until you're not mad anymore."

She remained silent, letting me hold her. The silence hung heavily in the air, making the atmosphere tense, so I broke it by speaking.

"I'm not very good at relationships, Yiwa. I don't know how to act or what to do. I didn't even realize giving flowers was a form of flirting. So, when you're upset, I don't really know what to do to make you feel better either." "..."

"But I want you to know that in this relationship, I'm not your adversary. If you're upset, I ask that you not be too harsh on me. I don't want to be more troubled than I already am. And with my emotions running wild because of hormones, I can't focus on anything else except worrying about you."

My explanation was filled with reasoning and logic. I tried my best to make her understand that I was doing everything I could to fix things. If she still remained upset, I didn't know what else I could do.

"I'm mad because you were unreasonable."

"I admit that."

"What do you think you did wrong?"

"I was unreasonable. You didn't do anything wrong, yet I took my emotions out on you. The person in the wrong is the one who sent you the flowers. You hardly even know Wasan."

"Yes, but I want to hear something else—what made you take your frustration out on me?"

"What do you mean by 'something else'?"

"Can you admit that you were jealous?"

"..."

"Because you were jealous, that's why this happened."

"Like I said, I don't know how these kinds of relationships work." I pressed my forehead against the back of her neck, holding her tightly in my arms. "If what I'm feeling is called jealousy, then yes, I admit I was jealous. It made me unreasonable. You accepted flowers from the same man who sent them to me. It made me angry because you're too beautiful, too confident— so much so that you might have caught his eye and made an impression on him. So, I acted out."

"If you had said that from the start, there wouldn't have been any need to argue."

"Are you still upset now?"

"Not yet."

"Then I give up," I made a move to get up, but Wan Yiwa grabbed my collar from behind and pulled me back down to the same position, but this time I was straddling her.

"Giving up already? You were just going to leave?"

"I don't know what to do." My voice started to tremble. The trembling emotions and hormones from my period took over. The sweet-faced person lying beneath me looked at me and used both hands to cover my cheeks.

"I'm not mad anymore. Everything you said made sense... Actually, even when you're on your period, you can have reasons."

"..."

"You succeeded in making up. I just wanted to stay mad a little longer to see you try harder, and maybe even teach you a lesson. At work, you act like a boss who's way too controlling. Now you know how frustrating it feels to deal with a partner who's just as stubborn."

"I'm scared now."

"Hehe." She laughed and lifted her head to grab my lips a little. I leaned down to kiss him back, but she covered my mouth and shook her head. "No."

"Why? Your period is over. I have been waiting for this day for a long time."

"My period might be over, but *your* period is here now."

"..."

"I'm not letting you enjoy this on your own," she said with a mischievous grin, pulling me down to lie beside her, wrapping her arms around my waist, and nuzzling into my chest. "Be patient for a sweeter reward."

"Wow, do I have to wait another three days?"

"It's fine, I can wait."

"But..."

"These three days, there are so many things for us to do, such as..." Wan Yiwa bounced up and sat down below. I, who was hugging her, was surprised and cried.

"Oh, I thought we were going to cuddle."

"While I was mad at you, I opened this."

And as soon as she opened the browser window, my eyes lit up like a spider. That pattern even let out a "huh". The sweet-faced one turned to look at me for a moment and smiled.

"What? Are you going to just sit there? Don't you want to see what's in here?"

"Since when have you been like this?"

"I've been like this since I knew you. I have been waiting for that day for us too."

Our lovemaking tools are on the website, with various styles and colors to choose from. I looked at them with a face full of blood pumping. It showed that when she was mad, she wasn't really mad. When she said she was working, she was just looking at these toys and waiting for her to stop being mad.

"I thought you said you were working. And this... what's this all about?"

"It's for you to use... or for you to use *on me.*"

As soon as she said that, I snatched her laptop and opened it to look at it myself. Wan Yiwa bared her fangs a little and made a nagging sound.

"Then pretended not to care at first."

"What can it do?"

"Vibrate, spin, swirl, everything."

"Then what's this fake tongue for?"

"Lick."

"Why would we buy a fake tongue if we already have one?" I asked casually. The sweet-faced one looked a little stunned and then answered with a cough. She wasn't very good at this.

"Some people are single, not in a relationship."

"No, we won't buy this because we both have tongues. Let's look at something else... Do you like spikes?"

"You idiot."

"You'll wear those pajamas on the day you're going to use them. They're pretty."

"I plan on not wearing anything."

"Oh, that's even better."

In conclusion, the two of us happily chose toys that night. From being flirty at first, it became like friends choosing a trip abroad and taking turns recommending places to go. This place wasn't that interesting. It wasn't until almost 3am that we went to bed, and yes, we were lying on the sofa with the window open, having already put more than five toys in our basket.

A couple of shopaholics!

# Chapter 11: Men

I had always wondered why some married couples seemed to have so many kids after arguing. It might be because they have reconciled and want to stay together for a long time after going through something bad. This happened to me and Wan Yiwa as well. This morning, we were snuggling like newlyweds. Even though nothing happened between us because of the accident when I got my period, that doesn't mean our love won't be spicy. I followed her while acting spoiled and irritated because I was on my period. No matter where she went, I would follow her like an ugly duckling following her mother and resting my chin on her shoulder.

"Honestly, when I was a student, I didn't think you had this side."

"Which side?"

"The spoiled side. You've been acting spoiled all morning. I can barely do anything."

"Are you annoyed with me?"

"Not really. You're cute." She put both her hands on my cheeks and pressed them together. I pouted and whined before leaning down to hug her.

"If I'm cute, then love me," I teased.

"The more you act like this, the more I realize how different you are from how I used to see you. Back then, you were like an aloof, proud cat. Now you're like a docile, cuddly one."

I don't care what you compare me to, but now I want to be close to you. I like the scent from your body because it makes me feel warm and hot at the same time.

"I have a stomachache."

"I know. You're not feeling well; I completely understand. You don't have to go to work today."

"I can't skip. The business is mine, after all. I still need to check on the warehouse inventory later."

"Being a business owner is more tiring than the average person. Before, I thought that the owner's job was to just sit at the desk and sign documents quickly and that was it."

"This isn't a drama." I straightened up and stopped flirting with her for a while. The sweet-faced one smiled and tilted her head to look at me.

"Now you're back to being the proud, aloof cat again," she teased.

"And I've turned back into the clingy cat again. My stomach hurts, you know," I leaned down, my head resting on her shoulder. Wan Yiwa laughed and scratched my chin as if to comfort me. I looked at her expression and closed my eyes happily. It felt like I was being comforted even though I was more like a pet than a lover. "Rub my head too."

"Oh, so cute."

Finally, Wan Yiwa couldn't help but pull me in for a tight hug. I giggled, thankful for our play this morning because it was different from yesterday's atmosphere, which was so stressful that it was muddy like water. While we were playing, her phone rang, interrupting us. I frowned a little and made a whiny voice.

"Who's calling?"

"I don't know. It's an unknown number."

"Don't answer it. Come and scratch my chin."

"Your chin can be scratched anytime. Just try to accept it first, in case it's an important job."

"If it's important, their name would show up, wouldn't it? Do you have people in your company whose numbers you haven't saved?"

She ignored my objection and picked up the phone with me entangled in her, like a snake. The smile on her face at first turned into surprise, her voice calmer.

"Hello... Where did you get my number?"

I frowned at Wan Yiwa's tone and tried to listen to who was calling. The person on the other end of the line was a man. I couldn't tell who it was until the sweet-faced one pressed the speaker button so I could hear her too.

[I know it's rude to call you without permission and secretly get your phone number, but I want to get to know you.]

"What do you want?"

[Have a meal with me, just once.]

"Okay."

I bounced up and stood up straight when Wan Yiwa answered the man on the phone like that and frowned. The sweet-faced one reached out to scratch my chin as if she wanted to tell me to calm down. As for me, I was so engrossed in what she was doing that I didn't make a fuss because I wanted to know what she was thinking.

"Set a place and time. We'll meet."

After the appointment, Wan Yiwa hung up the phone and stared at me with a determined look as I looked at her uncertainly and was ready to whine at any moment because of the raging hormones.

"Wasan called to ask for dinner."

"And you agreed?" I was about to walk away with a pout, but Wan Yiwa grabbed my arm first.

"Yes, let's end it and you have to go with me."

"Huh?"

"So he'll stop bothering us. Would it be okay if I ask for half a day off today, boss?"

I looked at her and narrowed my eyes slyly.

"Taking leave to run an important business, allowed."

"But if you have to go check the stock at the warehouse..."

"I'll go after lunch. The team can start counting without me, but dealing with this issue of yours is more important. I'm curious to know why Wasan asked you out, knowing full well you already have a girlfriend—and that girlfriend is me."

The two of us arrived at the meeting place about five minutes after the appointed time. The one who arrives later is usually the one who controls the game psychologically. Even though I drove to the restaurant a while ago, when I entered, I found Wasan sitting in the shop by the window waiting. When he saw that I came, he smiled faintly, like someone who knew that I wouldn't miss this.

"How wonderful—one invitation, but I get to see both of you,"

He stood up and invited both of us to sit down, acting like a gentleman. He pulled out chairs for both of us, in order from me first, then pulled them to Wan Yiwa. As soon as we sat down, he called the waiter in the shop to bring us menus, but Wan Yiwa waved her hand to stop him, interrupting us.

"It's okay. The two of us won't be here long. I came here because I have something to talk about with you directly."

"You're so straightforward. You don't beat around the bush."

"I don't know what you're playing at. One day you send flowers to one person, and the next day you send flowers to another girl even though you know they're a couple. You might be a bit dizzy. I mean Mina," Wan Yiwa nodded at me. "And then pretend to send me flowers to make her jealous, or really like me. But either way, neither of them should be right. I don't like what you're doing."

"Well, I truly appreciate your honesty," he smiled casually and put his hands together on his lap, leaning back in his chair to look at her admiringly. "I've liked you since you helped the waitress that night."

"Alright, so you like me. That makes things even simpler."

To be honest, I'm a little annoyed that he changed his mind from me to Wan Yiwa so easily. But then again, this isn't the mood to be petulant and useless. The reason we came is more important.

"I don't appreciate that. I already have a girlfriend, Meena."

"I know."

"Why did you do it if you knew?"

"Maybe it's just a fluke." Wasan picked up his glass of water and took a sip, smiling. "Sometimes, women love each other because they haven't found the right man for them. If I were to be your option, I might have a chance."

"Men tend to think that women are in a relationship because no other men would take them, or that they court them because they believe that a woman's love for a woman is impossible. Some couples might be like that, but not us." Today, Wan Yiwa was the one who did most of the talking, with one hand on my lap. Partly to give me encouragement, and partly to stop me from saying anything. She would handle it herself.

"If you don't try, you'll never know. I always find opportunities for myself.

So can you tell me why you like Meena so much? What makes you like her more than a guy like me?"

"Love doesn't have a reason."

"Because if there is a reason, it's not love." I added coolly, remembering from somewhere. Now the two of us have become a very gentle couple, under the sunlight outside.

"For example, I like you because you're brave, beautiful, and confident. Meena, too, has her good points. I liked her at first because she's smart, modern, and most importantly, she built herself up from nothing. Maybe you like her because she's rich."

"That's right."

I glanced at Wan Yiwa, slightly stunned.

"But you are rich too. It's strange that I don't like you. So being rich is only part of it, not the majority. Even if you are richer, have better things than Meena, it won't distract me. Moreover, I liked her before since we were students. I fell in love with her first. The fact that she responded to my feelings, which were only 12% possible, is a blessing for me. I won't let this opportunity go."

"If it weren't for her, would you have liked me instead?"

"Maybe, but it's a shame this world has her. And I love her very much. So don't ruin our love by playing games—sending flowers to one person and then another. Not only is it not cool..."

"..."

"...it's downright shameless."

When Wan Yiwa said that, she took a sip of water and imitated Wasan, as if her throat was dry. She smiled sweetly at him and nodded slightly.

"I'm saying this to end everything. Don't try to do something like this again, okay? You can hate me and go after Meena. I don't have a problem with it, but it's better not to do it. It's embarrassing."

"Have your parents accepted this?" Wasan asked casually, not feeling hurt by any rejection or insults.

"I don't know yet because I haven't told them."

"..."

"But it's not your problem."

We were quiet the whole way while driving to the warehouse. Right now, my heart is still beating fast because I feel that Wan Yiwa is still the same as before, firm, and independent.When she hit, she hit hard. When she spoke, it was clear and final.

"You're too cool, I'm melting."

I interrupted the silence while looking at the way. Wan Yiwa turned to look at me, tilted her head, and gave me a cute smile.

"Am I really that cool?"

"Hmm, I knew you were here to end it, but I didn't think you'd end it so decisively. I didn't even dare to do it."

"You can do it if it's business, but if it's a relationship, you might sympathize with the other person, but I don't."

"Do you always handle things like this... I mean, with your exes?"

"Pretty much. Whenever someone refuses to listen, I deal with them like this."

Another...

Oh my gosh... I was so cranky last night. If I acted like this, I would definitely get a complete and decisive breakup like everyone else.

"What's wrong? Why are you so quiet all of a sudden?"

"I promise I won't be unreasonable again,"

"That's good, but just be yourself. Because you look good in my eyes. Even when you're being unreasonable, I like it the most when you rip off your clothes to spite me." Wan Yiwa reached out and scratched my chin, which made me laugh.

"I like it the most when you're wearing pajamas."

"We'll have more fun when your period ends."

"You're ridiculous."

"Don't you like me talking like that?"

"I mean you're *so* ridiculous. My period's taking forever to end, and I'm dying to have you already,"

We giggled as we talked about dirty things to each other. I could tell that we were closer than before, maybe because we'd fought before. Even though we'd only been together for a few days, we talked more than when we were students or our whole lives. After running errands at the warehouse to check the stock, About two hours later, I had to take Wan Yiwa back to her room because she took a half-day off. She still had work to do because her job required her to be on standby in front of the computer all the time because whenever the department needed any information, they would have to ask her to help pull the information. After more than three hours of running errands outside the house, I intended not to go to the office today, so I drove straight home to come and cuddle her. But I had to stop when I reached the lobby and met someone I didn't expect to see.

"Mek, what are you doing here?"

A full set of backpacks and a younger brother in a school uniform stood up and looked at me, looking like he was going to cry.

"P'Min... help me."

"What? What's wrong?" Wan Yiwa looked at both of us in confusion. I rushed to my younger brother with concern because he suddenly appeared. "What happened?"

"I ran away from home."

"Why did you run away?"

"Mom found out that I brought a woman into the house, and Mom told me to get lost. So I went to you, P'Min. Let me stay with you, please!"

"No way!"

I blurted out immediately. This wasn't the right time for my younger brother to crash at my place—not when I had a girlfriend and very clear plans to deepen our relationship. But Methas wrapped his arms around me like a clingy octopus. No matter how hard I tried to push his face away, the big guy just wouldn't budge.

"If I can't stay with you, where else am I supposed to go?"

"Go wherever you want. you're grown up now. You can go live with the woman you brought into the house."

"How could I do that? She has parents too!"

"You know that already, and you still do something like that."

"Come on, P'Min, let me stay. I promise to be good. I won't cause any trouble." "But..."

Wan Yiwa walked over and nudged me and smiled sweetly at Methas, understanding.

"Your brother's in a tough spot. Don't push him away,"

"Who is this kind-hearted woman with a soul as generous as Niagara Falls?" When Methas looked at Wan Yiwa with flirtatious eyes, I pushed her face away to look away. "Don't even look at her."

"What's your deal, P'Min?"

"I don't trust you. Go home."

"Oh, don't be like that, darling," Wan Yiwa gently stroked my back. The words 'darling' instantly melted my resolve. Methas looked at Wan Yiwa's actions and started to notice. I didn't want my brother to know much, so I agreed.

"Okay, just one day. Then go home and apologize to your mom. I'll talk to her for you."

"One day's good enough for me! Thanks, P'Min! Yay!"

Well, great. My perfectly crafted plans—despite being on my period—of having an intimate, cozy day with my girlfriend were now utterly destroyed. The unexpected addition of Methas threw everything into disarray.

As for Wan Yiwa, when she entered the room, she went straight to her laptop and stood by the screen. She didn't care about anyone because she had to focus on her work. Methas, who had been staring at Wan Yiwa for a long time. Finally, he nudged me slightly and whispered, making sure only the two of us could hear:

"Who is that woman?

"A friend."

"Then why is your friend staying here?

"Then why can't my friend come here?"

"Because you don't usually let anyone get close to you. For you to let a friend work in your own space, you must be really close. Heck, even when your own brother asks to stay over, you treat him like a stray dog."

I was speechless, not knowing how to answer.

"She's temporarily staying here, just like you.

"I intend to stay here forever."

"Go back home, right now.."

"That way." I pointed to the area opposite the kitchen. Methas nodded and walked away. Now was a good opportunity for Wan Yiwa and I to talk. I rushed to her and made a very irritated voice. "It didn't go according to plan. My brother suddenly showed up out of nowhere."

"He's not staying for long, is he?"

"A moment ago he said he would stay forever."

"Well then, I guess you and I won't be doing anything *naughty* anytime soon," She giggled, not serious, but I wrinkled my nose because I was serious.

"No way. I *planned* to be naughty with you. If he doesn't leave, I'm throwing him off the balcony!"

"You're mean. Don't be upset. Your brother's clearly in a tough spot."

"You shouldn't have said that he could stay with me."

"I had to. I'm trying to be the kind, understanding big sister type. That way, when Methas eventually finds out I'm your girlfriend, he'll adore me even more."

"He doesn't need to love you. It's enough that I do."

"You're so sweet!" She reached out to scratch my chin and made a face like she wanted to bite me. It was just at that moment that Methas appeared. We both bounced away from each other, as if nothing had happened.

"Your house is so comfortable. If I were you, I would move here. But where do you want me to sleep tonight?"

"Balcony."

"You!" Wan Yiwa tugged at the hem of my shirt a little, so I had to change my words.

"Fine, the sofa. But don't you dare pee on it. I love that sofa more than you can imagine, so keep that in mind."

"Got it" Methas snorted, acknowledging it. "Your house has a bathtub. Would it be okay if I took a hot tub?"

"Do whatever you want, but don't make it feel like your own home. I'm not that welcoming."

"Yay!"

I still don't have an answer for my younger brother about why Wan Yiwa is staying here, and I don't specify a relationship. Even when I sleep, I let Wan Yiwa sleep on the bed, while my younger brother sleeps on the sofa downstairs. Today, we wear rather tight clothes. Even though I expected her to wear those beautiful pajamas, it's impossible. Right now, I'm looking as grumpy as a dog's butt. I want to drag Methas out to swing on the swing and let him fall to his death together.

"You've already told your mom he's staying over. She'll probably come to drag him back home tomorrow. Don't be so grumpy."

"It's just annoying. Now I have to sleep in underwear. It's uncomfortable."

"It's not a big deal. You still have your period. You have to wear underwear."

"But you don't have to wear these."

Wan Yiwa looked at me and smiled. She understood what I was trying to say. She couldn't help but poke my nose with her finger.

"Your head thinks about things like this like a horny man."

"And you've never thought about, I don't know... pinning me down or anything?"

"Thought about it."

We giggled at each other. The lights in the room were off. The moonlight from outside shone in so we could see each other. After staring at each other for a while, it seemed like we were attracted to each other. I pulled her in for a kiss and climbed on top of her under the covers. I reached under her shirt but found her underwear that seemed to be uncomfortable. So I wanted her to relax by unhooking her front until she raised her hand.

"You, your brother is just downstairs. Let's keep this sweet and simple, okay?"

"I like to cuddle with you. Even if I can't do much," my hands gripped her chest until her nipples were erect against my hands. "But at least I got to touch you."

"Don't you feel sorry for me? I'm a person with flesh and blood."

She used both arms to wrap around my neck and let me do whatever I wanted. I crawled under the blanket, lifted her shirt, and used my mouth to poke around from her navel and all the way to the top. Now Wan Yiwa's shirt was lifted up. My hands squeezed and threw it away. My mouth teased her until the sweet-faced one gasped for air and had to raise her hand to cover her mouth.

"No more. It's torturous."

"A little more. I love the scent of your skin so much."

"You're the curious type."

"What are you doing?!"

The lights were turned on brightly. Startled, I was shoved off her, and Wan Yiwa hastily pulled the blanket over her body. Still on my knees, I turned to see Methas standing at the top of the stairs, pointing at us with a smug grin.

"I already thought that you were not a normal friend."

"Methas!"

"Address me as *Prince Methas* immediately!"

"Why do I have to do that?"

"Because if Mom comes tomorrow, I will tell Mom. You will die for sure!"

# Chapter 12: Not Getting Married

I had been caught—Methas now knew that Wan Yiwa wasn't just a friend. But that didn't mean my little brother's threats held much weight. However, the person sitting next to me now, Wan Yiwa, just sat quietly while driving to work together. She was thinking about something by herself until I had to nudge her by reaching out to scratch her chin.

"Huh?"

"Just doing what you always do to me. What's wrong? What are you thinking about?"

The sweet-faced one smiled a little and seemed to like me scratching her chin. She giggled before sighing.

"I was thinking about your brother catching me. What do you think would happen if your parents found out you were dating a woman?"

"Nothing will happen," I replied casually. Even though in reality, it might happen, I considered myself an adult and could make my own decisions. My parents' opinions had no effect. "If I don't listen to them, there's nothing they can do,"

"It's great that you're like that. Everything you do is so confident."

"But not confident enough to have a problem instead of the waiter." I said sarcastically. The sweet-faced one smiled at me slightly and sighed. "Sighing again, I thought listening to me would make you feel better." "You've already figured out your part, but You've already figured out your part"

"What do you mean?"

"My mom... What will she think about us?"

It turned out that she was thinking about it. I was speechless because I didn't know how to encourage her. That's right, every family thinks differently. Especially relationships that aren't very open, even though there are series about BL or GL on the air for us to imagine and fantasizing, but when it's a family, we might feel a little strange and empty inside.

"It's okay." I reached out to hold her hand to encourage her. "It'll pass. Have you ever heard that 'Everything that happens is for the best'?"

"Hmm."

Wan Yiwa and I went back to the office to work as usual. But not long after, my mother called to say that she would come pick up my younger brother to go home. I told Wan Yiwa that I didn't feel anything, but when I saw that my mother was coming, I became suspicious of what Methas would say, so I jumped up from my office and drove back to the condo immediately, without taking Wan Yiwa with me. When I got back, I saw that my mother was sitting and waiting. I couldn't guess what my mother was feeling because I saw her sitting with her back straight and her face sullen, while my younger brother sat there, calm and without any power.

"Mom, have you been here long?"

"For quite a while now," Mom squinted at me for a moment and said sarcastically."You really spoil your brother, don't you? Instead of sending him home, you let him stay over. Such defiance toward your own mother."

"Wasn't Mom the one who kicked Mek out of the house? I know that if I took him back, Mom would kick him out again, so I thought it would be better to let Mom calm down and come pick him up."

"Do you know what your brother did to get kicked out of the house?"

"I know."

"And you're still acting like nothing happened."

"It's not the first time." I squinted at my good brother, Methas, who was sitting there, calm as a folded cloth. "And I thought he wouldn't do it again, but it happened again.

"Does that mean you knew beforehand that he brought a woman into the house?"

"I knew."

"I knew but I kept my mouth shut."

"Part of me thinks he's grown up now. It's better to keep an eye on him than to bring a woman. Sleeping in a hotel outside the house"

"Oh, I'm going crazy." Mom raised her hand to massage her temples and shook her head. "It's good that being a man doesn't hurt. Luckily, Mom has Mek who is somewhat capable and doesn't make Mom suffer like this."

Methas looked up and looked at me with a sly gaze. My mischievous younger brother was holding onto my secret and it seemed like he hadn't revealed it yet.

"Mek is an adult. Even if it makes me suffer, Mek can solve the problem himself." I spoke in a way that was half-way between having a problem and not having one.

"You talk like you're going to cause trouble."

"It may or may not be a problem. Now that Mom is here, Mom can take Mek home.He's been getting in my way long enough."

"Just say that you're a thorn in my side."

I glared at my younger brother, Methas who acted like he had the upper hand. At most, when he saw the serious gaze, he would sit back and not dare to say anything more.

"What is this thorn in my side?" Mom looked at Methas and me suspiciously. I didn't say anything because I wanted to know if my brother would blackmail me with this.

"Nothing, Mom. I was just teasing my sister."

"You can go back now."

I said coldly, in the style of a cool older sister. Mom told Methas to get up and forced him to go home. Methas went to get his bag, but I grabbed his arm before I could. Then I spoke so that only they could hear.

"Why didn't you tell Mom?"

"It's no fun telling her quickly. Keeping a secret like this is better than being superior to you. I feel superior."

"Get lost."

"Nah."

I'm an immature child.

I walked Mom to the lobby downstairs after they took the van back home. Just as I was getting ready to go back to work, my phone rang. I smiled when I saw that it was Wan Yiwa's number. So I answered the phone with a smile.

"Hey, you've been gone for a while and you've missed me already?"

[Meena...]

She paused as if she had something on her mind, which made me frown. Is there something else? Her tone didn't sound very good.

"What's wrong? You seem to want to say something. You can say it."

[I don't want to trouble you, but... I really need your help.]

"Go ahead, tell me."

[My mom is coming to visit me at my condo today.]

Everything was so sudden. Instead of going back to work, I had to go back to my room and pack all the clothes that weren't Wan Yiwa's, and put them in a suitcase and drag them to the car. Everything happened so fast that I was out of breath. I just realized that I have so many things. After packing everything, I went back to check my room again to see if I had forgotten anything. It was just when she called me.

[I've arrived at the condo. I'm really sorry for the short notice. My mom just told me she was at the front, so I didn't have time to prepare anything. You've packed away your clothes, right?]

"All done."

[I'm really sorry, my dear.]

Hearing her call me "my dear" made my heart melt. I smiled like someone who was full of encouragement and shook my head even though the other person didn't see it.

"It's okay. I can do it for you. Come up. I'll hide in the closet."

[Gosh, you're the owner of this room. Why do you have to hide?]

"Actually, I wanted to go out, but I was also curious to see what your mom would say about my room."

[You're a bit of a show-off. Mom is here, hurry up and hide]

I quickly looked for a place to hide by walking into the closet, but I hesitated. Most people, if they hide in the bathroom, it would be the closet. And when a murderer or the police break in to catch them, they usually look in the bathroom or the closet first. If Wan Yiwa's mother came, she would be curious about her daughter's behavior. In the end, she would have to search in this closet anyway. After thinking it over, I changed my hiding place to under the kitchen sink, which I had never even looked at because under it was the sink pipe. But it was big enough for me to fit in there. Even though it was a bit cramped, I felt grateful that I wasn't so fat that I could fit in. And not long after, Wan Yiwa and her mother entered the room with the chatter of old people.

"Is the room this big? How can it be eight thousand a month?"

The question that didn't seem to be very believable made me secretly smile. Of course, I bought this room for tens of millions. I don't even earn eight thousand a month. What profit is there? It wouldn't even cover the electricity bill and maintenance fees. "The person who rented it out was kind."

And loves you too.

"Kind like this? That's a bit suspicious. A man or a woman?"

"Mom, you ask a lot of questions. This rent is good enough. Do you want it to be more expensive?"

"But I think it's a bit far from our workplace compared to our house. And it's too big. Aren't you afraid of ghosts living alone? Let me check the room."

Then Wan Yiwa's mother walked around and examined every corner, criticizing, admiring the taste of the landlord, which was me. Whether it was the art on the walls, the interior design that was hired for an expensive interior designer, the new furniture, some of which were still in plastic, and of course the sofa in the middle of the room that I was so proud of and dreamed of having sex on.

"This is all new. How much money must this person have left to rent a room like this for eight thousand... Should I move in with you?"

Thud!

My head hit the sink, making a soft sound outside. It was quiet for a moment, and then a question came faintly.

"Did you hear something?"

"I didn't hear anything."

"I heard something hit something... Or are you not the only one in this room?"

"Of course, I live alone. Who else would I be living with?"

"Maybe you're hiding someone in here."

"..."

"Boo! Look at you, going all quiet! I almost thought it was true. Or is it?"

"No."

"Just as I thought. Well then, maybe I really should move in. This place is so comfortable. Living alone must get lonely—I can help you keep the place clean."

"No way!"

Wan Yiwa almost shouted, and that made her mother go quiet. "I... I mean, I need to focus on my work. Otherwise, why would I move out and live alone in the first place, Mom?"

"Is that the reason? I think it's a bit strange. Let's see."

"What are you looking at?"

"Let's see who you live with."

And it was as I imagined. Wan Yiwa's mother walked around the room, starting from the bathroom first. Then she looked left and right and stopped, standing at the sink. The faint shadow that passed by my face made me close my eyes.

"Of course, who would hide in the bathroom? It must be the dressing room... the wardrobe!"

Mom walked back out of the kitchen and rushed into the dressing room nearby, then searched here and there from the sound. Wan Yiwa tried to stop her, but Mom wouldn't listen because she felt like she was hiding something. And finally...

"What is this!"

The voice that sounded like a little shouting made me jump. That's right. What? I already packed everything in a suitcase and stuffed it in the car. I wanted to go out and show myself, but all I could do was sit on my knees like a corpse that had been murdered and hidden in the sink. Then I could only guess what would happen.

"Huh... huh?"

"Why are there men's boxer shorts in here?"

*Boxers? I've never owned any.*

"It's not like that, Mom. It must be the previous owner's. How could I have boxers?"

"Don't... You're lying to me. Why are you avoiding me?"

"It's not really mine."

"Wan Yiwa!"

Mom's fierce tone made her go quiet. I could feel the tense situation and wanted to go help, but I held myself back because I wanted to check out the place first.

"You want to move out of the house so much because you have a boyfriend, right?"

"..."

"Answer Mom."

"Yes."

She answered honestly, and that made her Mom go quiet.

"And Yiwa doesn't live alone in this room, right? That's why you prevented Mom from moving in from the beginning."

"Yes."

"How long have you been together?"

"Not that long... About a week."

"A little over a week and you've already moved in with him? Since when did Mom teach you to be this easy-going? That guy's easy. He gets free food and even pays for prostitutes."

"Mom..."

"Okay, Mom might be a bit old-fashioned." Mom tried to make herself calmer. "Yiwa is a grown-up. She can think for herself. But since she's grown-up, you have to understand that this is Thailand. You should respect each other when you do things. You go in by the door."

"So what do you want me to do?"

"Bring that man to meet me. Have a proper wedding. If he doesn't want to get married, at least have a blessing ceremony—something to make things official. The rice has already been cooked."

*The rice hasn't even been washed yet!* I thought, barely stopping myself from laughing. Mom had taken things *way* too far. I wanted to step in and help, but I decided to stay quiet and see how Yiwa would handle the situation herself.

"No."

"No what?"

"I won't get married."

# Chapter 13: The Reward for Courage

"Why aren't you getting married? What's the issue? Did the man refuse, or is there something else?"

"We're not getting married because we can't get married. I've decided to stay with him like this for the rest of my life if I can. Mom respects my decision."

Wan Yiwa's answer didn't help clarify anything. Both of them were silent. I couldn't see her expression, but I could feel the atmosphere was filled with tension. I once proposed to her seriously, but she rejected it. It wasn't because she didn't think it was true, but because she thought it was impossible and wouldn't happen.

Why? Was it because I'm a woman?

"I can't accept this. If he truly loves you, he should come talk to me properly. He shouldn't treat you like you don't matter."

"Being valuable doesn't mean we have to get married, Mom. Mom... can't you just visit me with a good mood for once? Let's not talk about this anymore, please."

She changed the subject and started talking nonsense, but it seemed like her mom didn't agree. The two of them didn't spend much time before leaving the room. As for me, who was hiding under the sink, I slowly crawled out and sat cross-legged, thinking. About this

Yes... I have to respect her, and that means respecting her family.

Not long after, Wan Yiwa hurried upstairs and quickly scanned the room, looking for me. However, I was sitting on the floor next to the sink because I was thinking about her. The sweet-faced girl was surprised to see me sitting there, squatting down and talking next to me.

"What are you doing down here? Where were you hiding?"

"Under the sink." I nodded to the cabinet behind me. The sweet-faced girl looked shocked and felt guilty at the same time.

"That must've been so uncomfortable. You didn't have to hide, you know. That was my mistake."

"No, hiding was a good idea. Now I know what your mom thinks. And now I know what *you* think." I looked into those light brown eyes and sighed. "The reason you brushed off my proposal... it's because you don't believe that women can get married, isn't it?"

"It's not that I *don't* believe. I do."

"Then you didn't get married because you didn't want your mom to know about our relationship."

"..."

"So what are you going to do now? Your mom has completely misunderstood that you're living with your boyfriend. Your mom must be really angry now."

"She will stop being angry soon."

"You say that so easily."

"Because I'm not worried at all. So why should you be? Come on, don't overthink it. The way we're living together now—isn't it already good enough?"

"At the very least, you should wear a beautiful wedding dress to honor your mom."

"It's not necessary for me at all. What's important is being with you." Wan Yiwa leaned down to hug me and rested her head on my shoulder when she saw that I still had a look of disbelief. "You're my dream. Don't let anyone else ruin it.The only people who can threaten our relationship are outsiders. So I need to set the boundary now—by rejecting the idea of a wedding outright."

"You're deciding everything on your own without asking me."

"You're going to drag someone else into our relationship. Have you ever read a novel? There's always a problem with an outsider. Let this matter be just us. We finally managed to brush off the problematic Wasan, if we drag family into this too, we'll be spinning in circles. Come on... get up. Have you eaten anything yet?"

She stood up and held out her hand for me to hold. I got up easily and shook my head.

"Not yet. Are you going to make it for me?"

"No, I'll order a Lineman to deliver it. Enjoy your meal. Stop worrying too much, ok?" She lightly scratched my chin like she always did when she saw that I was upset. I smiled at her and pretended not to care about anything and went along with it. But deep down, I wouldn't let this go.

It's true that love doesn't need someone else, but it does need respect—for the people around us. I couldn't keep hiding forever.

We both still come to work as usual. I didn't show any special behavior. We were still very sweet, standing and scratching each other's chins as we went to work. Wan Yiwa couldn't help but tease me a little just to get my blood flowing before going to work in the morning.

"Has your period ended yet?"

"Yeah, it's over."

"Wow... Today is a good day," she gave me a sly look, then covered her mouth with her hand and whispered in my ear, "Tonight... just wait and see."

My heart beat wildly and I pulled her in for a hard kiss.

"You won't survive tonight."

"Are you sure it's me who won't survive?"

Then we went to work like a boss and subordinate at the company, as if we weren't close and loving each other to deceive everyone like every day. However, today I found an excuse to go out to work first by saying that I had to go to the warehouse because some products didn't pass QC, so I went out alone. But in reality, I ended up at her house.

A house... where Wan Yiwa's mother lived alone.

I stood there, deciding and hesitating for a long time whether to go in or not, but in the end I decided to press the doorbell. The old woman looked surprised when she found out that there was a guest, but when she opened the door, she immediately smiled at me like someone she recognized.

"Wan's friend, What was your name again... July?"

"Meena."

"Just kidding."

Wan Yiwa's mother was a kind and cheerful person. She looked left and right as if looking for someone and asked about her daughter because she thought she was here.

"Oh, you came alone?"

"Yes."

"You came to see Wan? Wan went to work."

I made a slightly hesitant and awkward expression. I almost turned around and left, but I firmly decided that I came here because I had other things to do, so I answered, like a determined person.

"No, I came to see you."

"Huh? You came to see me? Is there something wrong?"

"Yes." I swallowed a little before getting to the main point and waited to see how the other party would react. "I came to introduce myself."

"..."

"I'm Wan Yiwa's girlfriend."

Okay, here comes the real stress. Now I am invited to sit in the living room of the house with Yiwa's mother serving me water. When I tell her that, she looks shocked at first but still tells me to come in and talk in the house. Now the atmosphere is full of tension and intense talk. The elderly person sits opposite me, staring at me intently, not saying anything at all, as if she is thinking by herself before speaking.

"Tell me everything."

"Yes. ma'am"

I am prepared for what will happen. Before telling how we met, what kind of relationship we have, and what brought me here.

"Yesterday, I hid under the sink. I heard everything you said when you visited Yiwa in the room." I start to talk. "You said that people should follow the proper steps in a relationship. I believe in that too. I want to do things the right way. I want to respect you."

"Does Yiwa know you came here?"

I noted how she still referred to herself as *Mom*, rather than distancing herself with a more formal pronoun. That gave me the slightest bit of hope.

"She doesn't know. Yiwa said that she wanted it to be our business, but I still felt unsettled. Being in a secret relationship would be awkward and I would have to hide all the time. Today, I would rather show myself."

"That takes a lot of courage."

The serious tone made me sit up straight. I took a sip of water and swallowed it hard because my throat was dry. Would I get slapped for taking her daughter out and having a girlfriend?

"Yes, ma'am. I take full responsibility."

"No wonder, when I told her to bring her partner to my house, Yiwa firmly refused. Because her partner is a woman. That means she must know that marriage between women is very difficult to accept."

"I once asked her to marry me."

"..."

"But she acted like she didn't care. So yesterday I asked her the reason directly. She said she didn't want outsiders to interfere in our relationship. If she knew I came to see you, she would have scolded me too. But I couldn't let this go. I want you to know that Yiwa didn't move in with a man. Those underwear belong to my younger brother."

Because I was very curious about why those boxers were left in the closet, even though it was a new room that no one had lived in before. But when I thought about it before, Methas came to stay here and I took a picture and sent it to my younger brother. Methas admitted that they were his and that they were the problematic items that made the mother and daughter argue yesterday.

"I was just wondering... would it have been better if it *had* belonged to a man?"

Another Blow

I wondered a little bit more because her mother didn't seem to like me that I

was Yiwa's real partner. Maybe Yiwa was right. A relationship with an outsider interfering would make us both unhappy.

"But Meena's arrival today also makes mom think that maybe...having *you* as her partner is actually the better choice."

"Huh?"

My mind was thinking in confusion, my eyes widened when I heard that and I had to ask again.

"I think that you are sincere, very brave to come to me alone and accept the truth like this. As for Yiwa, she is a bit too narrow-minded to think that I will not open my heart to accept something like this, which is actually hard to accept, but it doesn't mean that I won't accept it at all. I'm also watching the BL series, it's cute."

"..."

"But when it really happened to me, it was strange, but it's not bad."

"Yes."

"Let's say that right now I'm aware of your relationship. Even though it's not easy, I won't get in your way either. You can keep dating and see if this lasts. Maybe you'll just be each other's companion until you both meet the right person and move on. I'll leave it up to fate."

"What?"

"If one day Yiwa finds a guy she likes, you have to let her go.... Can you do it?"

I was still stunned because I never thought of letting Yiwa go anywhere. Her mom looked at me and tilted her head, waiting for an answer before smiling.

"Can't do it, huh?"

"I... I'm sorry, I didn't prepare an answer for that."

"Just asking to test your heart. It's quite certain. Even under this much pressure, you still don't think of accepting it. You must really like Yiwa."

I nodded, my hands fidgeting restlessly. My legs trembled slightly as excitement and anxiety warred within me.

"Let's just say I won't object. But please give me some time to accept it. You two can date in peace."

"Really?" I opened my eyes wide in surprise. "You, won't you scold me?"

"Can you scold me?"

"..."

"You little brat, daring to love my daughter! I will curse you to become a cockroach, to be bathed in soap by a five-year-old child and then crushed flat with your foot."

"..."

"Just kidding."

Then Mom laughed happily when I made a face like I was haunted by a ghost. Then she got up from the opposite side and sat next to me, wrapping her arms around me.

"You have a very... unique sense of humor, ma'am."

"I like you, kid. Especially when you make that cockroach face. It's hilarious!"

"Ma'am!"

"Hahahahahaha."

Accepting the truth wasn't that hard after getting through her mom. I went back to work at the company like nothing happened. But today, I was in a particularly good mood because her mom bought me drinks, snacks, chatted me up, and asked me about my background, when I knew Wan Yiwa, what I graduated from, and what I do. When she found out that I was the owner of the company, Wan Yiwa's boss, she seemed even more impressed and kept chatting me up until a customer called me to talk. I had to leave before I could finish my work. Today, I was warmly welcomed. The two of us passed the first level.

But how should I tell Yiwa that I went to see her mother?

When I got back to the company, my eyes searched for her first, but I didn't find her sitting at her desk. When I called her, she turned off her phone, and that started to make me feel a bit uneasy.

"Where did Wan Yiwa go?"

Recently, I asked my coworkers about her so often that my coworkers were starting to get suspicious. But no one would have guessed what our relationship was. Another coworker said that she was going home early today, which made me nod in understanding and start to worry.

Or maybe she was sick. No, she was fine this morning.

Or maybe she...she talked to her mom.

When I thought about this reason, I turned around and left the office immediately without even going into my office. I went straight to my condo. I prayed so much that we wouldn't fight again because Wan Yiwa had asked me not to let outsiders interfere in our relationship. What about what I was doing behind her back? Tonight, instead of going to the bedroom, I'll probably be sleeping on the sofa.

Sometimes, I really just caused my own problems.

I was anxious, so I quickly went back to my condo and rushed into my room. I found Wan Yiwa unpacking a package. We were both quiet. No one said anything. I looked at Wan Yiwa, trying to figure out if she would make a scene or talk. Stabbed in a sentence to prepare for defense, but no, she just looked and asked, as if nothing happened.

"Why are you here? Shouldn't the owner be at work?"

"I should ask you more, why did you come back to the room instead of staying at the company like usual?"

"I'm dating the owner. I doubt I'll get fired."

"The owner can come out whenever she wants, because she won't fire herself either."

Is this sarcasm? I still looked at her curiously. Wan Yiwa swiped the cutter up and down a little until it made a cracking sound, then opened the package in the box.

"I came back to get the package, I remember it was cash on delivery.

"Let the staff downstairs pay first."

"That's not good, I'm considerate of it. Besides, if someone opens this, they'll see what the person who ordered it will say." She took out the various toys we ordered that night. Each piece was wrapped in bubble wrap. When I saw the toys, my face flushed with embarrassment, but I was more worried about something else. "By the way, why did you leave the office early? Saying you went to the warehouse would take too long."

She got to the point. I swallowed hard, not knowing how to answer.

"Or did you not go to the warehouse?"

"Hmm."

"So, where did you go?"

She definitely knows. Her mother must have talked to her. I'll admit my mistake. How should I introduce this?

"I have something to tell you." I took a step towards her, but Wan Yiwa moved the cutter up and down again, causing me to stop my legs.

"You mean the fact that you met my mother?"

She really knew. The panic made me eager to explain immediately. I didn't want to fight with her. Not today, not any other day.

"I can explain. Me and your mother..."

"My mother called and told me everything. You're so brave." She met my eyes, her sharp eyes like a knife in her hand, before slitting the bubble wrap in her hand to unwrap a few toys we had ordered, causing the strangely shaped silicone to bounce back and forth. She held the dildo in her hand and pointed it at my face. "You didn't consult me about anything."

"Because if I did, you wouldn't let me do it.

"What if the result is not good?"

"I will kneel down and beg your mother to accept us until it turns out well."

She swung the dildo in her hand and walked to sit on the sofa with her legs crossed, staring at me with unpredictable but beautiful eyes. Today, she wore a white shirt, dark green slacks, and tied her hair up in a hurry, looking more like a tomboy than a sweet girl like that drooping face.

"You are too cool."

"I can explain... hmm."

"Doing something like this secretly requires a lot of courage. My mother called me and told me a lot about you and praised you for being brave. Even though she didn't really want me to date women, she said that if it was you... she would be okay."

"Does that mean you aren't angry?"

"Not only am I not mad..." she lifted her legs from the crossed position and spread them apart, wiggling her hands. "I have a reward for you."

"A reward?"

She smiled at me with charming eyes and used the dildo to beckon me to come over.

"Don't you want me anymore?"

# Chapter 14: Honeymoon Phase

A hundred sweet words cannot compare to a single touch. The new and unfamiliar sensations that come with love make everything feel even more intense when our bare bodies exchange caresses.

I had always wondered what it would be like to have sex with someone. Could we truly strip naked, completely exposed, and do things to each other without feeling shy? But when it actually happened, it seemed that embarrassment was the least important thing of all.

We exchanged sensations of burning desire.

We expressed our love through physical language, accompanied by the unmistakable scent of intimacy.

We explored each other's bodies, eager to discover what the other liked and disliked.

Her hands roamed across my body—over my chest, down the length of my torso—making me arch upward, inviting her to introduce something new. The breathy moans that escaped me, sounds I never thought I would make, became a melody more arousing to her than any song. And I felt the same. The more I heard her voice, the stronger my own desire became, driving me to bring her to her peak—so I could relish the satisfaction of knowing I had led her to bliss. It felt like a victory of its own.

The wetness that coated our bodies spilled forth, testifying to how much we craved each other. There was no need to explain how much pleasure we felt. Love had brought us to this moment, and perhaps it would continue to take us further and further, endlessly.

"Darling," she murmured as her body trembled for the final time, her fingers squeezing and clenching around me. Nature itself told me that she had reached her climax. I pressed a kiss to her temple, my hands never ceasing their caresses. She seemed to enjoy the lingering touches as much as I did.

"What is it, my dear?"

"I like it." she whispered.

"I like it too." I replied.

By this point, there was no reason for us to feel shy anymore. We had become one, intertwined like serpents in an embrace. We made love without end—one climax leading to another, each time ending in indescribable ecstasy.

The air was cold enough to make goosebumps rise along my arms. I wasn't sure whether it was because the AC was set too low or because our sweatcovered bodies were cooling in the aftermath. The only thing that could warm me now was her. Wan Yiwa lay on top of me, burying her face into the crook of my neck. Her breaths were steady, though her heart still pounded against mine, both of us still caught in the lingering haze of passion. The room was filled with the scent of sex and the heady traces of our mingled hormones. I stared up at the high ceiling, letting the aftershocks of pleasure sink into my bones.

Everything happened due to the internal drive and the mischievousness of the person lying on top of me at this moment. What began as intense passion had now shifted into embarrassment as I recalled what had transpired. I raised a hand to cover my mouth, unable to believe that I had made those kinds of sounds—let alone pleaded for the new and unfamiliar sensations she had continued to give me, right up until the very end.

"What are you thinking about?"

Wan Yiwa, whom I had assumed had already fallen asleep, suddenly asked, despite keeping her eyes closed. I flinched slightly and shook my head. "Nothing."

"Liar." She propped herself up on her arms, raising her head to look directly into my eyes. *"*Tell me what you're thinking, my little tigress."

Tigress? Hearing her tease me like that made me immediately cover my face with my hands, overwhelmed with embarrassment at the thought of what I had just done.

"Don't say that. It's so embarrassing to hear.

"There's nothing to be embarrassed about. Hehe."

The sound of her laughter made me unable to take it anymore. I pushed her away in a hurry, scrambling to gather the scattered clothes from the floor and hugging them tightly to my chest. Even though she had already seen every inch of me, I still felt the need to cover myself. Unlike me, Wan Yiwa remained completely unbothered, lying there in the most relaxed position— bare and unashamed, making no effort to conceal anything.

"It's rude. While I'm trying to be comfortable, you're acting all flustered. You're making me lose confidence, you know?"

"I... I..." I was at a loss for words, unsure whether I should continue clutching my clothes to my chest or just toss them aside. My hesitation made the sweet-faced woman burst into laughter again.

"Good girl, come here."

"..."

"Hurry up."

That firm tone made me obediently walk toward her like a tamed kitten. I climbed into her embrace, surrendering entirely, and let my clothes fall to the side—so that nothing would come between us.

"You're so adorable. If I had known you'd be this obedient after we got together, I would've done it from day one."

"You weren't like this on the first day at all."

"Neither were you."

With that, she suddenly gripped my shoulder a little too hard, making me yelp an "Ouch!" I glared at her, but the sweet-faced woman just raised an eyebrow in amusement.

"Angry? That's a good start. It means you're not shy anymore."

"You're really good at getting on my nerves."

"Do you like it?"

"..."

"You know exactly what I mean."

"Well... it's good."

"Just 'good'?" She feigned disappointment. "I've lost all my confidence now. Next time, we'll just cuddle, then."

"Absolutely not."

I answered so quickly that Wan Yiwa immediately pulled me into a hug, overcome with affection.

"Yeah, it was really amazing for me too... Oh." She yawned slightly, signaling that her body was craving rest.

"I think we should go to sleep now."

"Sure, but before bed, we need to take a shower first. And, of course..." She leaned in to whisper into my ear. "We'll shower together."

"..."

"Get used to it. This won't be the only time, trust me."

No matter how flustered I was, I obediently followed her lead. Both of us were exhausted, so we showered quickly before holding hands and heading to bed. Nothing happened after that—just the warmth of her embrace as we drifted off into a deep sleep.

We had a sweet night, but why am I still shy? I came in after getting dressed and getting ready to go out to work. While we were sitting and eating together, I kept quiet, not daring to look her in the eye until the sweet-faced person had to pull a chair to sit next to me and smile.

"You're like this again."

"What's wrong?"

"Look me in the eyes."

"..."

"Meena."

The moment she called my full name, I slowly lifted my gaze to meet hers. Those light brown eyes stared straight at me, unwavering. Just as I was about to lower my gaze and turn away, she cupped my face with both hands, forcing me to hold her gaze.

"Are you embarrassed in front of your wife?"

"Last night, we were both each other's wives. It's just that you happened to be a little more experienced than me."

"Hehe... That's true. You were so clumsy."

"And yet, you just kept going over and over."

"Well, that's because..." She was the one who pulled away and pretended not to know anything. This time, I was the one who grabbed her by the collar, pulling her in to meet my eyes.

"Have you done this before?"

"How should I put it...?"

"..."

"I've had a girlfriend before."

"I never knew that." My voice turned sharp, irritation bubbling up even though I couldn't quite place why. Seeing this, Wan Yiwa reached out and pinched my nose, gently pulling me to face her.

"You can't be jealous over the past. What's in the past stays in the past."

"I'm not jealous."

"Then what is it?"

"It's just... I never knew about this. And last night, I wasn't even prepared to have you be the one taking the lead like that."

I had always been eager to take the lead, fantasizing about being the one to make her moan and beg. But in the end, everything flipped—our roles completely reversed. Who else could I blame? I was utterly clueless, so awkward that she had to take charge. The more I thought about it, the more frustrated I became with my own inexperience.

"I think I get it now. You're mad because you were the clumsy one and feel like you lost, aren't you?"

"I didn't lose. I still made you come."

"Let's just say we both made each other happy. No need to overthink it."

"I don't care. Next time, I'll be the one taking the lead."

"I know you're a fast learner."

"Promise me."

"Promise what? That I'll let you take the lead next time? Fine. As long as we both enjoy it, it doesn't matter who starts first."

She reached out and scratched my chin playfully, like she was trying to coax me. At first, I was still sulking, but it felt so good that I leaned into her touch, letting myself relax before we headed to work together. This morning, I felt unusually refreshed, having slept soundly the night before. But my mind kept replaying what had happened yesterday—it was an entirely new experience, different from anything I had ever imagined. The lingering sensations of pleasure still sent shivers through me, making my heart race just from thinking about it. The numbers on my computer screen —buyer data and pricing proposals—barely registered in my mind.

**Knock, knock.**

The knock on the glass door from the secretary in front of the room made me look up. After being in a daze, a large bouquet of flowers from the delivery man arrived again. Normally, when a woman receives flowers, she is excited to see them. But when I saw that bouquet of flowers, the excitement in my heart suddenly turned into irritation. Wasn't Wasan going to stop doing this kind of thing again? Sometimes he sends flowers to me, sometimes he sends them to Wan Yiwa. Are you planning to take over two businesses at once?

"A flower delivery for you, ma'am."

"I can see that."

My irritated tone must have caught my secretary off guard because she hesitated, looking slightly uneasy. Realizing my mistake, I quickly adjusted my tone back to normal.

"Thank you."

I took the bouquet and stared at it coldly. It wasn't the flowers' fault. They had simply grown and fulfilled their purpose—to carry a message from one person to another. It was just that I didn't care for the sender. So, I stood there, holding them without any intention of doing anything with them— until my phone vibrated with a new message. It was from Wan Yiwa, and that single notification made me far happier than the sight of a massive bouquet ever could.

The advantage of someone who is already loved... is that they don't have to try, because they already have the other person's heart.

**Wan Yiwa :** Who sent you flowers?

**Meena :** Probably the same person as before.

**Wan Yiwa :** Did you read the card? What does it say?

**Meena :** I don't want to read it.

**Wan Yiwa :** Just read it. I want to know.

I looked at her messages, feeling mildly annoyed, before picking up the card that came with the flowers. But as soon as I read the message, I was surprised by both the words and the sender's name.

*To my beloved... my shy little kitten.*

*Yiwa*

After reading the message, I looked up and glanced outside the window, just in time to see the sender standing up from her seat and walking away. Seeing this, I looked back at the bouquet and couldn't help but smile brightly. Without hesitation, I followed her, tracing her steps until we ended up at the restroom. Now, it was just the two of us. Wan Yiwa arched an eyebrow at me before flashing a teasingly sweet smile.

"How is it? Do you like the flowers?"

"What made you send them?"

"I guess... last night left me feeling restless. I couldn't get it out of my head."

"Yeah... It's been stuck in my head all the time too."

"We're in the honeymoon phase, and honestly, I just can't get enough of you. Fair warning."

She didn't just say it—she reached out and slowly ran her fingers along my arm in a languid, teasing motion, as if expressing a deep longing. I watched her hand as it caressed me, and in response, I intertwined my fingers with hers, stroking them gently in return.

"At first, I was so pissed off when I saw the flowers."

"And now?"

"I'm grinning so wide right now."

"Come here."

She dragged me into one of the bathrooms at the far end before closing the door and locking it. I knew what she wanted to do. Even though I wanted to refuse, it seemed like the honeymoon phase were affecting me. In the morning, she was being naughty and didn't let me do anything, but now she was willing to do everything. Wan Yiwa pressed her lips to kiss me passionately. I kissed her back and let her touch me all over. My clothes were slowly removed but not off my body. My pants were pulled down to my hips. The sweet-faced person who seemed to be in a hurry immediately inserted her fingers into my body, but this time, it wasn't as difficult as before. It was as if my body was used to hers. She even told me that she wanted it too.

"I've never been like this before," Wan Yiwa whispered, slowly moving her fingers. "I think about you even when I can see you all the time."

"You're making me feel like I'm losing control of myself."

"Only with me, okay?"

"Who else would it be with?"

There was a loud voice outside, indicating that someone had come to use the bathroom. Wan Yiwa covered my mouth with one hand and flicked her fingers as if she wanted to torture me. I accepted it and tried my best not to make a sound. Everything was so fast, in less than three minutes, everything was at its destination. I panted, my hands clenched her shoulders tightly as if I wanted to support myself, I pressed my head against her forehead without saying anything until the people in the bathroom left and we just kept eyeing each other. For more than five minutes, those people came in and talked before leaving so that we could be free. I kept biting my lip while talking to her, feeling angry.

"You're so damn selfish."

"But you seemed to like it."

"This is not what we agreed on."

"Just this once, let me cheat a little," she smirked. "Think of it as repayment for the flowers."

"You got way more than the price of those flowers." I pulled her into a trembling embrace, still trying to steady myself. She hugged me back, pressing a soft kiss to my temple, as if to soothe me. Then, I asked, "Are you free this Sunday?"

"No."

"..."

"I'll be with my girlfriend."

She replied with a smile and turned to look at me, but I didn't dare to meet her eyes. I pulled her in for a hug in the same position and continued the conversation.

"Tell your girlfriend you have plans."

"What plans? Let me see first. If it's important, then I'll tell her."

"It's quite important."

"Like what?"

I paused for a moment with all my thoughts in my head, confused. The emotions I had just released, the confusion that I didn't know if I should do it or not, but I had already intended to make it clear since last night.

"I want you to meet my parents."

"..."

**"I want them to know that you're part of my life now."**

# Chapter 15: Family Time

Wan Yiwa was very cooperative. She didn't refuse at all when I told her I wanted to take her to meet my parents. To be honest, when I asked her, I was afraid she'd turn me down. She was the one who once said she didn't want anyone interfering in our lives. But now, here we were—walking side by side in the mall, carefully selecting an outfit that was formal and respectable for meeting elders. She said she wanted to make a good impression from the very first meeting.

"It should be white or cream. Which color do you think suits me better?"

"Cream, I guess."

I helped her choose, but honestly, I wasn't feeling entirely at ease with my own suggestion. Not every family could accept this kind of relationship as easily as hers did. Wan Yiwa, noticing that I was lost in thought,hung the clothes back up and tilted her head to look at me.

"What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing."

"You're spacing out."

"I was watching you pick clothes."

"Don't lie. I can tell. I know you better than I know myself now. If there's something on your mind, just say it."

"..."

"It's about meeting your family, isn't it?"

She saw right through me. I was stunned for a moment, unsure how to explain my own feelings to her. I was the one who suggested she meet my parents, yet now I wasn't so sure about it. I was terrified that the meeting wouldn't go well. That it wouldn't be beautiful. That it might end up hurting her.

"There are a lot of things I haven't told you yet. I... I'm scared."

Wan Yiwa continued browsing through the clothes as she spoke.

"You're afraid your parents won't accept us, aren't you?"

"You knew?"

"They don't think this is easy, you know. Other parents don't want their children to be different from society either. Why do you think they're choosing clothes?"

"To make a good impression, right?"

"Because clothes are a form of armor." She flipped through the price tag. "The more expensive it is, the more confident you are."

"Armor? How so?"

"When soldiers go to battle, they need proper armor to protect themselves from enemy weapons. And that armor also indicates their rank—whether they're a lowly soldier or a general. Right now, they're choosing their own armor for battle. Of course, they have to be a general."

"..."

"No matter what kind of weapons your parents throw at you, they won't be shaken because at least they have clothes to protect themselves. You don't have to think too much about it. Doing your duty to impress your parents is something they have to do."

"Mom's not so bad, but my dad...," I fidgeted with my fingers. "Maybe we shouldn't meet them at all. Just ignore it?"

"You've always been strong. Why are you so sensitive about this?"

"I can't stand to see you hurt." That was the truest feeling. Wan Yiwa smiled and reached out to pinch my cheek.

"Ow."

"I'm not that weak. Don't worry. If I could confess my love to you, there's nothing else to be afraid of."

"That much?" I laughed and looked at her with interest.

"Mhm. You don't know how much it meant when you agreed to be with me. Confessing to you was harder than enduring any criticism or ridicule. Besides," she reached for my hand without caring about the employees watching, "even if the whole world doesn't like me, as long as you do, that's enough. Meeting your parents is just announcing that we're together. If they don't like it, they can't do anything about us. Because you're not some weak-willed kid who blindly listens to your parents if they tell you to break up, right?"

"Right. You're absolutely right. I've already thought about this. Even if my parents force me to break up with you, I won't. I'm an adult now."

"That's all that matters. Now, help me pick an outfit. Something formal, easy to wear... and easy for you to take off."

"Idiot."

"Giggle."

"No matter what you wear, I can take it off."

"Just because you can take it off doesn't mean you'll get to do anything."

"You never let me do anything. This is another thing we need to talk about." I put on a serious expression, which made Wan Yiwa laugh adorably. "You're more serious about this than talking to your parents? You look so mad."

"If I weren't holding back, I'd be stomping my feet right now. You're so selfish in bed."

"I admit my fault."

"And what good is just admitting it?"

"I get to see you pout, my love." I was momentarily taken aback when she called me that. Seeing my flustered reaction, Wan Yiwa laughed. "You're so cute I don't even know how to love you anymore. From now on, I'll just call you 'my love.' My love, my love, my love."

"You idiot, you're speaking so loud... it's embarrassing."

"What's there to be embarrassed about? I love you, and I'm not ashamed."

"You're crazy."

I arranged to have dinner with my family on Sunday, only mentioning briefly that I had something important to tell them. As for Wan Yiwa, I gave her a rough briefing about my family—what my father was like, what my mother was like. She listened with a calm expression as I explained how my father was quite traditional and probably wouldn't accept this easily, especially given that we don't conform to conventional gender norms. "Dad once told Mek that if he was a transgender, he'd beat him up."

We were lying together on my favorite sofa, with Wan Yiwa resting her head on my lap. She simply pursed her lips, showing neither delight nor concern, and that made me quite worried about her. "And are you afraid of your dad beating you up?"

"No."

"Then that's the end of it." The sweet-faced woman reached up and gently scratched my chin. "As long as you're not afraid, there's nothing to worry about."

"But I'm worried that my dad will hurt you with his words."

"You act like I'm so fragile, like I've never been insulted before."

"Why aren't you worried at all? Normally, a son-in-law or daughter-in-law would be anxious when meeting their partner's parents, afraid that they won't be accepted."

"I may seem like this, but I'm very determined. If someone doesn't like me,

I'll try my best to make them accept me. The only thing I worry about is you —whether you'll be the one feeling afraid."

"You don't have to go if you don't want to."

"I have to. I need to repay you for gathering all your courage to meet my mom and confess about us. This time, it's my turn."

"What if it doesn't go well?"

"No one succeeds in everything right away. It takes time. But I'm confident in one thing... there's no adult who doesn't like me."

"My parents aren't like the adults you've met before."

"I can tell, considering the way you were raised—growing up so focused on studying, barely knowing anything about love. You must've been brought up under strict discipline. But I already told you, if I could win you over, then there's nothing in this world to be afraid of anymore."

I scratched her chin in return, and she let out a little *meow*, making me laugh.

"You're so adorable."

"Love me a lot, okay? Let's get through this together."

I smiled. "We'll get through this together."

I promised her, even though I was deeply anxious inside. I had never defied my father in my entire life. This was probably the hardest challenge yet, and I knew it wouldn't be easy. But seeing the determination in the person beside me gave me the strength to stand firm. No matter what happens, I'll stand by her side.

No one can break our love apart except for the two of us. The purpose of telling my family was simply to inform them—whether they accept it or not has nothing to do with us.

And then, the *D-Day* arrived. The restaurant I had reserved was in the Sukhumvit area, on the top floor of a hotel. I wanted to set a formal, serious atmosphere—elegant and refined—so that my parents would be forced to restrain themselves and not cause a scene. We rode there together, and throughout the journey, Wan Yiwa held my hand the entire time.

"It'll be okay. Believe that I won't waver, and I won't be hurt by anything. You have to remember this."

Because of her, I felt more confident, which eased a lot of the anxiety in my heart. Coming here was no different from stepping onto a battlefield. I had fought against hundreds of business competitors without ever feeling like I would lose. But this was the first time I was afraid—because this time, my opponent was someone close to me.

My own family.

After parking the car, we held hands as we walked to the restaurant, letting go only when the elevator arrived. Wan Yiwa, who had meticulously prepared herself today—from her outfit to her makeup—smiled at me.

"You have to smile too."

"Smiling isn't my personality."

"That's true. Then don't slouch." She reached out, placed her hand on my back, and pinched me lightly, making me jolt and straighten up. "Keep your head high. If your parents say anything harsh, just stay quiet—I can handle

it."

"How can I just endure it? I don't want to see you get hurt."

"Words can't hurt me. Let's go—we have an impression to make."

We nodded to each other and walked straight into the reserved restaurant.

My entire family had already arrived. When my mother waved at me, Methas, my younger brother, turned to look. He smiled at first, but his expression quickly froze in shock. He must have realized why I had arranged this dinner. He already knew who I had brought with me and what kind of relationship we had.

Alright. Time for the big meeting. We both pressed our hands together in greeting (*wai*) to my parents. Hwanyiwa greeted Methas with a smile, showing no sign of fear.

"Hello, Nong Mek."

"He... Hello"

My father looked at Wan Yiwa with curiosity, wondering why she was with me when I had said this was supposed to be a family dinner. But he didn't say anything and instead returned her greeting with a polite smile after receiving her *wai*. I pulled out a chair for Wan Yiwa, but she placed a hand on mine and shook her head, as if to say, *It's okay. I can handle this myself.* So, I let it be and pulled out my own chair instead.

"And who is this? She's gorgeous."

"I'm Wan Yiwa," she introduced herself in the sweetest, most polite voice— one that could make any elder adore her. And sure enough, my mother smiled at her with fondness.

"When did you start having friends?" Mom teased me, knowing full well that I rarely socialized. During my school years, I never brought anyone home or visited anyone else's house. So, she couldn't help but ask.

"It's been a while now."

"You're actually a normal person like everyone else? What a relief!" Mom chuckled and waved a hand in amusement. "Just kidding. My daughter is adorable."

I didn't laugh—because that's just not the type of person I am. But Wan Yiwa, on the other hand, found it amusing and immediately joined the conversation.

"Really? You don't have any friends at all?"

I shot her a playful glare for siding with my mom so easily, then shrugged.

"I'm just selective. You should be proud... Mek, will you stop shaking your leg already? The whole table is shaking." I turned to scold my younger brother, who had been nervously bouncing his leg under the table like an earthquake was happening. Even though he was an adult, he still acted like a child when he was anxious.

"Sorry."

"Let's order food. I'm hungry," Dad announced.

"I thought you had already ordered. Go ahead."

We called the waiter and placed our orders. After that, silence settled over the table as no one seemed to know what to talk about. I was trying to find the right moment to bring up the topic, but thankfully, Mom spoke up first.

"What's the occasion? Inviting us to dinner like this? You're usually too busy with work every single day. This is a surprise."

"I'm just in a good mood."

"Something good happened?"

"I have a partner now."

The table shook again as Methas anxiously bounced his leg and brought a hand to his mouth to bite his nails. Dad, noticing his son's odd behavior, was the one to scold him this time. His firm and authoritative voice filled the room, marking the first time Wan Yiwa got to witness his commanding presence.

"Stop acting like a child! Show some manners!"

Methas flinched at the reprimand and immediately froze like a statue. The intensity of Dad's tone sent a ripple of unease through me as well. Noticing this, Wan Yiwa calmly reached over, placed a hand on my thigh, and gave me a reassuring smile. She didn't seem the least bit shaken. Then, she turned to my brother and laughed lightly.

"Calm down, Nong Mek."

"Y-Yes..."

"What did you just say? You have a partner?" Mom asked excitedly.

I nodded instead of answering with words and then turned to meet Dad's gaze.

"Yes, I have a partner. That's why I wanted to tell everyone today."

"And who is your partner? Where is he from? Who are his parents?"

Mom, who was eager for me to settle down—desperate to have grandchildren to hold—pressed on with curiosity.

Dad, on the other hand, locked eyes with me as if he had already sensed something. Then, he shifted his gaze to Wan Yiwa, narrowing his eyes like a snake ready to strike.

"He's just an ordinary person," I replied. "We get along well. We've liked each other since our school days."

"And you," Dad turned to Wan Yiwa, "where did you study?" Wan Yiwa smiled broadly, as if she was subtly confirming something.

"The same school as Meein," she replied.

Dad fell silent. Mom, still unaware of the situation, continued questioning.

"And who is he? Just tell me his name."

I turned to look at Wan Yiwa and gave her a nervous smile before answering.

"My partner name is Wan Yiwa... The person sitting right next to me."

# Chapter 16: Joy

Dad... is the strictest person in the house.

I remember when I was a child, he was the one who tutored me and made sure I solved ten math problems a day. He would personally select the problems for me each day. Because of that, no matter how difficult math was in school, I could always solve it. I started seeing math as a game rather than just an academic subject. Wherever I took an exam, I would always bring home trophies, scholarships, or certificates to hang on our wall. My reward was Dad's smile, which reassured me that he still loved me.

Aside from enforcing rules and discipline, Dad was also the one who set all the household regulations—what could or couldn't be done, curfews that required me to be home by five in the evening, skirts that couldn't be above the knee. He taught me how to choose my friends. Growing up under his rules, I never realized that it was a form of control. It seeped into every fiber of my being, making me believe that everything I did was the right thing. The boundaries he set for me—if I ever stepped outside of them, I feared he would stop loving me.

And Dad despised same-sex relationships. When Methas was younger, he once wore Mom's high heels to imitate her. The moment Dad saw, he immediately whipped him with a cane until he cried out in pain. He then drilled these words into his ears:

"If you ever turn out to be a kathoey/Gay, I will stomp you to death."

Since that day, Methas never dared to play with Mom's shoes again. A child's innocent imagination was crushed before it even had the chance to take shape. But Dad never had to impose such rules on me because I had never given him any reason to worry about my personal choices. And I never thought that this day would come.

The day I would have to tell him and Mom that...

"My girlfriend's name is Wan Yiwa... The person sitting right next to me."

My introduction of Wan Yiwa was met with utter silence at the dining table. The only sound filling the air was the jazz music playing softly in the restaurant. My heart pounded fiercely, but I remained resolute. I had prepared myself for this moment, knowing full well what I was about to face. Still, I couldn't help feeling the immense pressure and fear of what would happen next.

Dad, who had remained silent for a long time, stared at me with piercing, furious eyes. He had never accepted this kind of thing before. With Methas, he never had any expectations. But for me the daughter he had raised so carefully this was something he had never imagined. His eyes burned with rage. His voice dropped into a low, commanding tone as he changed the way he addressed me using a pronoun he had never used before.

"Say that again."

"You."

Hearing that word directed at me for the first time felt like a knife slicing through my heart. I licked my lips, clenched my hands tightly under the table, trembling with fear. Sweat trickled down my back, despite the cool air conditioning in the restaurant.

"Wan Yiwa is my girlfriend," I repeated.

"A girlfriend... who is a woman?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure you want this?"

"Yes."

**BANG!**

Father slammed his hand on the table so hard it shook. Methas, already anxious about this whole situation, jumped to his feet and ran to crouch behind Mother, seeking refuge. I remained still. Wan Yiwa's hand wrapped around mine, her fingers gently patting the back of my hand. She was calm composed, as if fully prepared for this moment.

"You know I despise this kind of thing, and yet you still went through with it?"

"Yes."

"So suddenly, you've decided to follow some ridiculous trend like those people protesting for LGBTQ rights? Are you out of your mind?"

"I'm not out of my mind. I've thought this through. That's why I invited you and Mother to dinner. I want my family to know what I'm doing." I looked at my father. Suddenly, I had a huge power from within me like someone who wanted to win. "This is an announcement, not a request for permission."

"How dare you be so bold and strong to do something I hate and then brazenly say such a thing? Aren't you ashamed of being transgender?"

"I wasn't at first. But now I am."

Because the restaurant staff were now watching our table with curiosity.

"Good. You should be ashamed."

"I'm ashamed that you're being this loud and narrow-minded."

"Meena!"

Dad calling my real name means he's really angry. His blood is pumping and his face is red with anger. Wan Yiwa, who had been sitting quietly for a long time, squeezed my hand and smiled at my dad calmly.

"Father"

"I'm not your father!"

Father had lost all regard for decorum. He didn't care about appearances anymore—not about who was watching, not about Wan Yiwa, not even about keeping his own dignity intact.

"I will call you 'Uncle' then... But please, don't blame Meena. If you're going to blame someone, blame me I was the one who confessed to her

first."

"I knew it! My daughter would never have come up with something like this on her own. You planted these twisted ideas in her head, making her argue with her father when she'd never done so before!"

"I'm truly sorry, Uncle," Wan Yiwa said, pressing her palms together in apology toward my parents. At that moment, my restrained anger erupted.

"Why are you apologizing to them? This isn't your fault. We love each other. We came here today to tell them, not to ask for permission. If they don't accept it, that's their problem. Our love is ours to deal with."

"You—!"

Dad stood up, raising his hand as if ready to strike me from across the table. But Mom quickly got up and grabbed his arm.

"Dear... people are watching."

"Let them watch! I can't stand listening to these two any longer. Nature created men and women to love each other. But these two are going against nature! How will humanity continue if people keep breaking the rules like this?"

"So, what? Infertile people shouldn't exist either?" I shot back, standing up and pulling the napkin from my lap. "You always think you're the only one who's right and never care what anyone else thinks!"

"Oh? So now you're saying you're not my daughter anymore?"

"If you're going to be like this, then I'm ready to be a stranger to you."

"Come on, Meena. We came here to talk to them properly," Wan Yiwa tried to calm me down, but I turned to her, my self-control slipping.

"Is this what you call 'talking properly'? He just raised his hand to hit me!" I turned back to my father. "Think whatever you want, Dad. Call me rebellious if you like. But I've already achieved everything I set out to do. I don't need this family anymore. I don't need to ask for your permission ever again. The only reason I came here today was out of respect—to let my family know how I live my life, because I still thought of myself as a daughter and a sister."

"If I'd known you were going to say this today, I wouldn't have come to see you at all."

"Then believe me when I say this will be the last day you ever see me... the last day you'll ever see us."

At that moment, I had become the rebellious daughter—the defiant child. I had never once argued with my father before. But I did it today, just to protect someone I love. Today's meeting with Wan Yiwa wasn't as easy as the day I met her mother. Our families were raised differently. We grew up in different worlds. One family accepted their child for who they were. The other refused to accept it at all.

And I'm the unfortunate one.

"Fine! If we never see each other again, so be it! And if I find out that anyone in this house dares to meet with Meena, they can get the hell out too!"

Dad declared fiercely. The restaurant was on the verge of turning into a battlefield. Luckily, there were no other guests today, as I had anticipated things would get intense—but I never imagined he would be shouting such crude words.

"Let's go, Yiwa. We can't talk to them anymore."

"You people distort this world! You're all sick in the head!"

I was about to walk away, stopped my legs and clenched my fists before turning to look Dad in the eye.

"Before you judge others, take a good look in the mirror first."

"You little—!" Dad was about to rush forward, but Methas stood in front of him first, wanting to help me as much as possible.

"You can't do this, Dad!"

"You're not my child anymore. Don't ever call me 'Dad' again."

"If that's what you say... then so be it. Let's go home, Piti."

"Argh!!!"

Dad's furious roar echoed behind us as I held Wan Yiwa's hand and walked away. No one saw the tears brimming in my eyes, the way I was trembling on the verge of breaking down. They were tears of fear, of defiance— because I knew I wasn't wrong—and of sorrow, because I had just argued with my parents in the most ungrateful way.

On the way back, as I sat in the car, I slammed my fists against the steering wheel before starting the engine, seething with frustration.

"Shouldn't it be me who should be angry?" Wan Yiwa, who had been by my side the whole time, didn't show any sign of sadness, or she was trying to be strong so that I wouldn't feel any worse.

"I'm mad at myself for not throwing a wad of cash on the table before walking out. How could I forget such a dramatic exit?"

"Oh, you!" She laughed, but my anger only flared up more.

"What's so funny? This isn't a joke! That wasn't nearly satisfying enough!"

"The more aggressive you are, the more people will think you're really as rebellious as your dad says."

"I *am* rebellious, just like he said. If I were still relying on his money like when I was in school, I wouldn't have dared to do this."

"Because you've grown up—it's not about being rebellious or anything... I don't blame you for this. But I do blame you for not letting me say anything to your parents."

"I had to protect you. Dad went too far. He didn't respect you at all... didn't even spare your dignity." I looked at her as tears unexpectedly welled up and rolled down my cheeks. I quickly wiped them away with my fingers. "I'm sorry on behalf of my family that you had to go through this. I should've listened to you from the start—that love should just be between the two of us. If we had just kept our relationship a secret, none of this would've happened."

"You just wanted to respect me, and I wanted to respect you too. Looking on the bright side, now both our families know about our relationship. From now on, we won't have to hide anymore." She reached out, tucking a strand of my hair behind my ear before giving my cheek a playful squeeze. "Crybaby."

"I'm not... It's just that I feel this tightness in my chest. I've never felt the urge to protect anything as much as this before. You might think I was being ungrateful and end up not liking me anymore."

"You just got too heated. I know how feisty you are. Your eyes always give you away. Your dad probably saw it too—that's why he tried to overpower you with his voice."

"Aren't you scared?"

"Heh. Not at all. No matter how strict your dad is, he can't do anything to me. You're the one who's overprotective. Come here."

"What?"

"Come hug me."

Wan Yiwa, who had already fastened her seatbelt, unbuckled it and wiggled her finger, motioning me to come closer. I pursed my lips stubbornly for a moment, but I didn't want her to wait too long. So, I threw myself into her arms. And just like that, all the pain, all the overwhelming fear, came rushing out the moment I was embraced.

"Hic... I'm sorry for making you go through this. Please don't hate me. Don't hate my family."

"Are you crazy? I love you. That means I have to love your family too— just like how you love me and love my mom."

"But my dad is nothing like your mom."

"Then I'll make your dad love me."

"That's impossible."

"If I can't do it today, I'll do it tomorrow. I refuse to believe that I won't be able to change his mind for the rest of my life."

"For the rest of your life?"

"Because I'm going to love you for as long as I live."

"You're ridiculous—wahhh."

I cried like a little kid on her shoulder after acting tough in the restaurant for so long. The vulnerability I had hidden away was now fully exposed before Wan Yiwa. The person who always appeared strong in front of employees, who carried herself with confidence and pride, had now turned into a small, helpless kitten in her arms.

"And I'll love you forever, too."

Even though Wan Yiwa seemed unaffected, I could tell that, deep down, she probably wasn't feeling okay. Right now, we were soaking in a jacuzzi, with me lying on top of her. Our bare bodies were submerged beneath the frothy bubbles created by the showerhead. Our smooth skin pressed against each other under the water. I rested my head against her chest, staring blankly as my thoughts drifted, while soft music played from my phone. I had no idea what the lyrics meant since I wasn't paying attention, but the melody was pleasant.

"You don't have to pretend you're not feeling anything, Yiwa."

"Hmm?"

"You always tell me that if something's on my mind, I should just say it. So, I want you to be honest with me too... Today must have been really upsetting for you. I want to share some of your pain."

She fell silent for a moment before letting out a deep sigh.

"Saying it didn't bother me at all would be a lie... and I know you'd keep pressing me until I admitted it. So... yeah, I've been thinking about it a bit."

"A bit? That's an understatement."

"Alright, maybe more than a bit. I've been thinking about how to make your father soften his heart. He doesn't have to accept us completely, but at the very least, I don't want him to hate you."

Even now, she was still worrying about me. I ran my hand along her thigh underwater, hoping to comfort her—but it seemed to ignite something else instead, making the person beneath me burn like fire.

"Even in this, you're still worried about me."

"I don't want you and your father to fight." She shifted her legs slightly, reacting to my touch on her hips, and closed her eyes as if it soothed her. "You and your dad had a pretty intense argument today. I don't want to be the reason for it."

"The reason is my father, not you." I turned over, lying on my stomach, and began to press soft kisses all over her face, as if trying to kiss away all her worries. "You hardly did anything at all."

"Right now, I'm hardly doing anything."

"You don't have to do anything at all. I will comfort you."

My hand went to the center of her body and kneaded it like she used to. The sweet-faced one groaned, "Hmm," wanting to tell me that I was doing the right thing and that it was a good time.

"You're really getting into it now."

"I haven't fucked you yet."

"Then do it already."

My fingers slowly inserted under her body and moved slowly. Wan Yiwa's chin twitched in response and used both arms to squeeze my shoulders.

"Hmm.

Is it because of the accumulated stress or the atmosphere underwater that made her so easily give in? I moved my hand faster and hooked inside and flicked something, causing her body to tremble. Humph! Wan Yiwa forgot to look at me and stared with sparkling eyes as if she had seen something wonderful. I smiled slyly and increased the pace. Her eyebrows furrowed. Her mouth groaned, muffled, as everything was about to reach its destination. The doorbell rang, interrupting.

Damn... This is not the time.

"Someone's here," she said, sounding reluctant to let me go. "You should... check."

"Finish it first."

"But..."

I quickened my pace, trying to catch up. Wan Yiwa lifted a hand to cover her mouth, her body responding rapidly beneath the water. She moved in sync with my rhythm, edging closer to that peak before suddenly throwing her arms around me tightly. Even though she had initially told me to go check, it seemed like she wanted to hold onto something—anything— before she drowned completely.

"Just a moment..."

"I'm not in a hurry."

"Hurry up, someone's waiting... but just give me a moment."

She hugged me tightly, her legs wrapped around my waist like a coiling snake. Her entire body tensed as she rested her head against my neck and placed a light kiss there. "You did well today."

"I learned from you."

"Go see who's at the door."

"Hmm."

I got up from the water, put on a robe, and walked out without wearing anything underneath, grabbing only a towel. My intention was simply to check who had come. However, the moment I opened the door, I found my mother standing there, staring at me with a displeased expression.

"Why did you take so long? I knocked and rang the doorbell. What were you doing?"

"Taking a bath."

As I answered, I felt a little guilty because I hadn't just been taking a bath. My face felt so flushed that I didn't even need a mirror to know I was blushing hard.

"I have something to discuss with you."

She pushed her way into the room just as Wan Yiwa walked out, also wearing a robe.

"Who was it?"

She froze upon seeing my mother, who was equally shocked by our matching robes. They stood facing each other, locking eyes, but the first to look away was Wan Yiwa probably feeling just as awkward as I was. The identical robes made it painfully obvious that we had just come out of the shower together, and it didn't take much imagination to guess what had happened.

"You two seem to be enjoying yourselves while the house is in chaos."

"Mom, you start picking a fight the moment you arrive?"

"Go get dressed. I have something to discuss... both of you!"

# Chapter 17: Overcoming

My mother... Savitree Pathanadechachoke. A woman who was married off in an arranged marriage by her parents to meet my father.

For as long as I can remember, my mother has never been her own person. Whatever my father said, she followed. She was quite submissive and deeply believed that whatever my father said was always right. She never had a boyfriend because she lived under the strict guidance of her own parents, believing that their words were always correct. She carried this belief into her marriage as well. When my father saw being queer as wrong or unnatural, my mother agreed without question. She never opposed, never had her own thoughts. Whatever he said, she went along with it. I grew up in a household where both my parents shared the same beliefs—not because they truly did, but because my mother never dared to challenge my father.

And the fact that my mother was here today meant only one thing—she was here on my father's orders.

"What made you become like this?"

She opened the conversation once we had both settled down on the couch. She had come alone today, without Methas, probably wanting a private discussion. Or maybe she thought my younger brother was too young to understand. I stared into her eyes, ready to stand my ground.

I was exhausted from the long day and had only truly relaxed during my shower. I hadn't expected to have another battle waiting for me late at night.

"I'm just being myself, Mom. I just never showed you this side before."

"You've always been yourself."

"That was a different version of myself. The one who wanted to prove to you and Dad how well I could behave, how obedient I could be."

As I spoke, I reached for Wan Yiwa's hand. She flinched slightly and tried to pull away, but I held her hand tightly.

"And this is another version of myself that you and Dad need to see. I want to show you this side too."

"The side that likes women?"

"Yes."

"Even though you know your father despises this kind of thing, you still do it? No... This isn't the Meena I raised. You've changed because of someone."

My mother shot a sharp glance at Wan Yiwa, as if blaming her. But I shook my head.

"No, Mom. No one changed me. I've been this way since I can remember. She just made me realize what I truly want. And she came into my life at the right moment... The moment when I could finally walk on my own, without relying on you and Dad, without becoming a burden on your expectations."

"How is this not a burden? Meena... you've never been disrespectful to your father before."

She was right. Even on the way home, I kept replaying everything I had said to my father, feeling guilty about how harsh I had been. But if I hadn't done it, he would've kept using his authority to suppress me. I would never have been able to protect what I love—especially Wan Yiwa.

I would protect this love with my life.

"I had to be firm. If I kept backing down, I would never get what I want...

Just like when I started my fitness equipment business. No one in the family supported me, but I pushed through on my own. And I proved to everyone that I was right."

"Exactly like your father said—you've grown rebellious."

"You could say that."

"Still have the nerve to argue with me, huh?"

Mom's face showed clear disapproval. Wan Yiwa reached out to gently rub my back in comfort. She knew that she couldn't say much in this conversation between mother and daughter. If she spoke up, things would escalate—just like when my father lashed out at her.

So she chose silence.

"Does it really upset you that much that I love a woman?"

"How could I possibly be happy about my daughter not ending up with a man?"

"And how is being with a man better than being with a woman?"

"Because it's natural!" Mom insisted, her mind closed to any other perspective. "Men and women were created to be together! Otherwise, how would families continue? We wouldn't have future generations!"

"If having kids is such a big deal, then I'll adopt one."

"It's not just about having a child. I want grandchildren—my own bloodline."

"Then I'll do IVF."

"And the child would have no father?"

"Why does everything always have to be done the 'right' way, Mom?" My frustration was building. "Family doesn't always mean a man and a woman.

Some married couples can't even have children. What about men who are infertile? Are they still considered family?"

Mom faltered, struggling to find a counterargument.

"What if I were infertile? Would that mean I can't have a family either?"

"I don't want to argue anymore. What I want is for you to date a man, get married, and have children—not to walk around happily with a woman, letting people look at you with pity."

"That's what you want, Mom. But not me. I want to be with a woman, and I don't want to have children. Please respect my decision."

"I won't listen!"

"Then there's nothing I can do to help you."

This was the second time I had defied her. Today, my parents' so-called "good child" had become ungrateful, ready to be condemned to hell for eternity. But no matter what, I wasn't going to change my mind. I would hold on to what I believed in. I would love who I loved, and I would choose that person.

My parents had the right to raise me, to provide me with a good education, to make me study whatever they wanted—but not this.

I refused!

"We're getting nowhere with this conversation today. Let's talk again when we're in a better mood, when we're both more willing to listen... Just the two of us."

Mom glanced at Wan Yiwa without even acknowledging her presence before turning toward the door. I followed her, watching as she reached for the handle.

Before she left, I spoke one last time, reinforcing my stance.

"Right now, I'm in a great mood because I'm happy. So this conversation was already as reasonable as it could be. Talking about it again later will only end with the same discussion. You don't need to try."

She simply shot me a sharp look before closing the door behind her.

I stood there, staring at the closed door, letting out a long sigh. The sweetfaced woman beside me, who had been by my side the entire time, wrapped her arms around me from behind—offering comfort, letting me know she was still here.

"Calm down, love. You're both upset right now. Let's talk to her again when she's in a better state of mind."

"It'll end the same way. My whole family is narrow-minded—you've seen it yourself."

"I don't believe that if water drips onto a rock every day, the rock will never feel anything."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean... I'll make your family accept me. For your peace of mind and for mine. Let's fight for this together."

"We could just live on our own, you know. We don't need anyone else."

"But the people we're talking about are your parents. On holidays or special occasions, wouldn't you want to go home and take me with you to celebrate together? On our wedding day, wouldn't you want your mom and dad there to share in our happiness?"

"Wedding?" I looked at her in surprise. "I thought you didn't care about that kind of thing."

"At first, I didn't." She glanced at the closed door, determination gleaming in her eyes.

"But now, I do."

Since that day, Wan Yiwa had been engrossed in writing something by herself. Sometimes, she looked deep in thought; other times, she seemed lost in a daze before jotting something down again. Her changed behavior had become another mystery to me.

She kept asking me about my mother—what she liked to eat, her daily routines. When I told her everything I had observed about my family since childhood, she wrote it all down. Then, she started waking up at 4:30 AM every day, leaving the room, and returning just before 6 AM to shower and get ready.

"Where exactly have you been going?"

Finally, I couldn't hold back anymore. On the fourth morning, when she returned at six, her face looked noticeably brighter than in the past few days. She shrugged casually, as if it was nothing important.

"Just out for a walk. Bangkok in the early morning has nice air, even with a mask on."

"You could just go to the gym for that."

"It's not the same vibe."

"You know I'm just as good at catching your lies as you are at reading my thoughts. Don't lie."

I reached out and grabbed her arm, making her turn to look at me. Wan Yiwa pressed her lips together, debating whether to tell me or not, before letting out a deep sigh.

"Fine, I went to see your mother."

"Huh?"

"I went to the market with her."

What she said shocked me even more than a sleep paralysis episode. The sweet-faced woman had been disappearing at dawn every day, just to meet my mother and go grocery shopping with her.

To prove it, she handed me a well-organized notebook filled with her plans.

"You told me your mother insists on doing the grocery shopping herself near your house. So I figured your family probably doesn't have any housekeepers, even though her daughter is filthy rich."

"That's true." I looked at her, stunned by her accurate guess. My father had tried hiring maids before, but they all quit within a day because they couldn't tolerate him. Besides, he never liked having strangers in the house for too long. Since then, as far back as I could remember, we had never had a housekeeper again.

"So I thought, before winning over your father, I should win over your mother first—by becoming her assistant and carrying her groceries. I waited near your neighborhood market every morning, and sure enough, I found her."

"And she actually let you help carry her things?"

"Not at all. She was downright disgusted by it."

"Oh..."

"But today was the first time I managed to snatch something from her hands to carry. That's progress. From what I've seen, she doesn't truly hate me— she's just following your father's lead. If I can win her over, that's already one hurdle cleared." She beamed at me, cheerful as ever.

Looking at her, I felt an overwhelming gratitude that made me want to cry.

"You don't have to do this, you know. Even if you don't get along with anyone in my family, I wouldn't care."

"But you love them. You worry about them. Even when you spoke harshly to your father, you felt guilty all day. This is the right thing to do. If I can't win over your father, at least let me start with your mother, so you'll have some peace of mind... Today, I only managed to carry some bags without saying a word, but soon, we'll have a conversation. I told you—I'm good at dealing with adults."

I pulled her into a tight hug, deeply moved by all her efforts. She hugged me back, gently rubbing my back as if she knew exactly how I felt.

"Thank you... for trying so hard. You really don't have to. I understand that my family is like this."

"I'm not even trying hard. I just don't believe people can truly hate someone at first sight. They need to experience and understand them first. Your mother doesn't actually hate me. Give me a week—I bet she'll like me for sure."

"You sound so confident."

"But there's one problem... something I can't give you." Wan Yiwa sighed, still holding me.

"What is it?"

"A child. I can't give you a child."

For someone who always seemed carefree, in the end, she had been thinking about it all along. I held her tighter, rubbing her back in return, offering comfort.

"It doesn't matter. I can't give you a child or an heir either."

"But your parents—"

"We'll give them what we can."

"Actually... I do have an idea." She hesitated. "But never mind."

"What? Tell me."

"It's silly. Let's just take things one step at a time. When we reach that climax, we'll solve the problem together. I have some plans in mind, but now isn't the time." She pulled away and tapped my nose. "Don't ask, because I'm not telling. Alright, that's enough comforting for now—I'm going to shower and get ready. You should too. We have to go to the warehouse today, right? Let's focus on making money so we can afford to raise kids someday."

With that, she walked off to the bathroom.

I could only watch her retreating figure, tilting my head in thought at her mention of "kids"—as if it were something that could actually happen.

Wan Yiwa... what exactly are you planning?

# Chapter 18: An Impossible Agreement

It had been two weeks since Wan Yiwa's daily routine had changed. Every day, she woke up at 4 AM and rushed out of the condo to wait for my mother at the market. By the time she returned, it was around six in the morning. Every time she came back, she acted as if nothing had happened. I always asked for updates about my mother, but she would only shrug.

"There's nothing to tell."

"It's been two weeks now. Nothing at all?"

"These things take time."

She dodged the conversation by heading into the shower. The sound of the water running made me restless, and I couldn't help but follow her inside. Normally, Wan Yiwa never locked the bathroom door, just in case I needed to use it. But today, I decided to undress and join her under the shower. The hot water was almost scalding, making me yelp. The sweet-faced woman chuckled at my reaction.

"Jumping in like that, of course, it's hot."

"It's fine. My body will adjust." I gritted my teeth and slowly stepped into the stream. Soon, I grew accustomed to the heat and began washing her back with soap as I spoke. "You don't have to go this far."

"Go this far for what? Taking a hot shower?"

"No, I mean waiting for my mom at the market. If someone doesn't like you, no matter what you do, they still won't like you."

"Your mom doesn't hate me. At least she lets me carry the groceries now." "She just sees you as a servant. It doesn't mean she cares about you."

"Well, at least she's starting to look at me. My efforts aren't completely in vain."

"Yiwa," I turned her around to face me under the warm cascade. "Enough."

"Hm?"

"You don't have to do anything else. I don't care what my parents think.

We'll just love each other like this without needing anyone's approval. You've done enough, and I see it. If others don't, so be it."

"You do realize that 'others' are your parents, right? Don't make me give up now. I've come this far. Besides, today I casually mentioned that you only eat takeout because I can't cook."

"And?"

"So, I asked your mom to teach me how to cook."

"And what did she say?"

"She didn't say anything. Just shopped in silence like usual."

I sighed. She was determined to win my mother's approval, even though my mother wouldn't even acknowledge her existence. Suddenly, a strange thought crossed my mind.

"Why did you even fall for me?"

"What do you mean?"

"There are so many people who would love to be with you... Like Wasan. If you had given him a chance, you wouldn't have to wake up at 4 AM to please an old lady like my mom—Ouch! Why did you pinch me?"

She pinched my stomach, making me arch in pain. Her expression showed clear displeasure.

"Why are you bringing up Wasan? He wasn't just courting me, you know. He liked you too. Why didn't you go for him?"

"Because I don't like anyone but you."

"Well, I don't like anyone but you either. Same reason."

I looked at her with a smile, touched by her words, and pulled her into a hug beneath the flowing water. What started as a simple embrace gradually turned into something more—our wet bodies sliding against each other, warmth spreading between us, desire igniting in the misty air.

"Actually, 4 AM is a good time for exercise," I suggested playfully.

The sweet-faced woman, clearly in agreement, wrapped her arms around my neck and pulled me down for a kiss.

"A great time to make some noise too. I need to de-stress from all these early mornings."

The two of us comforted each other under the warm water while groaning at each other, wanting to exchange the love and pain that she carried but didn't share much because she was afraid that I would be troubled too. I gave in to her desire to win. How long do I have to wake up at 4 am for Mom to give in? If Mom doesn't feel like being on good terms with Wan Yiwa, doesn't she have to wake up at 4 am all the time?

What will happen if two stubborn people meet?

It had been over a month now. Wan Yiwa continued waking up early, driving my car to the market to see my mother and help her shop. I didn't know exactly what happened between them at the market, but I knew my mother was too hard-headed. Maybe I needed to talk to her myself.

So today, while pretending to be busy at work, I decided to call her.

"Mom, it's me."

["I know. Your number is right there on the screen. What's the matter? Surely, you're not calling about Wan Yiwa."]

My mother had already guessed, making me sigh.

"It's been a month now, Mom. Have you at least talked to her properly?"

["No."]

Her blunt answer made me pinch the bridge of my nose.

"You really haven't spoken to her at all?"

["Nope."]

"Mom, do you hate Yiwa?"

["Not really. I just don't think she's suitable for you. That's why I don't want to engage too much. But that girl keeps coming every day, even when I ignore her. It's annoying."]

"If she annoys you so much, why don't you just tell her off?"

There was a pause, as if she were thinking.

["What are you really calling for?"]

"I know she'll never win you or Dad over. You always side with Dad's opinions, so no matter what she does, you'll never accept her. But I see her waking up at 4 AM every day just to try and win you over, and I feel sorry for her. Our condo and the market aren't even close. It would be better if you just outright rejected her and told her to stop."

["Oh, so you're calling to defend your girlfriend? Now I'm even more determined to keep making her come to the market. Watching her wake up early every day is amusing."]

"Mom!"

["If you two really want to be together, then you have to endure some obstacles. Do you think life is that easy?"]

"I know it's not easy, which is why I'd rather not try anymore. If you won't accept our relationship, fine. I just won't bother with it anymore."

["So, are you planning to cut us off from your life?"]

"You cut us off first."

The tension between us grew over the phone. My mother was silent for a while before changing the subject.

["I heard you only eat takeout these days. That Wan Yiwa can't cook at all?"]

"After work, we're both exhausted. It's too much to expect her to cook. We just eat whatever's convenient."

["When you lived at home, I cooked for you every day. But now you rely on takeout? Your girlfriend is useless. I thought dating a woman meant you'd at least get a housewife."]

"If I were dating a man, I'd be the one expected to cook. If you can't expect me to do that, don't expect it from someone else's daughter either."

["You never used to talk back like this."]

"The situation forced me to toughen up."

["Do you love her that much?"]

Out of nowhere, my mom asked the most important question, making my face heat up. I fiddled with my desk, biting my lip, before nodding—though she couldn't see.

"Yes, I love her very much. Even if it's hard for you to hear, please bear with it. Nothing can change that now."

["Then I have nothing more to say."]

She ended the call.

I stared at my phone before sighing, looking out the office window. Wan Yiwa was busy with her work as the IT department's deputy manager, focused and diligent.

I had expected her to give up eventually, but... would that day ever come?

What happens when two stubborn people collide?

"What should we order for dinner today?"

Wan Yiwa, who asked me this as we got into the elevator to return to our apartment, was scrolling through her phone, trying to decide what to eat for dinner. I rolled my eyes slightly and thought about what I was craving today.

"Pad Thai Fai Ta Lu."

"You always eat expensive stuff."

"It's Michelin-starred."

"That's exactly my point. If you weren't rich, you'd be broke by now."

"So, am I getting my Pad Thai or not?"

"You'll get it. I'm just saying—you eat too expensively. If you weren't the CEO but just a regular salaried employee like me, you'd be starving at the end of every month."

I laughed at Wan Yiwa's playful complaint until the elevator reached our floor. After entering the door code and stepping into our apartment, the aroma of food filled the air. The air conditioning, which I thought had been turned off before we left, hit my skin with a refreshing chill.

Wan Yiwa and I exchanged glances before turning toward the source of the scent—my mother, who was in the kitchen surrounded by an abundance of vegetables laid out on the table.

"You're finally back. I've been waiting."

"Hello, big sis. Hello, Yiwa."

Methas, who had come along, suddenly popped up from behind the couch as if he had been playing hide and seek. I stared at my mother and younger brother in confusion.

"How did you guys get in?"

"You gave Mom a keycard, remember? She can come in anytime. Special privileges." My younger brother chirped, while my mother stood with her arms crossed and gestured with a finger.

"Wan Yiwa."

"Y-Yes?"

"Come here."

My mother's command made Wan Yiwa glance at me nervously before hesitantly stepping toward her. She looked unsure, not knowing what was about to happen. For all she knew, that pot of boiling water on the stove could be poured right over her head. No one could predict my mother's thoughts.

I stood on guard, watching my mother carefully in case anything happened. She glanced at me and smirked.

"What? Are you afraid I'll stab your girlfriend?"

"I'm more afraid you'll pour that boiling water on her."

"Talking back again. The reason I'm here is because I heard you only eat takeout."

She turned to look at Wan Yiwa with a sharp gaze.

"You two live together, so you should at least learn to cook. A CEO doesn't have time to cook for themselves, but at the very least, their 'partner' should take care of them."

Lately, my mother had been emphasizing the word "partner" more and more, almost as if she had accepted it—or at least realized she couldn't change my mind anymore.

"I came today to teach you how to cook," she told Wan Yiwa. "So you don't have to order takeout all the time. I'll teach you the first dish today."

The words "first dish" implied there would be more lessons to come. Wan Yiwa turned to look at me with an expression of deep emotion, as if all her efforts had finally paid off. I nodded at her encouragingly, even though my mother still wore a stern expression.

"Pay attention. I'm only teaching this once. If you don't remember, I won't repeat it."

"Yes, ma'am."

With that, Wan Yiwa was led into the kitchen with my mother, while I made my way to my favorite couch and sat down, watching intently. Methas leaned over from behind the couch and whispered to me like a mischievous little brother gossiping about our mom.

"This is a good sign, sis."

"How so?"

"If Mom really hated her, she wouldn't call her over like this or do anything for her. Your girlfriend has won over Mom—at least a little. Don't you think so?"

"I'm not thinking about anything. As long as Dad is still controlling Mom, this isn't going to be easy... By the way, how's Dad doing after that day?"

"Oh wow, a total meltdown. He trashed everything in sight. He had no way to vent his anger, so he just took it out on objects. And, of course, Mom had to be the one to clean up after him. You were pretty bold that day, sis— standing up to him like that. I went back to my room and laughed to myself all day."

"What kind of kid laughs at their dad's rage?"

I chuckled as I spoke. It wasn't hard to guess that Dad must have been furious—so much so that he probably never wanted to see me again.

"Don't worry, take it slow. Mom's already softened up enough to come here and teach cooking. It won't be long before Dad gives in too. Though, convincing him will probably take ten, maybe a hundred times more effort than Mom."

"I don't care about winning Dad over. If he won't accept me, then he won't accept me. That's his problem."

"But your girlfriend doesn't think that way. She's the kind who wakes up at 4 AM every day to go to the market just so she can win Mom over. It's only a matter of time before Dad softens up too."

"It's going to be tough."

In about half an hour, the food was ready. It was a simple dish that wasn't difficult to make—clear tofu soup, which didn't take much time at all. Wan Yiwa brought the dish to the table and waved me over to taste it. I walked to the table, sat down, and took my first bite of the meal she had made. It was so delicious that I couldn't help but exclaim, "Wow!"

"All credit goes to Mom. She was the one who did the seasoning."

"Thank you, Mom."

"It's nothing. It's just clear soup. Your girlfriend is slow—doesn't remember things easily when being taught. But at least she can cook now, so you don't have to waste money ordering takeout."

Mom pulled out a chair and sat down with us. Now, the four of us were seated on each side of the square dining table, surrounded by silence. Seeing that no one was saying anything, Mom was the first to break the quiet.

"Just so we're clear, I didn't come here because I accept your relationship."

She still held onto her pride, cutting through the warm atmosphere with her words, making me nearly put down my spoon and fork. But before I could react, Wan Yiwa kicked me lightly under the table, sensing that I was about to get angry.

"Why did you have to bring that up?" I asked.

"I didn't want any misunderstandings, so I had to correct them right away."

"Is there anything I can do to win you over, Mom? I'll do whatever it takes to make you happy."

Wan Yiwa, always good at dealing with elders, spoke sweetly without showing any sign of frustration or disappointment.

"There's only one way," Mom replied.

"What is it?"

"Have a child. If you can do that, I'll accept you."

The impossible condition was thrown out so casually that I immediately put down my utensils.

"Mom, you know that's not possible. We're both women."

"That's exactly the point. Since it's impossible, I'm telling you that you'll never be able to win me over. I want Meena to have a child—a child born from her own flesh and blood. If that happens, I'll accept it... but well, you know."

She spoke with a laugh that sounded more like mockery than amusement. I was about to argue back, but Wan Yiwa cut in before I could.

"As long as it's Meena's child, that's all that matters, right?"

"That's right."

"If Meena can have a child, will you and Dad accept our relationship?"

"If you can really do it, your father won't have a problem with it either. But how exactly are you planning to make that happen if not through IVF? This country only allows it for legally married couples, and the law doesn't recognize yours."

"That's not a problem. We'll handle it ourselves. Meena will have a child for you and Dad."

"Yiwa!"

I almost shouted, completely unable to understand her thought process. But the sweet-faced woman paid no attention to my reaction and turned to my mother with confidence.

"We'll bring you a grandchild to hold."

# Chapter 19: Double

Mom has left now, but she left behind the most difficult challenge—an impossible one. A challenge that indirectly tells us we'll never make it. She wants me to have a child of my own blood. Adoption is not an option. IVF is not allowed. That means our love will never be accepted.

I still can't sleep, lying in bed staring at the ceiling of my room, wondering why outsiders have such a huge influence on our love. Or maybe... we could just ignore them? But the person next to me still wants to win over my parents' hearts. When she heard Mom's condition, she didn't protest. Instead, she smiled as if she truly believed it could happen.

"What are you thinking about?"

I asked at 10 p.m., knowing well that the person beside me was still awake. She only had her eyes closed, but her mind was definitely occupied with the conversation from earlier today.

"Nothing."

"That's not true. Even I can't stop thinking about it."

She didn't reply, just pulled me closer, wrapping one arm around me.

"There's always a way out of every problem. And I think I've found mine."

"What is it?"

"You don't want to know yet. Let me be sure of myself first, and then I'll tell you."

That was all she said before closing her eyes again. No matter how much I pressed her, she wouldn't answer, effectively ending our conversation. Wan Yiwa is so determined that it scares me sometimes. She's even more resolute than I am, and I built a business empire from the ground up. If she had the same resources and opportunities as I did, she'd probably be wealthier than me by now.

"You really won't tell me?"

"..."

Her silence was my answer. I had no choice but to surrender and let it go for now. I'd hear her out eventually. At least for today, Mom had taken a step forward. She visited us, taught her how to cook. It's progress, even if not perfect. I'll just have to wait and see what she plans to do next.

Days passed, and we never brought up that conversation again. Wan Yiwa continued waking up at 4 a.m. every day to go to the market and meet Mom. I think Mom is starting to warm up to her because every day, she comes back with a bright smile. She'd tell me how Mom taught her how to pick vegetables, how they chatted casually, and—most importantly—how Mom started referring to herself as "Mom" instead of the distant "I" she used before.

"I've won your mom's heart. Now, all that's left is your dad," she said one morning over breakfast. I nearly spat out my coffee, choking slightly. She quickly grabbed a tissue to wipe my mouth.

"You got coffee all over your shirt. Why are you so shocked?"

"Winning over Mom is one thing, but winning over my dad? You shouldn't even try. He'll never accept us no matter what."

"Water drops on a rock every day, and even the hardest rock will erode." "Some rocks just find the water annoying."

"Don't discourage me. Anyway, we have plans this evening. You're free, right? No meetings, no clients?"

"Nope. What plans?"

"I'm not telling. Just keep your schedule open."

She never tells me anything in advance. She always keeps things to herself, making her own decisions before acting on them. Her sudden plans made me anxious but excited. What was she up to this time?

When evening arrived, I cleared my schedule and waited for her in the parking lot, making sure no one saw us leaving together. Right on time, Wan Yiwa clocked out and met me, announcing our destination.

"We're going to ABC Restaurant."

"We've been there before."

"Yes, and we're going again. It has the same atmosphere."

The "atmosphere" she referred to was the night we met Wasan there to ask him to stop interfering in our lives. Since that day, I hadn't seen Wasan again—because Wan Yiwa made it clear that he should back off. Luckily, he was the kind of man who understood words. He wasn't some cliché drama villain who couldn't take no for an answer.

Still, an uneasy feeling crept into my chest. My instincts told me something unexpected was about to happen.

As I drove, I couldn't help but ask,

"Are you going to tell me what we're doing, or are we just having dinner?"

"We're having dinner. And meeting someone."

"It's not Wasan, is it?"

"..."

Her silence made me slam the brakes and pull over immediately. A bad premonition settled in my gut.

"Why aren't you answering? Are we meeting Wasan?"

"You're way too good at guessing. No wonder you're so successful at business and stocks."

"Stop changing the subject. Why are we meeting him?"

"There's a reason."

"And that reason is?"

"You'll understand when we get there."

"I'm not moving this car until you tell me. We were the ones who told Wasan we wouldn't see him again, and now you've arranged a meeting? There has to be a reason. You need to stop keeping things to yourself and tell me."

Wan Yiwa sighed, her face troubled. I could tell—whatever she was thinking wasn't normal. And this time, I wouldn't let it slide.

"Fine. But promise me that after you hear me out, we'll still meet him."

"I want to hear first."

"Then I won't tell."

"Then I won't go."

"Then we'll just sit here forever."

"..."

"..."

"Fine." I gave in. "Tell me what you're planning."

"Don't freak out."

"..."

"I'm thinking... Wasan could be the father of your child."

"Are you out of your mind?!"

Even though she told me not to freak out, I couldn't help but shout. Wan Yiwa winced, biting her lip, as if she already knew how absurd her idea was.

"I knew you'd react like this. That's why I didn't want to say anything."

"You shouldn't have even thought about it in the first place! You want Wasan to father my child? How? You expect me to sleep with him?!"

"This is the only way your parents will accept us."

"You—" My hands clenched into fists. If she weren't the person I loved most, I would have slapped her. "Enough. We're not doing this. I don't care what my parents think. I care about what I feel, and I can't accept this."

"We have to do it!"

"No."

"Yes! I don't care if the child isn't mine. As long as it's yours, I will love them."

"But I care!"

"..."

"I love you. How can I sleep with someone else? If our roles were reversed, would you be okay with this?"

"..."

"If this is what it takes to have a child, I'd rather not have one."

Wan Yiwa reached out to hold my trembling hands. "I know my idea is extreme. But let's just talk to him first. It's not like he's agreed yet."

"And what if he does? What if he says yes? Would you be fine watching me with him?"

"..."

"If it gives you a child, I will endure it."

I shook my head, pulling my hands away from hers. Just imagining it made me sick. Was this some kind of test? Some twisted challenge? If I flipped the scenario, I knew I couldn't accept it.

My voice was sharp, laced with anger and defiance.

"Fine. If you think you can endure it, then watch."

"..."

"Don't regret it later."

When two crazy people meet, anything can happen. One wants to win—my parents are beside themselves—while I, on the other hand, want to provoke her, just to see if she can truly allow the person she loves to be with another man.

Now, the two of us have arrived at ABC restaurant, as Wan Yiwa suggested. We walk in, tense and silent. No, actually, I am the only one being sullen while she tries to speak to me nicely, but I refuse to engage because I'm still furious over this insane idea.

Wasan arrives later than both of us. After waiting for a while, the handsome man finally appears, dressed in a relaxed suit, as if he just got off work. He smiles at us, pulls out a chair, sits down, and greets us.

"You guys surprised me. I thought we wouldn't be meeting again."

His words mirror my own thoughts exactly. I, too, never expected to see him again. But the person beside me has made it happen once more for the strangest reason in the world.

"Thank you for coming," Wan Yiwa greets first.

"Have you ordered anything yet?"

"Not yet, we were waiting for you. Let's order now."

"Can we just get straight to the point?" I say impatiently, annoyed, my face clearly unwelcoming. Even if food were placed in front of me, I wouldn't be able to eat. Wasan looks surprised to see my sour expression. Normally, I'm not exactly cheerful, but he must be wondering why I'm this upset.

"What exactly is the point...? Well, let's just order something simple to put on the table so it won't seem impolite."

In the end, we call a waiter and order a few dishes. Even as the food arrives,

I continue to glare at Wasan as if he were an enemy. This is the man Wan Yiwa expects to be the father of our child? The man who is supposed to touch me and create an heir? Doesn't she feel jealous at all?

I glance at Wasan's face. He has sharp, well-defined features, neatly cut hair, and is dressed in a refined suit that speaks of wealth and taste. Despite not understanding why I'm so angry, he still maintains a pleasant smile.

"Alright, the food is here. Let's talk while we eat. Seems like a serious matter. Should we eat first and talk later, or talk now?"

"If we talk while eating, you might lose your appetite. But if you eat first, you might throw it all up afterward."

"That bad, huh?" He scoops up some food and eats as if none of this concerns him, which only irritates me more. "Alright then, tell me—what is it you called me here for? You've built up enough suspense that I'm curious now."

"You do know that both of us are women who love women, right?"

"Of course, I knew that. And, more importantly...I used to flirt with both of you at the same time." He raises an eyebrow as if it's some amusing story, but it makes Wan Yiwa look uncomfortable. Still, she proceeds with what she has to say.

"You are the most suitable person."

"Suitable for what?" Wasan pauses before taking another bite.

"Suitable to be the father of our child."

If it were me, I would have spit out my food. But instead, Wasan simply listens, chewing at a normal pace, sipping his drink, and swallowing in a composed manner before sitting up straight, ready to engage in business.

"So, you want me to be your sperm donor."

"It's not quite like that. But if you see it that way, you're not entirely wrong," Wan Yiwa responds, looking guilty—toward both Wasan and me. The handsome man smirks slightly and looks at me.

"But what about the sulky one over there? Does she actually agree with this plan? Because she doesn't seem very willing if I say yes."

He's referring to me, of course. I never agreed from the start, but out of spite, I came here anyway.

"Honestly, I don't feel good about this idea at all. But if you can get me pregnant... I guess that would be fine," I say, sneaking a glance at Wan Yiwa before baring my teeth in frustration.

"To be honest, as a sperm donor, I don't really mind. There would just need to be legal documents ensuring that the child won't have any claim on me in the future."

"Are you crazy too now?" I exclaim in disbelief. I thought he'd be outraged, storming off after realizing that two lesbians were trying to use him. If that had happened, I would have been happy. But instead, he just sits there calmly, unaffected, which somehow makes me even more frustrated.

"Not crazy. For me, this is purely physical fun. But I do have one condition —I want double the fun."

I exchange confused glances with Wan Yiwa.

"What do you mean?"

"I want both of you. At the same time."

# Chapter 20: What She Wants

Wasan's proposal made me jump up from my chair and walk away immediately. There was nothing left to discuss. Just hearing it felt so disgusting that I couldn't bear to stay any longer. Not long after, Wan Yiwa ran after me to the parking lot. The sweet-faced woman grabbed my wrist to show that she had caught up with me, but I yanked my hand away in frustration.

"Why didn't you stay and talk? Such a 'special' offer."

I sarcastically threw the words back at her, my face twisted in anger. Wan Yiwa looked flustered, unsure of how to deal with me.

"I didn't expect Wasan to make that kind of offer either."

"And do you still want me to have a baby with Wasan?"

"If it means you can have a child..."

"Wan Yiwa!"

The fact that she responded that way meant she wasn't bothered by the idea of the three of us having sex together. How could anyone accept such a proposal? Honestly, the only reason I even agreed to this meeting was to go through the motions. I never intended to agree to anything she wanted. I just wanted to see what direction the conversation would take. But no matter what, I wasn't going to agree. And yet, it seemed like she was crazier than I thought—actually considering a scenario where two women and one man shared the same bed, as if it wasn't strange at all.

"I know you're angry."

"Good." I clenched my fists and walked ahead to the car. "Go home!"

I snapped, and she obediently followed, like an ugly duckling trailing after its mother without a word. That night, after showering, we lay with our backs turned to each other. It was the first night we didn't touch. I didn't even want to look at her face, not after hearing such an outrageous idea. She was so desperate to win my parents' approval that she was willing to let me sleep with someone else just to have a child. And then what? Had she thought about the consequences? What if I went through with it and ended up falling for that man? She could be left abandoned and alone. Was that really worth it?

"Meen..."

Wan Yiwa's voice broke the silence, still lying with her back to me.

"What?"

"I never expected Wasan to suggest something like that."

"You were wrong from the start, just for even considering that I should sleep with someone else. Even if Wasan hadn't made that offer, it was never right in the first place. Would you be okay if *you* had to sleep with someone else just to have a child? Because I wouldn't."

"If the child was yours... I would love and cherish them."

"Enough already."

She turned and hugged me, burying her face against my back, as if searching for warmth. That kind of pleading gesture made my heart waver a little, but I was still furious.

"No matter whose child it is, as long as it's yours, your parents will accept our relationship."

This time, I turned to face her—not out of softness, but in frustration.

"You used to say that love was enough, just the two of us."

"But it's different now. I want to be with you forever. I love you, and I want to love your family too. And in return, I want your family to love me, just like my mother adores you. It's not just about us anymore."

"So if I sleep with that man, you can really stand it?"

"I'll try to endure it."

"But I *can't* do it. And I *really* can't bear the thought of that man touching you either. Our love isn't equal—I just realized that today."

I turned my back to her again. There was no warmth between us that night, only simmering resentment.

"Until you change your mind, we have nothing to discuss."

She fell silent, which meant she still held onto her beliefs. She was willing to accept even something as extreme as a threesome, as long as I had a child. That was all she wanted.

She was willing to do anything to win over my parents.

The tension between me and Wan Yiwa remained, even at work. We hadn't spoken for over three days, and when we did, it was only superficial, because we still lived in the same house. The atmosphere was suffocating for both of us, and I found myself snapping at everyone in the office, acting completely unprofessional. If a coworker made even the smallest mistake— like spilling water—I would lash out, almost firing them on the spot.

The truth was, I wanted Wan Yiwa to see how angry I was. But she remained passive, the only sign of distress being her red-rimmed eyes, as if she was on the verge of crying all the time. This was our biggest fight ever. She wouldn't back down, and neither would I.

Or maybe... I should be the one to give in.

Would it really be just about having a child? Could she really endure watching me be with another man? Seeing someone else touch me?

The stress weighed heavily on my shoulders, my neck, and even my chest. It felt like something was stuck there. Maybe it was all the built-up frustration. While I was leaning back in my chair with my eyes closed, my phone rang. It was Wasan—the very problem we had dragged into our relationship.

"Hello, Wasan."

[I'm calling to check in on your decision. So? Do you still want to have a baby with me?]

He spoke casually, like he was asking if I wanted to grab dinner, as if this wasn't a huge deal. I bared my teeth in anger, though of course, he couldn't see that.

"You sound like you're enjoying this proposal a lot."

[Of course! How often does a deal this good come along? I get to have fun, and you get what you want. Win-win.]

"We haven't decided yet. Your offer makes it very difficult for both of us."

[Come on, it's not that hard. You just need to say yes. I mean, it's just adding one more person into the mix.]

"If I decide, I'll call you. But I don't think it'll happen."

I hung up without saying goodbye, because the more he talked, the angrier I got. The pain in my shoulders worsened. I had to get out of the office. I called Wan Yiwa to follow me, using the excuse that we had business to discuss.

We ended up in the fire escape stairwell, the usual place I used to privately reprimand employees. If I walked in there with someone, nobody dared to intrude. Right now, everyone probably thought I was scolding her—which was fine, because she *did* deserve it.

"You're finally willing to talk to me?"

"Wasan called."

I met her gaze. Her light brown eyes were still beautiful to me, even when red from crying.

"What did he say?"

"He asked if we had decided yet."

"And what did you say?"

"What do you think? A threesome?" I shoved my hands into my pockets and kicked at imaginary dust on the floor. "He's getting the best deal here— two women in his bed while he gets to enjoy himself."

"If you really hate it that much, then just reject it. It's my fault for even thinking of something so ridiculous." Her voice trembled, and she twisted her fingers anxiously. "I was wrong to try so hard to win over your parents."

"You really believe that now?"

"It would be easier if Wasan had suggested sleeping with *me* instead..."

"Wan Yiwa, are you even thinking!?"

Just hearing her say it made my jealousy explode. My hands gripped her shoulders tightly, my jaw clenched. Just imagining another man touching her was unbearable.

"You're yelling at me... again."

But as soon as she started sobbing, my anger began to melt away. I let go and shoved my hands back into my pockets.

"So, just sleeping with Wasan is enough, right?"

"...?"

"You really think you can stand watching him with me?"

She said nothing—just threw herself into my arms.

"You do realize... getting pregnant doesn't happen in one try. If it doesn't work the first time... there will be more."

She stiffened, as if she hadn't considered that.

"Alright," I said. "I'll do what you want."

I pulled out my phone and called Wasan.

[Wow, calling me back so soon? So, what's the decision?]

"Let's do it. Once the contract is signed, you can do what you need to do."

# Chapter 21: Red Wine and Dancing

I never imagined I would reach this point—a point where I would have a lawyer draft a contract about having a child and carefully review it to ensure that, in the future, if the sperm donor suddenly wanted to be involved in the child's life, he would have no rights whatsoever. Now, the drafted document was placed in front of Wasan. He looked at the roughly five-page contract without even bothering to open it.

"You're really serious about this, huh?"

"Read it carefully. If there's anything you think is unreasonable, just mark it, and I'll have the contract revised."

"From what you've explained, I think I'm okay with it. No need to read it—I know you'd never try to use the child to get anything from me in the end. You're already rich as hell." He smirked, pulled out a pen tucked in his shirt pocket, and signed the document in one swift motion without even glancing at the content. "That's it, all done."

If this were a business deal, he would be the most careless businessman ever. But that worked out well for me—no complications, no hassle. I wanted everything to be this simple.

"And what if it doesn't work on the first try?" He asked with a playful smile. I had already considered this scenario. I glanced at Wan Yiwa, who had been sitting quietly without offering any opinions, and felt a pang of guilt.

"You have two more chances. If we sleep together three times and I still don't get pregnant, that's it—no more, no less."

"And what if the baby ends up being hers instead of yours?"

"You have to wear a condom every time you're with her." I spoke with difficulty because this was part of the deal. If we wanted something from him, we had to offer something in return. Wasan wanted pleasure in exchange for what we needed, but we also had to ensure safety.

"Fine."

"Before my ovulation day, you'll need to get tested and send me the results. We need to ensure safety too."

"That's not a problem. As for you two, I trust you. No need for tests." He said with a knowing tone, as if he was certain neither of us had been with a man before. "So, see you on ovulation day. Where should we do it? My place, yours, or a hotel?"

"Hotel."

"You pick the place."

The deal was officially sealed, but the tension between me and Wan Yiwa remained. No, actually, it was just me. She kept trying to talk, but I refused to say a word. Her desire to prove something to my parents made me feel hurt. She was perfectly fine with me becoming another man's woman—no jealousy, no hesitation whatsoever.

So I played along. Whatever she wanted, I would do. I wanted to see just how far she would go.

Would she really be able to stand there and watch me with another man?

"You got what you wanted, didn't you?"

I spoke as we walked out of the hotel lobby where we had chosen to meet.

A restaurant felt too informal, and I wanted this discussion to be strictly business. Even if it was about sex, I wanted it to be handled with formality, without any personal emotions involved.

"If you don't want to do it, you don't have to."

Hearing that, I immediately turned to glare at Wan Yiwa.

"Then why didn't you say that before? Saying it now, after the contract has been signed—what's the point?"

"I..." She hesitated. Over the past few days, every time she talked to me, her eyes were always filled with unshed tears. This time was no different, and it made my heart waver. "I just don't know what to do either."

"What's done is done. Accept the consequences. If you can bear to see me with someone else, then I'll go along with whatever you want."

"Meena..."

"I love you that much."

To ensure everything goes according to plan, I had to count the days and keep track of ovulation from the calendar and calculations—it would be in three days. I sent the schedule to Wasan via Line, specifying the meeting place and time, to which he readily agreed.

I stared at the message I had sent, then slumped into my office chair, feeling a tightness in my chest. Lately, I had been experiencing shoulder pain, and at times, a burning sensation in my chest that required me to take acid reflux medication regularly.

My phone buzzed with a message from Wan Yiwa, who must have been watching me from her desk with concern.

**Wan Yiwa :** "Your shoulders hurt again, don't they?"

**Meena :** "Yeah, it's just office syndrome."

**Wan Yiwa :** "But you also have chest pain, right? Shouldn't you see a doctor?"

**Meena :** "Don't worry about me. I can take care of myself."

**Wan Yiwa:** "I love you."

Her words of love made me lift my gaze to meet hers outside the office, stunned for a moment. But I quickly looked away, still nursing the resentment that she had been able to accept the idea of me sleeping with someone else. Lately, I had been speaking to her less, barely touching or holding her. My body language must have made it clear that I didn't want to talk or even look at her directly. Love was still there, but my feelings of hurt and anger made me want to ignore her instead.

**Meena :** "I've set the appointment with Wasan. Be ready."

She didn't reply. When I glanced over, she was simply staring at her phone before returning to her work, expressionless. That irritated me, so I texted her again, emphasizing the date and time.

**Meena :** "Three days until ovulation. Bring condoms."

I sent the message and continued working without looking at her again.

The day of reckoning arrived. Our meeting place was a hotel in the heart of Bangkok. The entire car ride there was filled with silence. Neither of us spoke, as if we were soldiers marching toward a battlefield, fully prepared for whatever was to come.

The truth was, I had never imagined that I would go this far—agreeing to sleep with someone just to have a child. I had never even thought about having kids. But if this was what it took for my parents to accept Wan Yiwa, then I would do it.

Even though I didn't want to.

When we arrived at the hotel, we took the elevator up together. And that was when I spoke my first words to her in hours.

"Did you bring the condoms?"

"I did."

"How many boxes?"

"One."

"Is that going to be enough?"

She turned to look at me but said nothing. My sarcastic remark must have cut deep. We had barely been civil to each other ever since this insane agreement began. Honestly, I could have refused. But I wanted to see her reaction—to see how she would feel watching me being touched, kissed, and held by someone who wasn't her.

And in turn, would I be able to bear it when she had to go through the same?

**Ding!**

The elevator arrived at our floor. We walked down the hall to Room 1208, a suite I had booked. As soon as I knocked, the door swung open, revealing Wasan in a bathrobe, already prepared. He greeted us with a grin.

"I was wondering if you'd really show up."

"We were wondering if you'd back out of the contract," I replied, eyeing his damp hair and the robe draped over his frame. "You seem very... prepared." "Of course. How could I pass up the chance to bond with two women I once tried to court at the same time? Come in. Have some wine. I just ordered it."

We stepped inside, but before I could move further, Wan Yiwa lightly tugged at my shirt. I glanced at her coldly before pulling away and walking in. We were past the point of turning back. There was no escaping this now. The only way was forward.

I sat on the couch in front of the bed and picked up the glass of red wine Wasan had poured for me. I didn't normally drink, but I needed something to numb myself.

"I need to tell you something," I said, downing the wine in one gulp before exhaling sharply. "I've never been with a man before."

"Oh... a rare gem," he mused.

He walked over to the hotel's bedside radio and switched it to a lively jazz tune before sitting beside me. Meanwhile, Wan Yiwa stood at a distance, arms crossed, watching everything in silence.

"Come have a drink too, Ms. Wan Yiwa," he invited, handing her a glass. She took it, downed it in one go, and turned away.

"Just hurry up and get it over with," I muttered, wanting this ordeal to end as soon as possible. Then I turned to her. "Give him the condoms."

"Do we even need them?" Wasan teased. "If we use them, how will you get pregnant?"

"You'll need them for her. Not for me," I said coolly. "By the way, where are the test results? I told you to get a health check."

"Right here." He retrieved a stack of documents from the coffee table and handed them to both of us. "I even made separate copies for you. See? I came well-prepared."

"Good. Let's start. I'm starting to feel the mood now."

I stood up and began unbuttoning my shirt. But Wasan shook his head and stepped forward, placing his hands on my shoulders.

"Not so fast. You're not the only one who needs to feel the mood. I do too," he said, stroking my arm and pulling me closer. "Dance with me first."

"Why are you making this complicated?"

"If I'm not in the mood, I can't perform. I'm a man. I need emotions to function."

"Fair point."

I begrudgingly let him lead me in a slow dance to the jazz melody. I let myself get lost in the rhythm, even resting my head against his chest for a second before quickly pulling away, startled.

"What's this? You flinched just from that? If I push you onto the bed, will you kick me off?"

I scowled but continued the dance. Wasan then turned to Wan Yiwa, who was still standing motionless, her cheeks flushed from the alcohol. He beckoned her with a finger.

"Come dance too."

"I don't know how," she replied.

"You're killing the vibe."

"I'm not here to have fun."

"Shame. Guess I'll just have fun with the mother of my child then."

He smirked and suddenly pulled me into a kiss before I could react. My eyes widened in shock. Drunk from the wine and caught off guard, I froze.

"Help me get into it," he murmured. "Touch me."

The word *touch* made me sick to my stomach, but this was my responsibility. Reluctantly, I slipped my hands under his robe, feeling the toned muscles beneath. My breathing became shallow. I turned my face away, trying to buy myself more time.

Wasan wrapped his arms around me from behind, his lips brushing my neck as his fingers started undoing my buttons one by one. Just as the second button came undone— "Stop. That's enough!"

We both froze.

Wan Yiwa's voice was shaking, her face streaked with tears. She rushed forward, shoving Wasan away from me and placing herself between us.

"I won't let this happen. I won't! I refuse!"

# Chapter 22: Methas

Wan Yiwa's loud outburst brought everything to a standstill. The sweetfaced woman, unable to bear what she was witnessing any longer, ran over and pushed Wasan away from me, forcing him to stumble back. She then positioned herself protectively in front of me. Her greed dissipated into jealousy and an unwillingness to accept what was happening. The handsome man, now a few steps away, let out an annoyed huff.

"What the hell, lady? We were just getting to the good part."

"I already told you to stop! I'm not letting this happen."

"But we signed a contract, didn't we? And my body is ready," he replied, his words dripping with layered insinuations. My face burned as I realized exactly what he meant. I quickly averted my gaze. Just moments ago, I had almost given in, lost in the effects of the red wine. Alcohol had certainly made me bolder than usual.

"Tear up the contract. We're not doing this anymore."

"'We'? Did you even ask your girlfriend if she agrees?" Wasan smirked, nodding toward me. I exchanged a brief glance with Wan Yiwa. Truthfully, I had never been on board with this idea from the beginning. But since she was so insistent, I went along with it—to test her, to provoke her, and partly out of sheer mischief.

"Do you... still want to go through with this?" Wan Yiwa asked me, her eyes brimming with tears. Her face was filled with utter fear, terrified that I might actually agree to what was happening. Emboldened by the wine, I spoke a little more freely than I usually would.

"Well, it's not like I don't want to. The mood is kind of right."

"Idiot!"

"You're the one who wanted to have a baby, weren't you? I was doing this for you."

"Not anymore! I don't want to anymore!" She broke down into sobs, burying her face in her hands as she sank to the floor. Her crying drowned out the jazz music playing in the background, casting a gloom over the entire evening. I found myself smiling in amusement, but I held back from comforting her too much. I wanted her to realize just how reckless she had been with this decision.

"You can't just change your mind like that," Wasan scoffed. "We have a legal contract. My job was to give you a baby. If you're going to throw a tantrum, then step aside. Let me and her handle this."

"I'm not leaving! I can't stand seeing you touch her... If this is still happening—" She turned to Wasan, her voice filled with desperation. "Then I'll do it myself. I'll get pregnant."

"Oh? I wouldn't mind that," Wasan raised an eyebrow, clearly pleased with the situation. He was getting everything he wanted either way. But I, on the other hand, felt a sinking sense of dread.

"But I mind," I interjected. "I'm not in the mood anymore. We're done here."

"You two are unbelievable," Wasan spat in frustration. "One moment, you arrange for this to happen; the next, you change your minds. You're completely disrespecting me. We had an agreement. You wanted my sperm, and I was willing to give it. Now, just before the final step, you back out? You two—" he shook his head in disgust. "You're just a couple of unserious lesbians playing house. If your relationship actually lasts, I'll let you kick me in the face."

He was visibly furious, grabbing his clothes from the chair and hastily putting them on. He took the signed contract and the medical documents, then ripped them apart in front of us without hesitation.

"Don't ever expect me to take part in this kind of nonsense again. If you ever want a baby, look elsewhere. I never want to see either of you again!"

**BANG!**

The door slammed shut behind him, leaving us in utter silence.

Honestly, I had never truly expected this to happen. My plan was always to stop it before it went too far. I just wanted to see how far Wan Yiwa would let things go. And yes... she loved me enough—was jealous enough—that she couldn't bear to see me in another man's arms.

My heart was still pounding from the fear of how this might have played out. I was relieved that she had been the one to stop it. Still, I couldn't resist teasing her a little more, making her feel just a bit guiltier.

"So... what now?" I sighed. "The chance to have a baby is gone. He ripped up the contract, which means there won't be another opportunity."

"Then so be it. I don't care anymore."

"Don't you still want to win over my parents?"

"I only need you. That's enough."

"That's not what you said before."

"I was wrong... I thought I could do it, but I can't. I was being reckless."

"You made me look bad, you know."

Pretending to be angry, I grabbed my purse as if ready to leave. But before I could, Wan Yiwa rushed forward and wrapped her arms around me from behind, sobbing uncontrollably. Her tears soaked the back of my dress.

And that... that was my greatest weakness. I could never bear to see her cry like this. It broke me every single time.

"I'm sorry... I was wrong. Please don't be cold to me."

"..."

"The past few days have been so unbearable... You wouldn't look at me, you wouldn't hold me at night. I know it's because of this. But please, don't stop loving me. Don't hate me. I can't stand it..."

"Before this, you were so determined to have a baby. You insisted on this ridiculous idea, and now, after all the trouble, you just give up? Like Wasan said, this wasn't a game."

"You can hit me if you want, just... just don't be like this."

"I would never hit you."

"Then don't be cold to me. We'll find another way to win over your parents. And if they never accept us, that's okay. I give up. I don't care what anyone thinks anymore. Just... let it be us, please."

She hugged me even tighter, pleading with every ounce of emotion in her voice. I smiled to myself.

Before this, she had been brave enough to confess her love to me. And now, to make amends, she had to be even braver.

I turned to face her, looking at her tear-streaked face. Her makeup was ruined—her mascara smudged, her false eyelashes barely hanging on. She looked like a mess. And yet, I couldn't help but laugh.

"You don't look pretty at all right now."

"Hmph! Not only am I awful, but now I'm ugly too?"

"Not at all," I grinned. "You're cuter than ever."

She hiccupped between sniffles, then rushed to the mirror to check her reflection.

"Oh no, I really do look terrible."

"That's what you're worried about?"

"I'm never putting on this much makeup again. My false lashes fell off, my mascara ran... You're going to fall out of love with me for being both awful and ugly."

"Who said anything about falling out of love?" I wrapped my arms around her from behind, meeting her gaze through the mirror. "I love you, just the way you are."

"Even after what I did?"

"Yes. You've always been extreme, even back in school. It seems like that trait has only gotten stronger with age."

"And you still agreed to do this for me..."

"I wouldn't say I agreed. I wanted to test you. I wanted to see if you'd actually let me sleep with someone else."

She shook her head firmly.

"Never."

"That's all I needed to hear."

"No matter what your parents think... are we really okay?"

"If I suddenly had a baby and told them, they might hate us even more.

We'll find another way, okay?"

"Okay."

"Now stop crying," I whispered, pressing a soft kiss to her neck. "I missed you."

"I missed you too."

"This room is ours now. Why don't we make the most of it?"

She smirked at me through the mirror, turning to face me, no hesitation in her eyes this time. She pulled me into a kiss, pushing me toward the bed.

But this time, I flipped her over, pinning her beneath me.

"This time, you're not in control anymore."

She laughed, throwing her arms up in surrender. "Go ahead. Show me what you've learned."

"Fair warning, the wine has me completely fired up. There's no way we're stopping anytime soon."

"Then bring it on."

I lunged at her hungrily, shedding the clothes of the one who allowed me to, feeling like an invader. Our laughter echoed in the room, more like two people playing than engaging in something more serious. But before long, the heat of passion took over. Our bare skin pressed together, growing hotter, burning. Nothing could stop us now.

Even though this was the first time I truly let myself go, there was no hesitation. I still remembered our first time. I was a quick learner—I knew where to place my hands, which spots were most sensitive to her touch. Wan Yiwa's moans encouraged me, making me move my fingers faster, curling, teasing, until everything reached its peak—wetness spreading. Her sweet face contorted in pleasure as she tightened her legs around me, signaling her arrival. She showered my face with kisses, a mix of gratitude and adoration.

Now, our clothes were scattered all over the room. I had no idea where my own pants had ended up. How was I supposed to walk to my car like this if I couldn't find them? Our naked bodies were covered in sweat, evidence of the many times I had driven her to the edge, proof of the fire between us. Now, Wan Yiwa lay sprawled on top of me, exhausted. The sweat on our skin, meeting the cool air from the AC, sent chills down my spine. I used my foot to pull the blanket over us. My heart was still pounding—partly from the red wine, partly from the satisfaction of this moment. I laughed. "What are you laughing at?" she asked, looking up at me. I ran my fingers through her hair.

"They say the more you fight, the more kids you'll have. I think that might be true. You were pretty intense today."

"That's because I missed you."

"I missed you too."

"Can we stop fighting from now on? It hurts me too much."

"Who wants to fight with you? Am I supposed to just smile and act fine while you sleep with another man? While he touches you after he's had his fill of you? If it were you, could you stand it?... No, wait, you couldn't even stand it when Wasan just hugged me and told me I was allowed to be touched."

She playfully smacked me, baring her teeth in mock annoyance.

"And yet you bring it up again! The more you talk about it, the more jealous I get. What did you even touch on him?"

"Quite a few places, actually. He takes good care of himself. His chest is well-built... His pecs might even be bigger than mine—ouch! Why did you hit me? I was just explaining!"

"You looked way too happy talking about it. Annoying!" She huffed and sat up, but I pulled her back down to lay on top of me again.

"You asked, so I was just describing what I felt. But I like your chest way more than Wasan's. His wasn't soft at all. It was all hard muscle, unlike yours." I pushed her up slightly to take a good look at her chest before squeezing it in my hands. "I love touching you, kissing you, claiming you."

Before she could protest, I flipped her over so she was beneath me again, demonstrating exactly what I meant. Her breasts perked up once more as I teased her with my fingers, playing with the sensitive tips.

"It makes me want to stay here forever, to never stop touching you."

"You're so poetic."

"Want to go another round?"

"You got me worked up already. You might as well finish what you started."

"You're surprisingly easy tonight."

"Consider it an apology for making you jealous."

As I was kissing her, tasting her, a sudden jolt of pain shot through my chest. I sat up abruptly, clutching the spot with my hand. Wan Yiwa immediately sat up too, concern written all over her face.

"What's wrong?"

"I don't know. It just hurts."

"Your chest?"

"Yeah. Sometimes my shoulders too. My back, my neck. Right now, it's my chest... Probably office syndrome."

"You've been working too hard."

"And stressing too much... My own girlfriend let another man have her."

"Ugh, there you go again! Just shut up and finish what you started. I'll let you do whatever you want to me tonight, but after this, no more talking about it, okay?"

I laughed and complied, ignoring the lingering ache in my chest. I didn't want to worry the woman beneath me. What mattered was that we were finally okay, that our love was flourishing, that we understood each other better now.

And that our sex was more passionate than ever.

Our love was filled with both heat and warmth. Everything was falling into place. Wan Yiwa had become openly possessive of me. Even just talking to my secretary for too long would make her frown and ask what we were discussing. If we were out for a meal and some guy so much as glanced my way, she would immediately glare, making it clear that she wasn't pleased.

Before, I used to think jealousy was just a sign of insecurity. But when it was her, it felt different. It was adorable. And I liked it—it meant she loved me that much.

"No more making eye contact with other people."

"Don't talk to your secretary for too long. She's too pretty."

"Who's prettier, me or her?"

"Why did you look at that woman?"

Her antics always made me laugh, but they were endearing. Ever since the whole Wasan incident, she seemed to finally realize that she couldn't let anyone else have me—I had to be hers alone.

We had been sleeping together more often lately. Sometimes it was out of pure desire, sometimes it was fueled by jealousy. She'd ask things like, "After all this, do you still want to look at other people?" Our relationship had reached a point of obsessive love.

As we walked back to the condo, bickering about whether the cute girl at 7Eleven had a crush on me—because, according to her, she'd noticed the girl staring at me for a while now—we suddenly saw Methas waiting for us in the lobby. The playful banter died instantly at the sight of my younger brother's troubled face.

"Hey," he greeted.

"How did you get here? Why aren't you home? It's late."

"I... I have something on my mind. I need to talk to you."

"You guys talk. I'll head up first," Wan Yiwa said, preparing to leave. But Methas stopped her.

"You can stay. You'll find out from Meena anyway."

The tension in his voice put me on edge. Whatever was going on, it had to be serious—serious enough for him to break Dad's curfew rule and come all the way here.

"What's wrong? Why do you look like that?"

Tears welled up in Methas's eyes, making him look like a lost little boy. He wiped them away quickly, taking a shaky breath before speaking.

"Help me, sis..."

"..."

"I got a girl pregnant."

# Chapter 23: Closing the Deal

Since this was a big issue, I took my brother upstairs to talk in my room.

Right now, Methas was sobbing uncontrollably, not knowing what to do.

"If Dad finds out, he'll kill me for sure."

His voice was filled with fear. I could already predict how this situation would unfold, but there was no use in panicking now. Showing my own fear wouldn't help anything. I didn't scold him because what's done is done— what mattered now was finding a solution.

"How old is she?"

"She's in her twenties."

"Okay."

At least it wasn't a case of statutory rape. If anything, she was the one who had taken my brother's virginity. There was no point in blaming her for that, though—what really pissed me off was the lack of protection.

"Why didn't you wear a condom?"

"There wasn't time."

"No time or no self-control?"

"Pee!"

Wan Yiwa, who had been silently listening, reached out to stop me, afraid I'd upset him even more. Even though I had told myself I wouldn't scold him, I just couldn't help but reprimand him.

"You're grown up now. I thought you could take responsibility for yourself. So how exactly did this happen?"

"A lot of different ways."

"Do you want me to slap you?"

Methas raised his hands to shield himself, afraid that I might actually hit him. I only pretended to raise my hand, clicking my tongue in frustration before lowering it with a sigh.

"So, what's your plan now?"

"I don't know, but I..."

"But what?"

"I want to keep it. It's a sin not to."

Honestly, I hated this ingrained belief that abortion was a sin. Some children were born into families that weren't ready, suffering more than if they had been terminated. I got up and paced the room, gnawing on my fingernail as I tried to think. Seeing me so stressed, Wan Yiwa spoke up.

"Why don't we meet the woman first? See what she thinks."

"What's her financial situation?" I turned to Methas, wanting to get at least a rough idea. I wasn't trying to be judgmental, but these days, some people did use pregnancy as a way to trap their partners. I wasn't saying that was the case here, but anything was possible.

"She's well-off. I've been in her car before."

"How did you even meet her?"

"At a club."

"You're not even of age! How did they let you in?"

"I snuck in."

"You're just looking for trouble!"

I snapped at him, making Methas burst into tears again. I let out another deep sigh. Wan Yiwa got up and placed both hands on my shoulders, trying to calm me down. I looked into her eyes, searching for a solution. She only reaffirmed her suggestion.

"Let's meet with her first, confirm the pregnancy, and then figure out what to do next."

While waiting for her, I kept glancing at the clock. She was already almost ten minutes late, and there was still no sign of her. Wan Yiwa, who could clearly tell I was getting irritated by her tardiness, reached over and gave my leg a small squeeze to calm me down.

"Maybe she's stuck in traffic. A little wait won't hurt," she said.

"Everyone's time has value, you know."

"Stop complaining. Looks like she's here."

Methas was walking alongside a good-looking woman. Her short, wavy hair made her look even younger. Based on what I knew, she was around 29, almost 30. Her expression and gaze were playful—far from what I expected. Most people facing an unplanned pregnancy would be overwhelmed with anxiety, yet she was all smiles as she sat down across from me.

"You have a beautiful sister, Mek."

The woman, strikingly attractive, caught me off guard for a moment. As soon as she arrived, she rested her chin on one hand while tapping her fingers on the table with the other. Is this really someone who's pregnant? Where was the worry, the concern?

"Hello, Miss Ann," I greeted.

Ann was the name Methas used for her. Given that she was nearly ten years older than him, I couldn't help but wonder—why was she involved with my little brother to the point of getting pregnant?

"No need to be so formal. We're all friends here... Mek said you wanted to meet me because you don't believe I'm really pregnant."

She got straight to the point, catching me off guard. I quickly composed myself and nodded.

"Here's the proof. I had a check-up at the hospital yesterday."

She handed me the medical certificate and test results, which I shared with Wan Yiwa to review. A quick glance was enough to confirm their authenticity.

"What do you plan to do about this child?" I asked.

"I'm getting an abortion."

She said it with a smile, without a hint of hesitation. It shocked both me and Methas, who was sitting beside me.

"You're going to get rid of it? That's a sin," Methas blurted out.

"I'll make up for it in hell, I guess. Besides, Mek, you're still so young. Do you really want to have a kid?" Ann turned to her partner, completely indifferent. "You can't even take care of yourself."

"If you knew he couldn't take responsibility, why let yourself get pregnant?" I asked.

"Maybe I was trying to trap him," she chuckled, as if it were a joke, before waving her hand dismissively. "Just kidding, don't take it too seriously. He's not rich enough to be worth trapping. I just wanted to have some fun, but things got a little out of hand."

"You act like this is all just a game," I said, frustrated. "This is serious."

"Why make it serious? If this baby is born, it'll just be a burden for Mek. Besides, I'm not ready to be a mother. We're on the same page about this... aren't we?"

"No," Methas answered hesitantly. "I don't want to destroy this child."

"And what's the point of letting it be born if you can't even afford a condom?" Ann shot him a cold look before smiling again. "But I can't really blame you. That night was intense—when things get heated, mistakes happen. Next time, after this baby is gone, I'll be more careful."

"Don't you feel any attachment to this child at all?" Wan Yiwa, unable to stay silent, asked with a pained expression. "It's still your baby."

"As long as it hasn't opened its eyes to this world, it's just a lump of flesh to me," she replied flatly. "And like I said, if it's born, who's going to raise it? I'm not ready to be a mother."

"I'll raise it."

The words slipped out of my mouth before I could stop them. I couldn't stand her indifference anymore. The room fell into silence. Ann turned to me with a smirk, tilting her head.

"How selfless of you," she mused, then glanced at Wan Yiwa. "Or are you planning to raise it for the perfect little family—mom, mom, and baby?"

She saw through our relationship without us saying a word.

"That's none of your business."

"But I'm the one carrying the baby. So it *is* my business... No, I won't give birth to this child. Nine months is exhausting. I'm not going to do it. But..." Ann leaned forward, locking eyes with me, a sly smile on her lips. "If you can offer me something interesting, then maybe I'll reconsider."

She was ice-cold—not someone driven by money, but by the thrill of the situation. She didn't seem to care that this was a serious issue. To her, an abortion was just an abortion—a simple decision, already made. Unless I could convince her otherwise.

"Five million."

"..."

"Consider it a fee for carrying the baby to term."

"I'm not poor, you know. And plenty of people richer than you have offered me money before—I wasn't tempted."

"This is what I can offer. Five million, and you give me the baby with no strings attached."

"If I agree, won't I look greedy?" Ann glanced at Methas and shook her head. "Seriously, you're such a headache for your family. Buying a condom would've solved everything."

"So what's your decision? Five million."

"That's a bit low for carrying a child for nine months. But honestly, money isn't my priority... Let's do this. If you beg me sincerely, I'll lower it to three million."

"Beg you sincerely?"

"Kneel before me, and I'll give you the baby."

"...Are you serious? Have you been watching too many movies?"

"Maybe. But no one's ever kneeled for me before. This is a golden opportunity—wouldn't it be an interesting life experience?"

I clenched my jaw, resisting the urge to grab her hair and slap her across the face. But all I could do was sit still. I was already willing to pay five million, and now she wanted me to humiliate myself on top of that? This is insane.

"You're taking so long to decide. You're willing to pay five million to save a child's life, but you won't kneel? Pride really is something, huh?"

"You're doing this all just for fun, aren't you?"

"What else is life about if not happiness and entertainment?"

I looked at Methas, feeling an overwhelming urge to strangle my own brother. He had managed to get himself involved with a cunning and mischievous woman who was proving incredibly difficult to handle. And judging by the situation, it seemed like we weren't going to get the upper hand anytime soon.

Methas suddenly stood up from his chair and dropped to his knees. Everyone in the restaurant turned their attention toward us, pulling out their phones to take pictures, probably assuming this was some sort of marriage proposal. The reality, however, was far from what they were imagining.

"Please let me do it instead," he pleaded. "Please keep the baby and accept my sister's offer."

"Oh wow, someone actually kneeled... But I didn't ask you to do it," Ann said with amusement, making an "X" shape with her fingers. She then turned her gaze toward me with a smirk. "So, dear big sister, you want this baby, don't you? Show some effort, and I'll even lower it to three million. Nine months of carrying the child, and you get to have them all to yourself."

"Let me do it," Wan Yiwa said as she stood up, but I quickly grabbed her hand.

"You don't have to... She asked me, so I have to be the one to do it."

Ann knew exactly what she was doing. She had figured out that I was the type of person who never backed down and that I wanted to win—no matter how small or insignificant the challenge. This was nothing more than a ridiculous game to her, a way to claim some meaningless victory.

I took a deep breath and slowly lowered myself to my knees in front of her at the restaurant table, fulfilling her absurd request.

"Please keep the baby," I said. "I will give you anything you want."

"Five million."

"...Huh?"

"You said you'd give me anything I wanted, right? It was three million before, but since you just said 'anything,' I changed my mind. Now it's five million. Do you agree?"

I clenched my teeth, feeling utterly infuriated.

"...Fine. Five million."

"Deal closed."

# Chapter 24: Domestic Violence

"Are you okay?"

Wan Yiwa asked with concern, gently massaging my shoulder muscles. Lately, I had been feeling pain from my neck down to my chest. Maybe I needed to see a doctor or at least get a good massage.

"I have no choice but to be okay. It feels like I've just encountered the ultimate troublemaker."

"That word suits Ann perfectly—troublemaker." Wan Yiwa laughed before curling up on the sofa and resting her head on my lap like a small cat. "Mek sure knows how to find himself a real villain. But from what I observed, she didn't actually seem that interested in getting money from you."

"Five million—how is that *not* a lot?"

"Are you short on money?"

"I have money, but you said she 'didn't want money.' First, she asked for three million, then suddenly changed it to five. That's insane."

"Don't use harsh words; they don't suit your face."

I silently cursed under my breath, my expression sour. Five million wasn't a significant amount for me, considering the company's cash flow, but having money squeezed out of me like this was beyond frustrating.

"Are you going to tell your parents about what happened today?"

"I have to. After all, I just agreed to let that child be born."

"I'm honestly surprised."

"About what?"

"At first, you didn't seem to care about this baby at all. I even thought you'd tell the woman to get an abortion. But then, out of nowhere, you kneeled down and paid five million for a baby that isn't even a fetus yet."

"To be honest, when I saw the mother, I just wanted to win. Besides, this child won't be born into poverty. If they make it into the world, it's their blessing. The only issue is that the parents aren't ready."

"But Auntie here *is* ready to raise them." Wan Yiwa giggled, then paused for a moment, just as a thought struck me. Our eyes met, widening in realization.

"Let's raise this child together! / We should raise this child!"

Even though we didn't say it at the exact same time, our thoughts were perfectly aligned.

"You really agree?" I asked excitedly. Wan Yiwa nodded enthusiastically.

"Of course! We don't even have to go through pregnancy. Besides, this child is your flesh and blood—half of their DNA is yours."

"But what about you? This baby has no relation to you at all..." I mumbled, feeling guilty, but Wan Yiwa just shook her head.

"That doesn't matter. As long as they're from you or your family, I'm okay with it. This is a great chance for us to have a child. Plus, your parents won't be able to complain that we aren't 'reproducing' anymore."

"Ugh, don't even bring them up. It pisses me off. Do they see us as nothing more than baby-making machines?" I crossed my arms in frustration, puffing out my cheeks, only to have Wan Yiwa poke them playfully, deflating my annoyance like a popped balloon.

"Don't be mad. This is a good thing! A new life is about to be born, and they're going to be *our* child. So, let's start preparing and come up with a name!"

"You're making me excited."

"I'm excited too!"

"Let's do something *even more* exciting."

My eyes sparkled as I prepared to remove my clothes, but Wan Yiwa suddenly grabbed her laptop and knelt by the coffee table, searching for something. I frowned—undressing and browsing the internet weren't exactly connected... unless she was about to open *Pornhub*, but that didn't seem likely.

"What are you doing?"

"Looking up baby names! Hehe, just thinking about it makes me excited!"

"You're excited about naming the baby?" My fingers, which had been on my shirt buttons, loosened as I pouted. I wasn't *obsessed* or anything; we just clearly had different priorities.

"Of course! What did you think I was talking about? And why is your shirt so unbuttoned?"

"Nothing. I'm hot."

She side-eyed me knowingly but pretended not to notice, scrolling through a list of baby names that were beautifully curated for expecting parents. I knelt beside her, looking at the endless list of names, amazed at how people came up with so many unique options.

**Rrrrrrrr**—pronounced *Raranron*.

**Rifky**... Is that even a name?

**Storm Justin**... Okay, I give up.

Compared to these, my name and Wan Yiwa's sounded like we were born in the early Rattanakosin era.

"But there's a small problem," Wan Yiwa muttered, frowning at the screen.

"We don't even know if your niece or nephew is going to be a boy or a girl."

"That's true. Maybe we got ahead of ourselves. Let's do something else." I closed the laptop and leaned toward her, only for Wan Yiwa to push my face away.

"What is with you? The atmosphere was so cute, and now you're ruining

it!"

"We don't need to rush picking a name when we don't even know the gender yet. But since *we* are a special kind of couple, shouldn't we do something *special* instead?"

"You never used to be like this."

"Love is overwhelming."

I playfully snuggled against her while she pretended to resist, laughing. Just as things were about to get heated—when Wan Yiwa was starting to give in and we might have ended up making love on the rug in front of the sofa— my phone rang.

What the hell? Just when I was about to be happy, someone had to interrupt. Should I throw this damn phone away?

"I should have put it on 'Do Not Disturb' mode."

"Pick it up. It might be important."

"You're more important."

"You say that every night. Now answer it." She playfully pushed my face away and glanced at the screen. The moment I saw my mother's name, tension filled the air as if we both had a bad premonition.

"Alright... This is probably about Mek."

"This is going to be a big deal."

I answered, and my mom immediately scolded me for taking so long to pick up. I had to pull the phone away from my ear.

"What is it, Mom? No need to be so upset."

["Come home immediately! Your father is about to beat Mek to death!"]

"Damn it... Did he confess already?"

["Wait, you knew about this? Why didn't you tell me first?"]

"I'm coming now. Try to stop Dad."

This was now a full-blown crisis. I had no idea how Methas confessed, but the outcome wasn't surprising. I grabbed my car keys and headed home with Wan Yiwa . She looked at me with concern.

"Are you sure it's okay for me to go? Won't it make your dad even angrier?"

"You have to be with me through everything—good or bad. And this isn't even counting the fact that we're going to get married."

"Married? You're still not giving up on that idea?"

"If we're already having a child, marriage is a small matter. I told you— we'll face everything together. But if you're scared, you can wait in the car."

"I'm not scared—I just don't want to overstep into your family's affairs."

"You are my family."

I simply said that, and she nodded, touched.

When we arrived, we rushed inside to find my father furiously hitting Methas with a golf club. I screamed at the top of my lungs.

"Stop it, Dad! This is too much!"

"I will build my family by taking Methas's child as my own. I've already talked to the child's mother, and she has agreed to give birth. You don't have to worry about anything, Dad. Methas won't have to take any responsibility at all."

"Are you out of your mind? The child isn't even yours, yet you're offering to raise someone else's kid?"

"Someone else's kid is still my nephew. You wanted my family to be complete, right? Well, here it is. A child born through reproduction— shouldn't that satisfy you?"

"Meena!"

Dad raised the golf club, ready to strike me, but Wan Yiwa rushed in between us to stop it from going any further. Dad hesitated—because, to him, Wan Yiwa wasn't family.

"Why are you interfering? You're the problem here! Get out! A father has the right to discipline his child!"

"I can't accept this—using violence against your own family. I want you to calm down and think this through. No matter what, things have already come this far. The two of us are ready to raise Methas's child. The baby's mother has agreed to give birth without asking for... too much."

"There it is! So she is asking for something! What does she want?"

Wan Yiwa looked into my eyes. I licked my lips, debating whether I should tell him everything. But what was the point in hiding anything now?

"Five million."

"..."

"In exchange for carrying the baby for nine months."

"And you actually paid her?"

"If I don't, Ann will get an abortion."

"Then let her do it!"

"But I won't let that happen. This child will be mine. If you and Mom refuse to accept them, then fine. Cut ties completely if you must. But we will raise this baby as our own. We will teach them love—not violence, like what you're doing right now."

"Meena, you're crossing the line!"

Dad dropped the golf club and reached out, gripping my throat—not hard enough to choke me, but firm enough to show his anger. He was always terrifying when furious, but even now, he held back, afraid of actually hurting me. He just wanted to assert dominance, to make me obey.

"Don't think that just because you can make your own money, you can do whatever you want. As long as I'm still alive—"

Thump.

Thump.

Thump.

A sharp pain shot through my chest. My hands instinctively clutched my left side as my mouth opened in a silent gasp. Dad's expression shifted immediately before he caught me in his arms.

"Meena... what's wrong? Meena?"

"..."

"Meena!!!"

# Chapter 25: Plan Like You're Not Planning

Thud...

Thud thud, thud thud...

Gasp!!!

I jolted awake, my eyes widening in shock. My blurred vision gradually cleared, and I found myself surrounded by people. Right in front of me, Wan Yiwa was performing chest compressions, tears streaming down her face. Her usually sweet face was now pale and drained of color. The moment she saw me open my eyes, she burst into tears, sobbing uncontrollably until her face was soaked with tears and snot.

"You're awake! Oh... you're awake!"

She covered her face with her hands and cried out loud in the midst of the silence. My parents and Methas were just as pale as she was. I scanned everyone around me, confused, not understanding what had happened.

"Did I faint?"

"Don't talk yet." My father rushed over, supporting me as I tried to sit up. "What happened to you? Why did this happen?"

"What do you mean? What are you talking about, Dad?"

"Your heart stopped," Methas answered for everyone, his voice shaking.

Tears welled up in my younger brother's eyes, turning them red. Still confused, I turned to my mother, who was crying even harder. I raised my hand to my chest and gasped.

"My heart stopped? I thought I just fainted."

"You need to go to the hospital."

"Yes, you must go to the hospital. Right now!"

"There's no need." I waved my hand dismissively. "I've already woken up. It was probably just a fainting spell."

"But your heart stopped!!!"

The seriousness in her voice made me start worrying too. I reached out to gently touch Wan Yiwa's tear-streaked face, trying to comfort her, and then teased her with a laugh.

"Don't sound so panicked. You're practically yelling at me."

"You need to get checked. Right now... Mek, Dad... someone, anyone who can drive, take Meena to the hospital!" Wan Yiwa clasped her hands together, pleading. "Please take her. I'm scared."

At that moment, no one had the time to be resentful or upset with her anymore. My father nodded and swiftly lifted me into his arms as if I weighed nothing. Feeling embarrassed at being treated like a child in his embrace, I quickly struggled to get down.

"You don't have to carry me, Dad. I can walk."

"Stop talking already. We're going to the hospital!"

My father's firm tone left no room for argument. It seemed my condition had shocked everyone so much that they forgot we had been in the middle of a heated argument. My last memory before this was of my father choking me and Methas getting beaten up. But now, all of that was forgotten as they hurried me into the car and rushed to the nearest hospital.

After the medical examination, the results made Wan Yiwa cry even harder, and they left me anxious about my own health.

"Your coronary arteries are blocked. You need a bypass surgery."

"I have heart disease? But I had no signs at all... just a little shoulder pain, slight chest discomfort..."

"Those are signs," the doctor said.

He explained my condition briefly. My body had accumulated extreme stress, which had directly affected my heart. Even though I had always taken good care of myself—exercising regularly, eating healthily—my body had still betrayed me. I couldn't help but feel a little bitter at my fate.

"If I undergo the bypass, will I recover?"

"Yes, your condition isn't too concerning. But it's best not to let your heart stop again."

Hearing the doctor's words made me reflect on a lot of things. Life is unpredictable. No matter how well we take care of ourselves, if something is meant to happen, it will. After receiving the diagnosis, everyone fell silent.

On the way home, my father, who had been seething with anger earlier, now sat quietly, deep in thought. The rage he had shown before was gone. That silence made me bring up the unresolved issue.

"Aren't we going to continue arguing?"

Wan Yiwa pinched my thigh so hard that I yelped, as if scolding me for stirring things up. I pouted slightly, feeling like our argument hadn't reached its proper conclusion. My father looked at me through the rearview mirror, his eyes now cold and emotionless, all traces of anger gone.

"We'll continue the argument after you recover. What's done is done. We'll deal with the problem later."

"There's nothing to deal with. I will raise this child myself. Even if no one agrees, I don't care."

"You really want to fight with me, don't you?"

"Oh... my heart hurts." I pretended to clutch my chest in pain. My father bared his teeth in frustration, seeing right through my act, which made me smile.

"Get better first, then we'll argue again."

Even though I tried to brush everything off like it wasn't a big deal, deep down, I was overthinking. What if my heart stopped again? What if the surgery failed? The people I left behind would be devastated—especially Wan Yiwa. She would be left alone, full of worry.

For the first time, I started seriously thinking about planning my life. I thought about what would happen if I died. How would the people around me cope?

A few days later, I secretly called the company's lawyer and drafted my will without telling anyone.

"Divide my assets into two parts. Half for my family, the other half... for Wan Yiwa."

The lawyer, who had never heard her name before, looked at me curiously but didn't ask questions. He simply took notes and accepted my instructions.

Outside my office, Wan Yiwa, who had been watching everything lately with growing suspicion, saw the lawyer leave and immediately messaged me.

**Wan Yiwa :** Who were you talking to?

**Meena :** A lawyer.

**Wan Yiwa :** What for? Why do you suddenly need a lawyer?

**Meena :** I wrote my will.

As soon as I sent that message, she barged into my office. She had never done that before. Usually, if we needed to talk privately, we would meet at the emergency stairs. This time, however, she didn't care about appearances.

Her sudden entrance left my employees stunned, as her position had no direct connection to mine. Normally, she would report to someone else, not me.

"What the hell are you doing? Why are you writing a will?"

"Darling, you're not even trying to be discreet anymore?" I leaned back in my chair with a faint smile. I rarely smiled openly, afraid that showing vulnerability would make me lose authority. But ever since realizing I might not have a future, I had stopped caring.

"Don't joke around!" Her eyes welled with tears. "Are you planning to die or something?"

"Just being cautious. I need to make sure things are settled before anything happens."

"Nothing is going to happen!"

"Really? If something happens to me, how will you support our child?"

"Our child?"

"The baby growing inside."

Her expression changed. "Is the baby included in the will?"

"Are you thinking of killing me now that you know you get half of my assets?"

"Meena!"

Her loud voice echoed beyond my office. I pressed a button to turn on the privacy screen. It wouldn't block sound completely, but it would at least hide our faces.

"Don't be mad." I walked over and placed my hands on her shoulders. "Life is uncertain, and I want to show you how serious I am about this relationship."

She burst into fresh tears. "You're staying with me until we're old!"

I pulled her into a hug, sighing.

"Of course, but let's do something first—let's drop everything and take a spontaneous trip to the beach."

"Huh?"

I have never done anything without planning ahead. Even knowing that I have a heart condition, I have planned what will happen to the people around me if something happens to me. But skipping work—that's a different story. I never act without thinking, and this is the first time in my life that I have. I took Wan Yiwa's hand and walked out of the office right in front of many employees, then drove to Pattaya without caring how work would proceed or what documents needed to be completed.

Being ill has made me realize that in life, what matters more than anything is happiness in the present. I used to be obsessed with work and only thought about tomorrow, never considering my own happiness in the moment. So, coming to the sea was a dream of mine—to sit idly under the sun, take off my shoes and feel the sand, then walk into the water, playfully splashing around while waving at Wan Yiwa to join me.

"Come on, the water's warm."

Wan Yiwa stood there watching me, her eyes filled with sadness. She took off her shoes and stepped into the water, but she wasn't really enjoying it— she was just keeping me company. Seeing her expression so devoid of joy, I could only sigh.

"You're at the beach, but you look so lifeless. How can this be fun? I'm trying to create a romantic memory for us."

"You're saying that again."

"Alright, let me put it another way—I'm enjoying the present in a way I never have before. Can't you have fun with me?"

"I'll be happy when the surgery goes well. And you should stop pretending to be happy like this."

"I *am* happy. Besides strolling by the sea, I also plan to drive a boat!" I pointed to a speedboat docked nearby. "I want to drive that boat."

"You're so self-centered. And then what?"

"Have sex with you on it."

"You..." At that, Wan Yiwa finally managed a small smile and even laughed. "This isn't being spontaneous—you totally planned this in advance."

"No one will notice if we do it while the boat rocks with the waves. How many couples get to do it in the middle of the sea?"

"You're crazy."

"Come on, let's do it."

"What kind of thing is that to say?"

"Well?"

"...Fine, sounds exciting."

"So you're just as naughty as I am."

Today was a day I let myself be completely free. I had never done anything like this before. I rented a boat, drove out to sea, and stared at the endless horizon where the sky met the ocean. Then, as I had planned, we stripped off our clothes and made love. The salty sea air made our skin feel sticky, but it didn't lessen the pleasure. After we had done everything we wanted, we lay back under the scorching sun, unafraid of getting tanned.

"Again..."

Wan Yiwa's sobbing made me turn to look at her with amusement. I chuckled and reached out to wipe her tears.

"You cry so easily. Why are you crying now? Weren't you happy just a moment ago?"

"The more you do things like this, the more uneasy I feel. It's like you're saying goodbye—writing a will, doing things without planning like you never do. Are you thinking that you're going to die?"

"It's not that extreme."

I half-admitted it, then lay back again, using my arm as a pillow. "Ever since the doctor told me I have this condition, I've felt like nothing is certain anymore."

"*Sniff*"

"Don't cry, silly. You look even funnier when you cry. Let me finish talking."

She turned to hug me, sobbing against my shoulder. I explained why I was doing all of this.

"I've never had the freedom to think for myself. Did you know that? Ever since I was born, I worked hard in school. I never got to be what I wanted to be."

"What did you want to be?"

"An artist. I wanted to draw... but I had no talent, just a dream and a desire. My parents didn't support it because they wanted me to study science and math. If not a doctor, then an engineer—like the old-fashioned way of thinking. But I took the middle road and studied business. It wasn't what they wanted, but at least getting into the top university made them a little less angry." I gazed at the sky, reminiscing. "I buried myself in work to make my family proud, to be a good role model for my younger brother. I never thought about what I really wanted. Until I met you."

"..."

"You are my love."

I was confessing my love to her. I wasn't sure if I'd ever said it before, but today, I would say it again and again so she would know.

"I could finally be myself because of you. I never stood up to my parents before, but I did it because of you."

"That makes me sound like a bad influence."

"A bad influence, but adorable. So I forgive you."

"You idiot." She playfully bit my shoulder.

"Honestly, I only started doing what I wanted after meeting you. When I found out about my condition and that I needed surgery—even if it wasn't life-threatening—it made me realize that life is short. So I came to the sea. I did what I wanted. I had sex with you on a boat. I wrote a will to avoid any issues later. It seems like I'm being reckless, but really, I planned it all in advance. It's a contradiction."

"I don't want anything from you. Go cancel everything."

"No. I want to make it clear that I love you. I want you to know, and I want my parents to know that you are my other half." I sighed. "I never cared about same-sex marriage laws before. But today, realizing that if something happened to me, you'd be left with nothing—it feels unfair. The best I can do is write a will and..."

"...And?"

She echoed my words, waiting to hear what I would say next.

"Marry you."

Silence fell between us. The waves rocked the boat. The sound of water splashing against the hull filled the air.

Every time I brought this up, she would go quiet. I knew she probably didn't want to get married—for whatever reason. But I kept asking anyway.

"Marry me."

"Alright."

Her answer made my eyes widen in shock. I shot up and looked at her in disbelief. I hadn't expected it to be this easy.

"Did you hear what I said? If you misheard, I'll say it again—marry me."

"Yes, I will."

"You usually say no."

"Well, now I want to. Let's do it as soon as we get back."

# Chapter 26: Preparation

After living life on my own terms, I realized that true happiness isn't hard to find. It's not about money, but about the little joys we can create for ourselves—waking up early to watch the sunrise from the window, enjoying delicious food with a loved one while laughing together, or even skipping work for a spontaneous date at the beach. These were things I had never done before, and I made a promise to myself that from now on, nothing would stop me from doing whatever I wanted.

"Give me your hand."

"Hmm? We're about to enter the office—what for?"

"Just give it to me."

I took Wan Yiwa's hand and walked into the office together on a workday morning. Almost all the employees had arrived, and the usual loud chatter came to a sudden halt, as if a strict teacher had just entered the classroom. I scanned the room to make sure that most people were present. Wan Yiwa tried to pull her hand away, but I held on firmly. With everyone's eyes fixed on our clasped hands, I seized the opportunity to do something unexpected.

"In about two months, Wan Yiwa and I will be getting married. Anyone who is available is welcome to attend and celebrate with us. Thank you. That's all."

With that, I pulled Wan Yiwa into my office and turned the glass walls opaque for privacy. The sweet-faced woman in front of me blushed deeply, looking both shocked and flustered, unsure whether to be angry or embarrassed by what I had just done.

"What did you just do?"

"You didn't hear me clearly? Should I go announce it again?"

I teasingly tried to drag her back outside, but she clung to me with all her strength, then lightly hit my arm.

"You! You knew exactly what I meant, yet you still teased me. How could you just announce it like that without consulting me first? You even made a company rule that employees can't date each other. And now, out of nowhere, you're saying we're getting married? With no warning at all!"

"True, the rule says employees can't be in a relationship. But it doesn't say the company owner can't be with an employee." I smirked, stuffing my hands into my pockets. "We're going to try on wedding dresses this afternoon."

"What? Just like that? And what's with this two-month timeline? What about the auspicious date? Why don't I know anything about this? I only agreed to marry you yesterday!"

"The auspicious date is 'whenever we're ready.' Two months is just to prepare everything. It'll be a small, simple wedding, only inviting people we know. I don't care about gifts; I just want the world to know we love each other."

"Everything is happening way too fast! When you set your mind on something, nothing and no one can stop you."

"Well, I don't know when I might die."

"..."

"Just kidding."

Every time I joked like this, she reacted differently. And when I saw her eyes well up with tears, I felt guilty, so I pulled her into a hug, gently rubbing her back.

"Sorry, I was just teasing. Please don't cry."

"You always say things like this. I don't want to marry you anymore."

"Hey, no way! You already said yes."

"And what if I marry you and you suddenly die? Won't that make me a widow?"

"That sounds like we're already married! A widow... ha!" I chuckled, but she pinched my side, making me yelp.

"It was just a joke!"

"I'm serious. Don't say things like that again. I don't like it."

"Okay, I won't joke about it anymore. I just wanted to do things quickly because I'm afraid you'll change your mind. Besides, I'm ready to be with you forever. Whether it's in two months or two years, my choice will always be you."

"You smooth talker."

"Wan!"

"Hehe."

"You're laughing now!" I stretched her cheeks like elastic, making her yelp. A knock on the door interrupted us, and we quickly stepped apart, maintaining a professional distance.

"Come in."

My secretary entered to inform me that the lawyer I had scheduled had arrived. Wan Yiwa looked at me in confusion, wondering why a lawyer was here when I had already completed my will.

"This is for a contract that Ann needs to sign. Everything must be done properly."

"Oh, then I'll step out. I'm sure my coworkers have plenty of questions for me now."

"Just tell them the truth about what we did on the boat yesterday."

"You idiot!"

Wan Yiwa left, and the lawyer handed me the contract regarding Ann's agreement to give up the child. I reviewed the document carefully. If she went back on her word later, she would be fined ten times the agreed amount, and we would have no further responsibilities in any case. There would also be no marriage between Ann and Methas. But judging from Ann's attitude, she didn't seem serious about Methas anyway.

Once the contract was finalized, I called Ann to the office. She barely glanced at the pages filled with legal text before signing without hesitation. I felt sorry for the child in her womb.

"Are you sure you want to give up this baby? There's no turning back."

"I'm not ready to raise a child. If you hadn't made an offer, I would have terminated the pregnancy."

I looked at her coldly, just as she looked at the contract without any warmth. Who was this woman? I couldn't read her at all.

"Someone like you shouldn't have made a mistake with Methas."

"I didn't make a mistake. Your little brother did. Oh, and maybe the birth control failed." She shrugged indifferently, making me lean back in my chair to study her.

"You have no feelings for my brother at all?"

"He was just a one-night amusement."

"But Methas loves you."

"Love?" She laughed as if the word was too romantic for reality. "Aside from my looks, what else is there to love?"

"You're undervaluing yourself."

"I've never had any worth. I live only for fun and pleasure. It's not that I feel nothing for this baby, but I know I wouldn't be a good mother. I don't even know how to handle it. Even carrying it to term feels overwhelming."

"You're too cold. Motherhood might make you softer."

"I've never received kindness from anyone, so I can't give it to anyone—not even this baby."

She never referred to the unborn child as "our baby" or "my child." It was as if she wanted to distance herself as much as possible. Still, I could sense a hidden fear within her. That was fine. I had no reason to persuade her to love or care for the child because I had already decided to raise it myself. Since we agreed, this matter was settled.

I extended my hand for a handshake, but Ann instead ran her fingers over the back of my hand flirtatiously.

"Soft hands."

"What are you doing?"

"In case you didn't know, I prefer women over men. And women like you— beautiful and rich—are my type." I immediately pulled my hand away, stuffing it into my pocket. She arched an eyebrow and laughed. "But if you're not interested, there's nothing I can do. See you at the birth. Don't forget the money—checks or transfers are fine."

"I won't forget. Let me walk you out."

"Thanks."

I escorted Ann to the elevator, and Wan Yiwa followed. Ann smirked at our synchronized movements.

"This is far enough. If you follow me downstairs, people might think we're all heading to a hotel together."

"What are you saying?"

"Just teasing your girlfriend... she's beautiful. I like her too."

"The elevator is here."

She waved playfully, and the doors closed. Now, it was just me and Wan Yiwa. I turned to her with a teasing smile.

"What? Jealous?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Seriously?" I chuckled, tapping her head. "How could you not trust me?"

"It's not you I don't trust—it's her. The way she looked at you... I saw her stroke your hand!"

"At least she didn't follow me into my office."

"You still need to be careful. Is the contract airtight?"

"Yes. She has no maternal instincts at all."

"Not yet. They develop when she sees the baby."

"Worried about losing our child?"

"Our child."

"That was firm." I draped an arm around her shoulders. "This is just the beginning. We have a lot to do."

"Besides getting married and having a baby, what else?"

"Inviting our families to the wedding."

To be honest, even though Wan Yiwa's family could accept that I was her girlfriend, her mother wasn't entirely in favor of it. She didn't want too many people to know that her daughter was getting married and living with another woman. I thought this hurdle would be the easiest to overcome, but I was wrong. A heated debate broke out between Wan Yiwa and her mother the moment she disapproved.

"If you're together, just live normally. Why go through the hassle of a wedding? If it were a man, that would be different."

I flinched at those words from an elder. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I didn't expect it to hurt this much just because I was a woman too.

"Mom, why would you say that? What difference does it make whether it's a man or a woman?"

"I'm not stopping you from being together. You can stay friends, can't you?"

She still used the word "friends" instead of "partners" or "spouses." Even though she was somewhat open-minded, the idea of a public wedding was still too new for her—almost as if she couldn't keep up with the times.

"Yiwa wants the world to know that she has someone she loves, that she belongs to someone. That way, no one will try to interfere with her or her partner. If you don't agree, that's fine. I'm just letting you know. If you don't want to come, I won't hold it against you."

"Yiwa!"

"I'm going to have the wedding no matter what. It won't be anything too extravagant, but it would be nice if you were there."

She declared stubbornly, causing her mother to sigh and shake her head without saying another word.

"How did it get this far? I thought you were just dating, and after a while, you'd break up. And now you're getting married? How long have you even been together? What if you change your mind in the future?"

"That's a possibility for the future. But right now, at this moment, she is the only person I want to be with, the person I want to spend my life with. If you don't agree, that's fine, but please don't oppose it or say things that hurt us."

Wan Yiwa took my hand and pulled me to leave. Her mother remained silent, only watching us as we walked away and drove off. Yiwa was visibly upset, and I had to be the one to comfort her.

"It's hard for the older generation to understand. Give them some time."

"Why does our relationship have to matter so much to other people?"

"Because they are family, Yiwa. And this is just the beginning."

She looked at me, realization dawning on her face, and her expression turned somber.

"You're right. This is just the beginning. That was only my family..."

She understood what I meant. If her mother was already against it, what would happen when we faced my family?

"If no one agrees, what will we do?"

"If not a single person supports us, will you still marry me?"

"Yes."

"Then it's not a problem. Now, let's go see my family. We already know how it will turn out, but if you're determined to marry me, nothing can stop us."

"Right... Nothing can stop us."

As expected, the moment we left Wan Yiwa's house and arrived at mine, the second I announced my wedding plans, my father's voice thundered through the house like a lightning strike, startling everyone.

"I won't go, and I won't allow this wedding!"

It wasn't surprising. I already knew he would react this way, so I stood there calmly, smiled at him, and shrugged.

"That's okay. I'm just informing you. If you don't want to go, I won't hold it against you. But Mom and Mek will come, right?"

Mom and Methas remained silent under my father's intense gaze. He was still looking for ways to argue when he saw that I wasn't intimidated.

"No one in this family will go to your wedding! And I forbid you from getting married! If you insist on doing this, then change your last name. I don't want anyone to know I have a daughter who's a pervert."

"If that's what you want, I'll find a new last name."

I stood firm. I had prepared for this and knew exactly what to expect. Anticipating the worst made things much easier. Seeing how things were escalating, Wan Yiwa gently tugged on my sleeve and smiled at everyone before bowing respectfully.

"Please, let's all calm down. Father... We have thought this through carefully. We want to spend our lives together, which is why we are announcing it to the world. Even if the whole world doesn't acknowledge

us, we at least hope our families will support us."

"Who's your father?" My father remained stubborn. "And does this look like support to you? If you want to get married, do it. But don't tell me, don't invite me, and like I said—change your last name. I'm ashamed of my relatives, ashamed of the guests. If I ever show up, feel free to kick me out."

"That's fine. Then, I'll take my leave."

Although I remained composed, my heart ached. I wished my family would attend, but I had very little hope they actually would.

"When you calm down, I'll come back—with our child."

"Child? How are you going to have a child? Oh... must be one of those IVF things. I won't recognize it as my grandchild. I don't know where it came from, and I don't want it visiting this house."

"Your grandchild, Father. Mek's child."

At that, Mek sat up, shocked.

"Really, Sis? You're going to raise my child?"

"Yes. Your child will be mine. I've already made arrangements with Ann."

"And... what did Ann say about me?"

"Why do you care?" My father snapped at Mek for prolonging the conversation. "That's not my grandchild either. I don't acknowledge anyone! One got a woman pregnant and had to take responsibility. The other is a deviant. Do whatever you want, but I won't be part of it."

"Alright. Then I'll take my leave."

"Don't forget to change your last name."

"I'll search for a new one and have it done by today."

"Such a smart mouth." My father lunged forward to strangle me, but my mother grabbed his arm in distress.

"What are you doing? She's still unwell!"

"She is not my daughter!"

As much as I wanted to cry at his cruelty, I held back. I bowed to everyone before leaving. Wan Yiwa and I got into the car in silence. We looked at each other and embraced, understanding how difficult the day had been.

"No one supports us at all." I tried to stay strong, not letting myself cry. Yiwa stroked my back and nodded.

"It's okay. One day, they'll understand. For now, as long as we love each other, that's enough, right?"

"Smile."

"What's next? Should we go home and rest?"

"Let's finish everything in one go. We'll try on dresses and arrange our prewedding shoot—something fun to take our minds off things."

"You planned everything, didn't you? You're in such a rush."

"Why wait? I can't wait to marry you."

Seeing her blush, I finally laughed for the first time all day.

We changed our relationship status on Facebook, invited those who supported us to our wedding, and carried on—because we were determined to be a family, no matter what.

Meena Manuprapakam

*For all our friends who have been asking about our relationship status, we want to confirm that we are indeed a couple and are planning to get married in two months. We chose a convenient date, and since our love has fully blossomed, we want to share this happiness with the world. Anyone who wants to attend our wedding is welcome—there's no specific theme; just come with your heart and celebrate with us. We will announce the venue and time later. Thank you to all our friends for supporting our love. We'll share the story of how we fell in love at the wedding.*

Many people have liked, shared, and commented that they'll definitely attend because they are curious about our love story and how it all began. I looked at that status and then glanced at Wan Yiwa, who was sitting next to me.

"You... how did we fall in love?"

"With a question like that, who could remember? Seriously, when did we start liking each other?"

"What should we do? If our friends expect us to tell them at the wedding, how will we announce it?"

"Just tell them... I loved you at first sight." Wan Yiwa raised an eyebrow playfully. "You have those big, sparkling eyes, radiating beauty from miles away."

"Exaggerating."

"How did you even manage to become my partner? What kind of merit did I accumulate for this?"

"Actually, I think I fell for you first."

"Impossible, because I have nothing outstanding."

"I love how you're fair and just, and how much you care for your friends. I've told you this before."

"That was back then—when teenage hormones were all over the place. But now, it's different. I couldn't just go around picking fights like that anymore."

"Oh really? Just the other day, when someone harassed your employee, you were ready to grab a chair and smack them."

"Oh wow, you're right." She looked as if she just realized something. "But that's not my true nature—I'm actually a gentle person."

"I know. But the truth is, you have so many great qualities that make it impossible for me to leave."

I turned back to my computer screen and started searching for a new last name. Seeing this, Wan Yiwa reached out and held my hand.

"Are you serious about changing your surname?"

"It's a meaningful thing to do. We'll officially have the same last name, truly becoming a family. Think of it as a positive step."

"Do you really want to do this? I thought you were just being rebellious toward your father."

"Since he's fought so hard over this, I can't be stubborn anymore. It's better to change my surname before we get married. That way, he won't be able to claim that I've tarnished his family name."

Even though I acted indifferent, deep inside, my chest ached so much that I couldn't tell whether it was my heart condition or my emotions. Changing my last name might seem like a small thing, but to me, it felt like being cut off from my family. My father was a man of his word—no matter how painful it was, I had to do as he said.

No matter how rebellious I was, I was still afraid of him.

We sat together, mixing different words to come up with a new surname. After considering a few options, we eventually decided to merge our last names to create something entirely new. As we were working on it, Wan Yiwa suddenly said, almost absentmindedly:

"So our child will carry this last name too, right?"

"Yes."

"That sounds like a real family."

She was giving me positive energy—she must have sensed the pain I was hiding inside.

"Even in difficult times, there's something good in it. Thank you for being here today."

"Thank you, too, for being born."

# Chapter 27: Wedding

We both have our new last name now. I changed mine first so that my father wouldn't have any trouble later. However, Wan Yiwa still keeps her original last name out of consideration for her mother, planning to change it later. I don't mind. Ever since I had issues with my family, I've barely visited home, afraid that I might upset my father. But my mother still calls to check on me regularly.

"Mom, you'll come to my wedding, right?"

While on the phone with her, I asked because tomorrow is the day Wan Yiwa and I will be getting married. She remained silent for a moment before answering in a way that made my heart ache, though I understood.

[Mom might not be able to make it.]

"I see. I understand. Just a blessing from you is enough... I hope you can at least give me that."

[Are you really sure about this decision?]

"I've already changed my last name, Mom. We've come this far."

I heard a deep sigh from the other end of the line. She must have realized that nothing could change my mind. So, she gave me her blessing as I had asked, which was enough to bring a small smile to my face.

[If it makes you happy, then do it. I wish you both happiness, no suffering, and a lifetime together.]

"Couldn't you say, 'Grow old together with love and happiness'?"

[Give me some time to accept it.]

Three months had passed, yet my family still refused to open their hearts to this. Meanwhile, I remained firm in my decision, causing a constant conflict. For my mother to even give her blessing was already a big step. At least she had come to accept, in part, that this was my choice and my happiness.

"If you can come, please do, Mom. I want my family to be there on my special day."

We ended the call. I looked at my phone screen and smiled slightly. Even this much was enough. If I asked for too much, I would only end up unhappy. As I was lost in thought, a warm embrace from behind made me lean back. Wan Yiwa hugged me from behind and placed a soft kiss on my shoulder as a way of giving comfort.

"Did it go well?"

"This is as good as it gets. What about you? Did you talk to your mom? What did she say?"

"She agreed to come."

"At least we'll have an elder to bless us. Let's get to bed early. You have to wake up at the crack of dawn for makeup tomorrow."

"I thought this was supposed to be a casual wedding."

"At least dress up a little. We're only getting married once."

"Fine, for you. But honestly, I already look good without all the extra stuff."

I rolled my eyes playfully at her self-confidence before we held hands and went to bed. It wasn't just her who had to wake up early for makeup—I did too. So, we decided to sleep early tonight so we could look our best tomorrow. We wanted this wedding to be unforgettable for our friends, something they would talk about for a long time.

And then, the wedding day arrived. The venue was filled with colorful flowers arranged by the organizer, who did an excellent job. It was worth every penny. Our wedding didn't follow traditional Thai customs—there was no groom's procession, no feeding each other sweets, and no symbolic gates to pass through. Instead, we opted for a Western-style reception, a simple banquet where friends from school gathered to celebrate. Some came out of genuine happiness for us, while others were just curious— wanting to see for themselves how we loved each other and what kind of wedding we had.

I wore a tailored women's suit, carefully selected for the occasion. It was a deep-cut suit with no inner shirt, revealing my cleavage. Wan Yiwa didn't particularly like this outfit, repeatedly saying she was jealous, but I thought it looked stylish and accentuated the beauty of femininity in our own way.

"A little show-off doesn't hurt. I think it's sexy—like a passionate businesswoman in love."

Meanwhile, Wan Yiwa wore a form-fitting white dress—clean, elegant, and exquisitely tailored. I had searched for wedding dresses overseas and had it shipped to Thailand. Her dress was incredibly expensive, but it was worth every cent. She looked breathtakingly beautiful, especially with the makeup done by a professional artist I had hired.

"Why do you get to wear a suit while I have to wear a dress?"

"Because I want something easy to take off."

"If that's the case, people will assume you're the dominant one, when in reality..."

"Shut up." She was about to say something cheeky, but I flicked her forehead hard, leaving a red mark. A sharp *pop* sound echoed.

"Ow! How could you treat your bride like this?"

"Well, you were about to say something inappropriate to your bride too." "This is unfair. I wanted to wear a suit too."

"You can wear a suit next time when we get married again."

"We're getting married twice? That's awesome!"

"We can get married three, four, or five times—if it makes you happy."

We hugged each other for encouragement and laughed happily. Today, we would forget all our sorrows and live in the present, laughing together to make this a good day—one we could tell our children about, so they would know just how wonderful the day their two moms got married was. Now, we were both ready. The organizer came to call us to the ceremony according to schedule, and the moment we walked out hand in hand, a wave of applause erupted. The guests, filled with friends and colleagues, cheered excitedly at the sight of the two brides stepping forward.

The reception was set up as a buffet, making everything feel casual and intimate. I skipped all the overly traditional Thai elements and leaned into a Western-style celebration to ensure no one felt constrained. Creating this atmosphere helped open people's minds significantly. Everyone congratulated us and kept asking how we ended up together—what made us fall in love.

"There's no reason," Wan Yiwa answered, and I looked at her for a moment. "When you love someone, there's no reason. You just know they're the one."

"Same answer. No reason. One moment I was just living my life, and the next—oops, stumbled into love and found my home."

Laughter erupted. Everyone raised their champagne glasses and joined in the merriment. The atmosphere was so warm and joyful that I wished we could do this a hundred more times. It would have been even better if our families were here...

"Mom? Mek?"

As I was thinking about my family, my mother and younger brother, Mek, appeared at the event, dressed neatly. They looked at Wan Yiwa and me with warm smiles.

"Where do I put this?"

"No need to put anything," I laughed, rushing into my mother's embrace. She gently rubbed my back before pulling away, feigning displeasure.

"If there's no gift, how will I get my money's worth?"

"Just having you here is enough."

"And what are you wearing? This dress plunges so low—you're not even wearing a bra? Meanwhile, Yiwa is all covered up!"

Wan Yiwa smiled at my mother before twirling to show off her open-back dress, making Mom clutch her chest in exaggerated shock.

"Oh my! Must you wear something this revealing?"

"You even made it rhyme, Mom. Just admit it, our outfits are stunning."

"Mom!"

Wan Yiwa, who had just spotted her own mother arriving, quickly ran to greet her. This was the first time our families were meeting, so there was a bit of awkwardness between the elders. But both had come to give their blessings, which moved me to tears.

"Your presence here means so much to me," I nearly broke down, but Wan Yiwa frowned and urged me to hold it in.

"Not today, love. No crying."

"But it's true... h-hic..."

I had rarely shown any vulnerability, but now I sobbed openly. Some guests turned to look, but their gazes were filled with sympathy rather than judgment. Seeing me cry, both our mothers pulled me into a tight embrace, offering their support.

"Don't cry, sweetheart. Do whatever makes you happy. We'll always stand by you."

"Thank you. Thank you so much."

I wiped my tears and forced a smile before guiding both mothers to their seats and making sure they had food. The party continued with music, dancing, and laughter. The atmosphere felt more like a high school reunion than a wedding since everyone knew each other.

While I was dancing happily with Wan Yiwa, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed someone lingering near the entrance. The figure was familiar—so familiar that I instantly recognized who it was. My heart skipped a beat, and I stopped dancing. My bride looked at me with concern.

"What's wrong?"

"I'll be right back. I just need to use the restroom."

"Want me to come with you?"

"What, are our bladders attached?"

"I'm just trying to be nice, and you're being sassy."

"Kidding. Stay here, okay?"

I gave her a reassuring smile before quickly making my way to the entrance, where the figure was pacing anxiously. As I got closer, I saw his face clearly—it was my father.

"Dad?"

He wasn't dressed for a wedding. He wore a t-shirt and shorts, his expression as cold as ever, and he said nothing, forcing me to break the silence.

"Aren't you coming inside?"

"I wouldn't step foot in there for anything."

Just as I thought, he hadn't come to celebrate—he was here to drag Mom and Mek back home. But at least he had the decency not to storm in.

"Are you hungry? I can bring you some food—"

"I don't want anything. If you really care, go get your mother and brother. I'm taking them home."

"Mom came to celebrate with me."

"I know. That's why I'm here—to take them away," he snapped. Luckily, we were outside, so no one else witnessed the scene.

"Why do you need to take them away? She's just here to show me her support. Can't she even do that?"

"No. She's my wife, Mek is my son. If people find out they attended some ridiculous event like this, how will I show my face? I even saw a few reporters lurking around. You didn't give an interview, did you?"

"Reporters? I haven't seen any. They're probably just photographers."

"Who knows? Every time one of you freaks gets married, the media makes a spectacle out of it." He sneered. "Have you changed your last name yet? If you ever give an interview, don't you dare say you're my daughter. Don't tarnish my family name."

His words cut deep. I clenched my fists, struggling to control my emotions —this was supposed to be a happy day. I forced a smile, hoping to ease his anger.

"I already changed my surname. If any reporters ask, I won't mention you."

He hesitated, clearly taken aback. He probably didn't expect me to actually go through with it. His face flushed with rage.

"You two must really love each other to go this far, huh? Changing your last name, cutting ties—don't you care about your family at all?"

"I didn't do it to cut ties. I just didn't want to upset you, so I did what you wanted."

"How did I raise you to turn out like this? I should have stuffed ashes in your mouth the moment you were born."

"Why do you hate me so much?" I finally snapped. "How does me loving a woman hurt you?"

"I'M ASHAMED!"

"..."

"If anyone asks how I raised a child to turn out so repulsive, what am I supposed to say? You're lucky I haven't stormed in there and destroyed your wedding. I'm sparing you that humiliation."

"You make me regret being born," I gritted my teeth. "But I can't change that. I didn't get to choose my parents."

"You've got some nerve."

"Wonder where I got it from."

"I hate you."

"...."

"You are my biggest disappointment. I gave you everything, raised you perfectly, and you turned out like this. You bring nothing but disgrace. Since you've changed your last name, you're not part of my family anymore. Stop dragging my wife and son into your mess."

"Mom and Mek are my family, too."

"Not anymore. Now, go get them before I do it myself."

"I won't. Mom wants to be here. If you don't approve, just wait here. The reception will be over by the afternoon."

"You think I won't go in?"

"If you were going to, you would've done it already."

"Fine. Watch me."

He shoved me aside and stormed in, yelling for my mother and brother. The guests fell silent. The band stopped playing. My heart pounded, my chest tightened, but I forced myself to stand firm.

Then he did the unthinkable—he slapped Wan Yiwa.

I snapped. I grabbed his arm and squeezed.

"That's enough, Dad. If you want to hit someone, hit me."

"Fine!"

His hand came down hard on my neck. I fell back, staring up at the sky as my body went numb.

"Meena! Are you okay?" Wan Yiwa sobbed, her bruised cheek glistening with tears.

I wanted to answer.

But everything went dark.

# Chapter 28: Drifting

Where is this place...?

A thick mist swirls all around me, and the atmosphere is unfamiliar. The cool air brushing against my skin sends a slight chill through me, but not enough to make me shiver. It feels like being in an air-conditioned room, yet this place is far from anything like that. The vastness stretches beyond what my eyes can perceive, everything is blurry, and I can barely see anything. With no other choice, I begin to walk forward, hoping to find a way out. Then, to my surprise, the fog gradually fades away, revealing a familiar house.

The house... where I was born and raised.

Why am I here?

From the outside, it looks like no one is home. At first, I hesitate to go in— what if I run into my father? We'll just end up arguing again. But the eerie silence convinces me otherwise; it seems empty. So, I decide to step inside, curious to revisit the place. It's strange. I know every corner of this house, having grown up here, yet something compels me to explore.

The door isn't locked, so I enter easily. The first person I instinctively look for is my mother.

But there's no one here.

I wander through the house, glancing around. On the side table near the sofa sits the brass clock my father used to collect. I thought it was gone, yet here it stands, as proud as ever. Turns out, my father was quite good at keeping things safe.

After circling the house, I head upstairs. Still, there is no one—no sign of life. Not even the sound of Mek blasting music like he usually does when he's alone. Convinced that I'm truly alone, I decide to step into my old room. That's when I see her.

A young girl sits at the desk, her back turned to me, engrossed in a book. She is so quiet that I hadn't noticed her presence. Who is she? What is she doing in my room?

A soft sniffle breaks the silence.

She's crying.

I cautiously approach and peek over her shoulder—only to reel back in shock.

It's me.

There I am, younger, reading a Thai language book while crying in distress. Tears drip onto the pages, soaking the words. She looks miserable.

Of course, she is. She hates Thai literature. Hates analyzing poetry. What's the point of deciphering hidden meanings in verses? It all feels useless to her—to me. I remember this feeling well.

Am I... witnessing a memory from my past?

"Who are you?"

The young girl lifts her head and looks at me with sharp eyes. I blink, stunned, unsure how to respond. If I tell her I am her, would she think I'm crazy? Even I can't make sense of what's happening.

"My name is... Meena."

"I'm Meena too."

We stare at each other, and in that instant, an understanding passes between us. We are the same.

"You're me, aren't you?" she asks, perceptive as ever. I nod slightly.

"Then, how did you get here?"

"I don't know. I don't really understand it myself."

She is quick to grasp the situation—just like me. No explanation is needed. Just by looking at me, she knows. The little girl wipes her tears, closes her book, and stands up to face me.

"Then tell me... what kind of person will I become?"

"You'll be... just like me."

"So... I won't be happy, will I?" she murmurs, clenching her fists. "I thought things would get better if I just studied hard..."

"Is your life really that bad right now?"

"If it wasn't, would I be crying into this book?" She looks at me with frustration. "Do you have any idea how boring it is to be stuck inside studying while my friends are outside playing? To be the 'good child' at home, never disappointing our parents? To be a role model for my younger brother? What about my own happiness?"

So this is how I felt as a child. I was never truly happy. I pretended to be indifferent to everything, but deep down, I was just trying to bury my real feelings. She—no, I—wanted to explore the outside world, not be trapped under my father's strict rules.

"If you hate it that much, why not rebel?"

"I don't have the courage," she says, turning away, tears falling again. "You know what our father is like."

"I do. Better than anyone. Even now."

"If I study hard, do you think I can escape his cage?"

Her goal was to break free. Just like me. I worked hard to build my life, doing everything I could to gain independence. But I never understood what true freedom was until I met Wan Yiwa—the person who unlocked that door for me, who gave me the courage to break the rules. Who made me who I am today.

"You'll grow up just fine."

I pull her into a hug. She stiffens slightly—just like I would—but eventually, she lets me hold her. Slowly, she wraps her small arms around me, inhaling my scent.

"You smell just like me."

"Of course. We're the same person."

"When I grow up... what will I be like?" "The kind of person who disappoints our father."

She stiffens, staring at me.

"You'll do things your own way. You'll be true to yourself. Just hold on a little longer."

"...I'm glad to hear that."

We embrace tightly. I've never hugged anyone other than Wan Yiwa before. Now, I am holding myself—my younger self—and it feels oddly warm. She buries her face in my shoulder and sighs.

"Will I ever have a boyfriend?"

I chuckle. "Of course."

"Someone will actually like me?"

"It'll be the same person you already like."

"No way. How would you know who I like?"

I smirk. "Don't forget—I am you."

She blushes and quickly hides her face against my shoulder.

"You're just here to give me false hope, aren't you?"

"I don't know why I'm here, but seeing you again... talking to you... makes me realize that everything I did was right. Life is something we choose for ourselves."

"Dad wants me to be a doctor."

"You won't become one. That will be your first act of rebellion."

"You're spoiling my life too much." She laughs before stepping back. "If life is really going to be that good, then I guess I'll endure a little longer."

"That's the spirit. Be yourself. Don't let anyone dictate your choices. Remember, three things in life should always be our own decision: our education, our career, and our love."

She smiles. "I'll remember that. But... if everything's going well for you, then why are you here? And what were you doing before you got here? You're dressed so fancy..."

I glance down at myself, realizing I'm still in my low-cut suit, exposing just a hint of my chest.

"I was at a wedding."

"You're getting married?"

I smile. "Yes."

"Then go back. What are you doing here?"

"I... don't know how to."

"Go. This isn't your place."

"...?"

"Go live your life to the fullest. We won't meet again."

She shoves me hard. I stumble and fall. As I hit the ground, it feels as though I am sinking—like my heart is giving out.

The last thing I see is my younger self, smiling and waving at me.

"Go live your life."

And then, everything fades to black.

Gasp!!!

Beep... beep... beep...

The sound of the ECG machine echoed in my ears. My eyes widened as I tried to figure out where I was. The mixed scent of alcohol, medicine, and Dettol made it easy to guess—I was in a hospital. Tubes and wires were attached all over my body. I felt dazed, but I could still piece together some of what had happened. The last thing I remembered was the image of Wan Yiwa crying as I collapsed, and then everything went black.

Not long after, a nurse rushed to my bedside before quickly running off to report to the doctor. Soon, both senior doctors and interns gathered around, discussing something complicated that I couldn't quite understand.

All I knew was...

I was back.

# Chapter 29: A Mother's Happiness

After I woke up, the first person to rush to visit me was my mother. Her face was drenched in tears, her eyes dark and sunken as if she hadn't slept. I looked at her and gave her a faint, understanding smile before quickly apologizing, even though I barely had the strength to speak.

"I'm sorry, Mom, for making you worry."

"It's not your fault at all, Meena. I'm not angry at you, my child."

Besides looking at my mother, I scanned the room for others. My father and Wan Yiwa weren't there, and their absence left an empty feeling inside me.

"Yiwa is waiting outside. The doctor is allowing only two visitors at a time," Methas, who had come in with my mother, explained as if he knew exactly what I was thinking. I nodded in acknowledgment before asking about someone else. "What about Dad?"

"He didn't come."

"Typical of him."

"It's not like that, sis," Methas tried to explain, but my mother spoke up first.

"I didn't allow him to come."

"Why?"

"He doesn't deserve to."

Her tone was firm in a way I had never heard before. Before I could ask more, Methas stepped out, letting Wan Yiwa take his place. The sweetfaced woman walked in, wearing a sterilized gown since this was an ICU room. I looked at her and smiled apologetically, while she stood there, eyes brimming with tears, wiping them away repeatedly.

"I'm sorry. Our wedding didn't go as planned."

"How can you even say that?"

"I'll leave you two to talk, but don't take too long. The doctor allows only ten minutes per visitor," my mother said before stepping out.

Now alone with Wan Yiwa, I imagined she would immediately rush to my side—but she didn't. She just stood there, staring at me like someone on the verge of breaking down completely. The tears that had been welling up finally spilled down her cheeks, and her face looked as if her world was falling apart. I had to be the one to lift my hand and beckon her closer.

"Don't stand so far away. It feels empty. I don't have the strength to speak loudly."

At that, she leaned in and burst into sobs. I chuckled softly but immediately felt a sharp pain in my chest. I didn't want to show it, though—I didn't want to worry her even more.

"There, there. Don't cry."

"How can you still comfort me? Do you even realize what happened to you?"

"I assume I had another heart attack."

"Yes."

"And judging by all these tubes, I assume the surgery went well?"

"Hic... Yes. You made it through."

"Then why are you still crying?"

"Because I was so scared you wouldn't come back! The doctor said your heart stopped during the surgery... Do you even know how terrified I was, you idiot?"

She sobbed uncontrollably, though she tried to keep her voice down so as not to disturb the other patients. I had always thought that after surgery, I'd be moved straight to a private room, like in TV dramas. But of course, that's just fiction—no way they'd move an entire film crew into an actual ICU.

"I'm alive now, aren't I? So why are you still crying?"

"Because I feel useless! I couldn't even protect you from your father—I just stood there, frozen!"

"You did your best, in your own way. No one can stop my father. I bet the guests were all shocked."

"Forget the guests! I care about you!"

"Well, you can't have me right now. I'm sick."

"Ugh, you're still such a tease!" she laughed through her tears, seeing that I could still joke around. "It's so frustrating! I married you, we had all the rituals and ceremonies, but when you were rushed to the hospital, I had no legal rights over you at all. The doctors only listened to your relatives. I was just... a nobody. I couldn't do anything for you."

"That's because the law hasn't changed yet. But we'll get there someday. It's a good thing I was prepared and wrote my will in advance—I already left you half of my assets. I knew something like this might happen."

"Who cares about your money? I care about having the right to you—just like I want you to have the right to me. It's so unfair. Why can't people who love each other make decisions for each other?"

"We can't have everything we want in this world. But we can work to change it."

Wan Yiwa's eyes hardened with determination, as if she had just made up her mind about something.

"Tell me right now what you're thinking," I said.

"I'm going to protest. I'll march for LGBTQ rights and freedom."

I laughed—not because it was silly, but because even at a time like this, instead of worrying about me, she was thinking about politics.

"I see you're serious about this."

"Of course, I am! This whole situation made me feel powerless!"

"I survived, didn't I?" I reached up to wipe the lingering tears from her cheeks, even though she had already stopped crying. Those were the tears that remained, hanging on. "And I'll support you, no matter what you do."

"Promise me you'll get better."

"I already am. The doctors said the bypass surgery was a success, didn't they?"

"Yes, but you still need to be extra careful. I'll stay by your side for the rest of our lives—cling to you like a leech, I don't care!"

"Leech? That term is for men. Maybe a hermit crab would suit you better."

"Why a crab?"

"Because you have a shell. You should be a shell on my back."

"You idiot!"

A few days later, I was moved to a special room to recover and be monitored. Although I was much better, the doctors were still cautious. During this time, Wan Yiwa was the one taking care of me. As soon as she finished work, she would come to stay with me, refusing to let anyone else take her place.

While I was unconscious for several days, many things had happened. Methas updated me that our parents had divorced, which nearly gave me another heart attack from the shock of my mother's decision.

"Why did Mom divorce Dad? Was it because of me?"

"Yes," my younger brother replied shortly, his face sorrowful like a child who felt he had become completely orphaned. "Mom couldn't take Dad's authoritarian behavior anymore."

"Family politics, huh?" I joked, though my expression was far from amused. "I'll talk to Mom. She must be angry."

"Mom won't change her mind. When they fought, she let out everything she had been holding in. You collapsing like that was just the last straw. Dad went too far—he ruined your wedding and nearly got you killed."

"Don't blame Dad. He's always been like this."

"And that's exactly why Mom can't take it anymore. Aside from what happened to you, there were so many other things she had endured since she was young. She told Dad that the only reason she stayed with him was because of us. In truth, she never loved him—just like he never loved her. So they finalized the divorce."

"They're already divorced? Dad agreed?"

"He did. I don't know if it was because of what happened to you, but he seemed drained, like he had lost all his energy. I don't even know who to feel sorry for."

"Where are we going to live now? I'm not at home anymore."

"Mom told me to stay with her. She said if I stayed with Dad, I might end up like you—bottling up stress until it explodes. Dad agreed without saying a word."

As we talked, Mom and Wan Yiwa returned from the mini-mart downstairs, carrying snacks. They were chatting and laughing so comfortably that I couldn't help but smile and tease them.

"You two are getting along well."

"Is that a bad thing?" Mom smirked. "I thought you'd be happy that I get along with your wife."

The word wife made both Wan Yiwa and me freeze. Mom said it so naturally, without any hint of awkwardness.

"What? Did I say something wrong? Not wife? Or should I say husband?"

"Mom!"

I yelped, while Wan Yiwa busied herself unpacking the bags, clearly flustered. Methas giggled in amusement. I tried to keep a straight face and cleared my throat.

"Girlfriend is fine, Mom."

"But you're already married. Still embarrassed?"

"It's not a polite term."

"'Husband and wife' isn't polite anymore? Or have you not decided who's the husband and who's the wife? Or... are you both?"

"Mom!"

"Just kidding!"

Mom didn't seem to care at all, looking far more relaxed than when she was with Dad. Seeing her like this made me smile.

"You seem happy these days."

"I suppose I am."

She suddenly looked serious and walked closer to my bed. Wan Yiwa and Methas, sensing the change in mood, quietly stepped out of the room to give us privacy.

"What is it, Mom? You were just cheerful, and now you look so serious. What do you need?"

"You're rich now, right?"

"I have enough."

"Then you should be able to sign something for me."

"Sign what?"

"I want to take out a loan for a house. I need you to be my guarantor."

I looked at her like I had seen a ghost. This was the last thing I expected. I thought she wanted to talk about her divorce, not this.

"You want to buy a house? Because of the divorce?"

"Methas told you already, didn't he? Yeah, that's part of it. I don't have anywhere to go right now, so I've been staying in your condo while you're in the hospital. But when you're discharged, I need to move out. I can't stay with you and your girlfriend. I need a place for myself and Methas. But I'm not asking you to buy it for me, just to guarantee the loan."

"Mom... are you sure about this? You can still talk to Dad. Don't make me the reason for your divorce."

"You were just the final push. I had plenty of reasons long before this—I just didn't have the courage. I quit my job a long time ago, so I had to rely on him. It was only recently that you started sending me money, so I didn't have to depend on him as much. But living in his house meant I had to serve him, and I barely had a voice in anything."

I stayed silent.

"Now that we're divorced, I need a place to live. I don't want to rent a small condo—it's too cramped, and it wouldn't be suitable for Methas either."

"I understand now."

"Good, I was worried you'd argue."

"But you won't get approved for a loan."

"What?"

"To get a loan, you need a stable income or a secure job. No bank is going to approve it. I don't mind being a guarantor, but the real problem is that neither you nor Methas have any financial stability for them to consider."

Mom slumped her shoulders in defeat.

"But if I buy you a house, that's different."

"Hmm?"

"I'm rich. If this is what you really want, I'll take care of everything. Did you really think I'd just sign as a guarantor and leave it at that?"

Hearing that, Mom broke into the happiest smile. Seeing her so joyful made me feel even sadder for Dad. Did he really hold her back this much? I had always thought Mom wanted to be with him. She never once complained, always keeping quiet and following his wishes. Even when I first got engaged, she went along with Dad. But now, she finally seemed to be herself. She did what she wanted. She loved who I loved.

"You're such a good kid."

"Find a house close to me, so I can visit easily."

"Sounds great! I've always wanted a cat. Now that I'll have my own house, I'll get two orange ones." Mom hummed a tune as she packed things away. "Where did those two go?"

"They left to give us space to talk."

"Wan Yiwa is such a sweet girl. She takes such good care of you. It makes me feel at ease knowing you have someone by your side—someone to be your partner, your support. I believe you'll grow old together."

Out of nowhere, Mom started praising Wan Yiwa. I smiled and teased her.

"Flattering me now that you're getting a house, huh?"

"That's not it! But I am really happy about the house, so I might as well butter you up a little. You know, love isn't always about being a man and a woman. You've opened my eyes to new perspectives. At the end of the day, we're all just skeletons under the skin—no gender, no labels."

"Wow, Mom, that's deep."

"That's how I really feel. I stayed with your father for thirty years without a single happy day. But in just a few months with Wan Yiwa, you've been happier than I ever was in my entire marriage. Love is amazing. I want to experience it, too—not just attachment, but real love."

Her voice sounded so resigned to the past.

"You will be happy, Mom. I'm sure of it."

"As long as I have my cats and my new house, I'll be happy." She grinned.

"And if you're happy, I'll be even happier."

"I am happy now."

"Then thank you for being happy. You're a good kid. Never forget that."

# Chapter 30: Bad News from the Other End of the Line

I had been in the hospital for about three weeks before the doctor finally allowed me to go home—with a massive pile of medication. Each day there felt unbearably long, stretching on as if it were an eternity. But once I was back to my normal life, nothing had really changed. The traffic was still as bad as ever. The sidewalks were still full of potholes. Power lines still criss crossed over pedestrian bridges just like I had seen in the news.

That was when I realized that no matter how successful I became, no matter how much money I had, I was still just a tiny speck in this vast world. I wasn't going to change anything—no matter the fact that I had nearly died.

Even though I was back to my normal routine, I still hadn't returned to work. I needed to avoid stress and too much movement. Wan Yiwa took care of me like I was a delicate newborn, treating me as if I might break at any moment. Sometimes, I wanted to tell my girlfriend to let me roll around in the dirt a little.

"Who in their right mind would roll in the dirt?"

"Soldiers do."

"Well, they're soldiers."

"So you're saying they're not good people?"

"Stop twisting my words! You're still on rest. No work. You're not allowed. The company will survive without you for a bit."

"You're wrong. If I'm not there, the company is definitely doomed. At the very least, you should bring me some important documents to review. Right now, everything is frozen. If it collapses, rebuilding in this economy won't be easy."

I was preparing to take the company public soon. There was a mountain of things to sort out—accounts, assets, and consultations with experienced seniors in the field. But instead, I ended up having a heart attack and needing bypass surgery.

"Fine. I won't argue with you anymore. You can work from home, but you're still not going to the office or the warehouse. Stay in bed and rest."

"And what if I get in the mood?"

"Then just lie there. I'll do all the work."

"Oh my god, you—"

I burst out laughing at our playful banter. Wan Yiwa never backed down— she was terrified something would happen to me again. Just as we were teasing each other, I heard my mom clear her throat. She had been staying with us for a while now. From her flustered expression, I could tell she had heard everything. Wan Yiwa looked embarrassed, but I simply covered it up with a bright smile.

"How's it going, Mom? Have you picked a house yet?"

Lately, Mom had been obsessed with real estate brochures. She nodded enthusiastically, clearly in a good mood, before handing me one.

"I want this house. Is it too expensive?"

I glanced at the price without even flinching.

"Not at all. It's just right. Don't forget, your daughter is rich."

"It's so great that we're rich and beautiful."

"You're sweet today, Mom."

"Well, I'm about to get my dream house and a cat! I already reserved one at the temple."

It was such an unusual way to adopt a cat. Normally, when people wanted a pet, they'd go to a breeder and pay a deposit. But Mom had essentially just claimed a stray at the temple—for free.

"You really want a cat, huh? But, Mom... are you sure you really—"

"Shut your mouth." She held up a finger to stop me, knowing exactly what I was about to say. "I'm not changing my mind. The divorce papers are signed. My daughter is rich now—I don't need to beg a husband for money just to put food on the table, only to have him lord it over me."

Mom had completely switched from calling my father "your dad" to simply "him," like someone who had truly moved on. She used to be afraid of him, always hesitant, always dependent—because he was the family's main provider. But now, with me as her safety net, she had found her independence. Still, I couldn't shake the feeling that I was somehow to blame for all this.

"Mom, are you really leaving Dad all alone?"

"He did this to himself. He almost got you killed!" Her voice was tight with anger, her jaw clenched. "He ruined your wedding. He didn't care who he hurt. Why should we care about someone who hates us?"

"He's still my father, Mom."

"Fine. I get it—you can't cut him off. But a husband and wife? That's different. I'm done." She sighed and shook off the tension. "Anyway, I'm going out to see the house today. Walking through it makes me feel rich. It puts me in a good mood."

"Alright, alright."

"If I like it, can I put down a deposit?"

"Go ahead. Just give me a call."

"Of course, I have to tell you—you're the one paying, after all." She grinned, playfully scratching my chin before happily skipping out of the room. Wan Yiwa, who had been quiet for a while, turned to me with a knowing look.

"You're worried about your dad, aren't you?"

"Yeah... Now he's truly alone. It feels like I stole Mom away from him."

"Don't overthink it. Maybe once your mom cools down, she'll make amends."

"Does she look like someone who wants to make amends?"

"Either way, I think you should hold off on visiting him for now. Wait until you're fully recovered. If you're really worried, just call him first—don't rush into anything."

"You say it like I'd be going into battle..." I sighed but nodded. "Fine. For your peace of mind—and his."

Maybe seeing me would only make Dad even angrier. But still, I wanted to check on him. Instead of calling his phone, I dialed the house number to keep my number hidden. After a few rings, he picked up.

[Hello? Who's this?]

"It's me."

[...]

"How have you been, Dad?"

Silence.

Then, without a word, he hung up.

I let out a small sigh, staring at my phone in mild disappointment. Wan Yiwa had been right—calling first was the better option. At least now I knew where things stood.

"He hung up." I gave a weak smile. My girlfriend reached out, rubbing my back before resting her head on my shoulder in comfort.

"It's okay, love. Just take it slow. Once things settle down, it'll all get better."

"Yeah... I hope so."

After recovering, I finally returned to work. Everyone welcomed me back, and by now, they all knew about my relationship with Wan Yiwa. Work was going smoothly, and my mother had finally gotten the house she wanted—a fully furnished model home, ready to move in. She had also adopted the orange temple cat, along with my younger brother, Methas, who now had the new responsibility of taking care of it. My mother was now under *my* care, and I was the one paying for all the household expenses, including Methas's education.

"I'm so happy! The house is beautiful, the neighbors are rich, and my daughter is rich. Life is perfect!"

"You really seem happy, Mom."

"Of course! No more tiny, old wooden houses. No more having to ask someone's permission before buying furniture. Now, I have *financial freedom*! And I have a cat!" She grinned and held up her new pet. "I named him Piti—because he makes me happy."

"Mom... seriously?"

"Dead serious."

Meanwhile, my friend Ann was now seven months pregnant. Wan Yiwa and I regularly checked in on her and provided financial support. Ann, of course, never let an opportunity pass to tease me.

"You ready to pay up yet? Babies are expensive, you know."

"Do you ever talk about anything *besides* money?"

"Not much else to talk about, is there?" she smirked, rubbing her belly.

That evening, as Wan Yiwa and I were relaxing in our condo, Ann unexpectedly called. I almost ignored it, thinking she was just going to ask for more money. But her voice on the other end made me sit up straight.

"You... you okay? You sound weird."

[Something's wrong. There's blood. A lot of it.]

"What?"

[I think... I think I'm having a miscarriage.]

# Chapter 31: Naming

The two of us rushed to the hospital immediately after receiving the phone call. At first, we thought of taking Ann to the hospital ourselves, but she was conscious enough to call us and explain the situation. She had already called an ambulance beforehand, so everything was handled quickly and in time. Ann was taken into surgery for an emergency C-section. Wan Yiwa and I paced nervously in front of the operating room, waiting anxiously until the doctor finally came out to give us an update. That's when we learned that Ann hadn't miscarried—she had given birth prematurely, two months ahead of schedule. This meant the baby had to be placed in an incubator.

Ann was now safe, and the baby had been taken to a sterile special care unit, lying safely in the incubator. The two of us stood outside the room, watching the tiny red infant, just a little bigger than a palm, breathing faintly. I stared at the baby, silently rooting for him, though my heart was heavy with worry—what if he didn't make it?

He—the baby boy. My nephew. No... my son had been born into this world.

"He will survive."

Wan Yiwa, who had been standing beside me the entire time, spoke as if reassuring herself. Right now, her maternal instincts were in full force—she had waited so many months for this child. I nodded, trying to convince myself to believe it too.

"There are many cases where premature babies survive."

Even though we said that, we couldn't help but worry about the aftereffects.

The doctor had warned us that premature birth was quite risky. Babies who survived often faced disabilities or stunted growth. Their brains might not develop fully. Their eyesight and hearing could also be affected in the future.

"We will raise him well. We won't let anything harm him."

The sweet-faced woman beside me reached out and held my hand, offering comfort—or perhaps seeking comfort herself.

"This child—no, our son—will have everything he needs. Right now, what he needs most is our encouragement."

"Then he's already receiving it in full... Darling, we have a son."

"We'll get to see our little one take his first bath too."

*"Giggle."*

She laughed through her tears, a mix of joy and overwhelming concern. I looked at her and couldn't help but apologize.

"I'm sorry that I couldn't give you a child of your own."

"Are you crazy? Why are you apologizing? I knew from the start that we couldn't have a child together. If I suddenly got pregnant, you should be worried instead!"

"Honestly, if you hadn't stopped Wasan back then, I might have been pregnant by now—ow! Why did you pinch me?"

"Stop talking nonsense!"

I finally laughed. In truth, we were just trying to lighten the mood, finding humor to ease our distress and the deep concern we had for the baby. After watching over him for a while, Wan Yiwa and I went to visit Ann. She was still unconscious from the anesthesia after surgery, completely unaware of anything. Since we couldn't talk to her, we decided to go home and gather ourselves. I was too restless to sit still, while Wan Yiwa, on the other hand, managed to compose herself better by opening her laptop to work.

"You're amazing. Even at a time like this, you can still work. Your company must be making a fortune with you there." "No, I'm thinking of a name."

"Hey! Take back the compliment then!"

Despite saying that, I went to sit beside her at the table in front of the sofa. There was a long list of names suggested by people online, ready to be used. We were looking at the boys' name section, and the sheer number of choices was overwhelming. Wan Yiwa, who always carried a notebook, carefully wrote down the names she liked, lining them up in a neat list of her preferences.

"Let's decide on his real name first. I've got about five options already."

"Those are your choices! I haven't picked mine yet!"

"We'll split it. I'll choose his real name, and you pick his nickname."

"A real name is important too! I want to name him as well. I've had one in mind for a long time."

"What is it?"

"Suriya Chakrawan (Solar System)."

"Go to bed."

"Why?" I whined, upset that she didn't approve of it. Wan Yiwa gave me a cold stare before turning back to the list of names online.

"What kind of kid has a name as long as Bangkok's full name? Aren't you worried he'll get teased at school?"

"I want our son to be as grand as the solar system! And of course, it's a unique name! *Suriya Chakrawan!*"

"No."

"Do you want to fight me over this?"

"I can fight, and I'll win."

I shrank back, remembering the time she got into a fight with a senior in school. I knew for sure I stood no chance against her.

"Why do you always resort to violence?"

"You're the one who suggested fighting first! No, we're not using that name. The real name is my responsibility. You just pick the nickname. Whatever you choose, I won't object."

"Hmph! Fine! I'll pick his nickname then."

I got up and stomped my feet dramatically as I walked over to turn on the desktop CPU nearby, then started the process of searching for a name. In truth, it helped relieve the tension that had built up over the course of the night. Having something to think about, something to plan for this child, was better than pacing around anxiously, worrying about his premature birth and what the future might hold for him.

More than two hours passed as I searched for names, and I lost myself in it completely, forgetting all my worries. Before I realized it, Wan Yiwa had come up behind me, wrapping her arms around me and resting her chin on my shoulder.

"How's it going? Found a name yet?"

"Not telling. Hmph."

"What? Are you still sulking about earlier?"

"You ignored the name I carefully planned for our child if he was a boy. You even threatened to slap me over it!"

"Do you really think I would have done that? Besides, don't forget—you were the one who suggested the slap in the first place."

I didn't say anything, just pouted dramatically to make it seem like I was still upset. She was right—I had been the one to bring up the idea of a slap first, so staying mad at her wasn't exactly fair.

"Come on, let's go to bed. It's really late."

"I haven't finished choosing yet." I pouted even more, trying to look cute, but I still gave in and pressed shutdown like she asked. When I turned to look at her, Wan Yiwa was smiling at me, and I instinctively smiled back— only to quickly wipe it off my face. "What are you smiling at?"

"I'm smiling because you're adorable." She gave me a quick kiss. Of course, I hadn't really been sulking at all. I had just created the situation to lighten the mood and ease the tension. And it seemed like she knew exactly what I was doing.

"I love you so much," she whispered.

"Wow, what an extravagant way to apologize."

"Let's relieve some stress, then."

"Oh? You're inviting me to ballroom dance?"

"Nope. Let's go play the cymbals."

"When did we get cymbals in our room?"

"We've had them for a long time." She motioned downward. I immediately caught on and narrowed my eyes at her.

"Interested?" she asked playfully.

"You think you can win me over with this?"

"Then you can just lie still."

"Nope. I want to play Thai classical music."

"Then let's go to bed. Stop being coy... Whoever gets to the bed first gets to be on top!"

The moment she said that, I practically leaped out of my chair and raced up the stairs. In the end, the winner of that night was Wan Yiwa. And I had to accept everything she gave me.

The music that night played so beautifully that I forgot all my worries completely.

I had already informed my mother and Methas about Ann's premature delivery. The two of them were more excited than anyone else and rushed me to take them to the hospital as soon as possible so they could see their grandchild. Now, they stood in front of the glass, watching the tiny baby move his little hands without much awareness of the world around him. Meanwhile, Wan Yiwa and I went to visit Ann, who was probably awake by now.

When we opened the door, we found her staring out the window at the early morning sky. I cleared my throat slightly to get her attention. She flinched before turning toward us, quickly shifting her expression into an indifferent smile.

"Hello, good morning. You guys came so early. You must be really excited."

"Of course we are. You gave birth almost two months early!"

"Well, I was in a hurry for money, you know?" She shrugged nonchalantly.

"Have you gone to see your baby yet?" Wan Yiwa asked with concern, but Ann's response was completely devoid of emotion.

"Do I have to?"

Her answer left us both stunned. If this was an act, it was the most convincing performance I'd ever seen.

"At the very least, you should show some concern for the child you carried for months," I said.

"I carried him because of the money from his mother. Otherwise, this baby wouldn't have made it."

The way she referred to him as "the baby" instead of "my child" spoke volumes about her detachment. I sighed and nodded, accepting reality. In a way, this was a good thing. If she had formed any kind of emotional attachment, I might not have been able to take the child at all.

Thinking this, I pulled up a chair, crossed my legs, and got straight to the point.

"What happened? Why did you suddenly go into labor?"

"I don't know. After you left, I was just watching TV, walking around, doing normal stuff. Then, all of a sudden, I started bleeding and feeling contractions. That's it."

"You didn't do anything to induce labor, did you?"

"If I wanted to do that, I would have done it in the first month. I wouldn't dare do anything reckless—this baby is worth five million. Since we're already talking about this, don't think I'm being greedy or anything, but now that the baby is born, my job is done. Have you prepared my money yet?"

Wan Yiwa and I exchanged glances. At first, we had thought her coldness was just an act to hide her emotions, but the way she was demanding money now made it clear—there really was no attachment at all. I licked my lips, my irritation rising. How could someone be this greedy? This was her own child, and she hadn't even glanced at him before bringing up money so casually.

"I'll write you a check," I said.

"It better not bounce."

"I swear, I really want to slap you right now," Wan Yiwa growled, rolling up her sleeves as if she was ready to fight. She had been trying to hold back, but Ann's attitude must have pushed her over the edge.

I quickly stepped between them, waving my hand to stop her. Then, I pulled my checkbook from my bag, filled in everything she wanted, and wrote down the amount before handing it over.

"This is your payment for carrying the baby."

"Your handwriting is pretty," she said, flicking the check between her fingers as if using it as a fan. "Ah, the smell of money. Even as paper, it's intoxicating."

"From now on, you have no rights to this child. You're not allowed to visit, check in on him, or build any kind of bond. You can't even secretly look at him. And don't even think about trying to take him back."

"Oh, don't worry. Even if those conditions weren't in the contract, I wouldn't do any of that."

"Good. Then we're in agreement. From here on out, there's nothing left for us to talk about. This is where our paths finally separate."

I grabbed my bag, preparing to leave, but just as I opened the door, Ann called out to us.

"Wait a minute."

"What now?"

"Have you decided on a name for the kid yet?"

"I have a few in mind. Why? Do you want to know?"

"Not really. Just wanted to see how prepared you are to raise him. Now that I know, I'm satisfied."

I took a step out of the room, but Wan Yiwa, who was trailing behind, turned back one last time and said,

"His name is Suriyachakrawan."

"..."

"He will grow up well under our care. You don't have to worry."

"I'm not worried at all."

# Chapter 32: Father

Our son, who had spent two months in the incubator, was finally out. Everything had gone well. The moment the nurse carried him out to us, tears streamed down my face without me realizing it. For the past two months, I had only been able to watch him through the glass. But today, he was here, real and tangible. I was still frozen in awe, hesitant to touch him too much because he seemed so fragile.

"Do you want to hold him?"

"I'm scared."

I answered without even realizing I had spoken. In my life, I had never feared anything except my father—but that was a fear instilled by patriarchal oppression since childhood. This was different. This tiny, fragile life had just entered the world. If I accidentally dropped him, there would be no more Suriya Jakrawan, our child. Just the thought of it terrified me.

"Go on, try holding him. The nurse will support you."

"... He's smiling."

I carefully cradled our little son in my arms. He was lighter than I had imagined. His wrinkled newborn skin hinted at the adorable features he would grow into.

"Wow." I gasped as the tiny baby moved his little hands around, eyes still closed. "He's moving!"

"You seem amazed by everything today," Wan Yiwa, who stood beside me, poked the baby's cheek, her voice trembling with emotion. "He really is moving."

"You're just as excited as I am."

"Can I hold him too, sis?"

Methas, who had been silent for a long time, asked hesitantly. I glanced at my younger brother before nodding in approval. That was all it took for him to rush forward, though he still didn't dare to touch the baby, only gazing at him with teary eyes. He wiped his tears away with the back of his hand.

"He's so cute. Have you picked out a nickname for him yet?"

At that question, I suddenly felt flustered. No one knew the name I had in mind. I hadn't dared to tell anyone yet, so I simply shook my head.

"Not sure yet, but I have an idea. Let's just call him Suriya Jakrawan for now."

"Are you serious?" My mother, who had initially suggested that name, made a grimace. "Aren't you afraid he'll get teased by his friends?"

"Why do you sound just like Yiwa? Why would he get teased? It's a grand and majestic name! I don't care what anyone says, no one's changing it."

"You complain about your father being authoritarian, but you're just like him."

I snapped my head around to glare at my mother, pouting in mock defiance.

"I'm cutting your salary, Mom."

"You really are just like your father."

"I don't love you anymore."

"Then go love your father instead."

Her sarcastic remark reminded me of someone else who should know about this. I handed the baby over to Wan Yiwa and walked away to make a call.

Everyone immediately knew what I was about to do, and my mother quickly followed, trying to stop me.

"Don't call him. Your father never wanted to know about this in the first place."

"But he's still the grandfather. This is his grandchild. He should know."

"You'll only end up getting hurt."

"Then I'll go in person instead."

"That's not what I meant."

"Maybe seeing the baby will soften him. This is his grandchild, after all."

"A child born from his son? He won't believe it's his grandchild. It's oldfashioned thinking, especially from someone like him. But if you really want to try, fine. I'll go with you."

"When was the last time you saw Dad?"

"A lifetime ago."

My mother's voice was laced with bitterness. I started to reconsider taking her along, but going alone was risky. In the end, I decided to bring her with me. We took the baby and drove to my father's house, but the moment we arrived at the front gate, we all hesitated. No one moved to open the door, unsure of what we would face.

"Maybe we should just turn around," Mom suggested while holding the baby. "What if your father loses his temper and throws the baby to the ground?"

"Mom... You're thinking too negatively."

"Did you forget your own wedding? He almost killed you!"

At that, my mother grew visibly angry. Wan Yiwa, sitting in the backseat, reached forward to massage her shoulders in an attempt to calm her down.

"It won't be that bad. Let's just go inside first. If things get out of hand, we can leave."

"Your wife is as calm as ice."

The word "wife" made Wan Yiwa pull her hands back, looking embarrassed. We were more used to calling each other "girlfriend" than anything else. I smiled a little at the thought of her being my wife. Though, at times, she played the role of a husband, too. It didn't matter. In our relationship, we could be anything for each other.

"We're already here. Let's just get this over with."

I was the first to open the car door, and then the others gradually got out before unlocking the front gate and stepping inside to find my father, who was watering the plants. When he saw us, he froze, holding the hose still, narrowing his eyes at us like a venomous snake ready to strike. I felt a bit nervous and instinctively took a step back to hide behind my mother, even though I had been acting tough just moments ago.

Mom was the first to speak, her voice carrying none of the previous reverence she used to have for my father.

"You... we came to visit today."

"Why?"

"We brought your grandchild to see you."

The word "grandchild" made my father fall silent. He remained motionless, his eyes slicing toward the small child in my mother's arms.

"Why did you bring it here?"

"So it can see its grandfather, at least once."

Technically, the correct term should have been "grandfather," but since Suriya Jakkawan was my child, the use of that title had come to an end. Since my father refused to move, my mother decided to step forward instead. The water was still running. My father aimed the hose at my mother, causing water to spray onto her.

"Don't come any closer."

She stopped and let out a mocking laugh.

"Can your damn ego be eaten or something? You won't even spare a glance at your own flesh and blood? This child has done nothing wrong."

"That thing is not my grandchild."

"It is, Dad," Methas, my younger brother, finally spoke up, his voice laced with both fear and determination to protect his son. "He's my flesh and blood."

"You've got some nerve talking to me like this now."

"..."

"A child is just a child. What's looking at it going to do? Is it going to get up and dance? Take it away. I don't want to see its face. Bad luck."

Hearing that, I bared my teeth, ready to fight. He could insult me all he wanted, but calling my child "bad luck" was beyond tolerable.

"Dad, that's too much."

"Who's your dad? You're not my child anymore, are you? Didn't you change your last name already?"

"I told you we shouldn't have come. This was pointless. Let's go," Mom urged, deciding we should leave even though we had barely been there five minutes.

Dad pretended to continue watering the plants as if nothing had happened. Wan Yiwa then stepped forward to speak.

"Father—"

"I'm not your father."

"Uncle... at least look at your grandchild—ahh!"

Dad sprayed her with the hose without hesitation. I quickly ran to pull her away.

"That was too much, Dad! We came here just to visit and see how you're doing. We even brought your grandchild, and you treat us like this? Do you plan on being alone for the rest of your life?"

"I'm perfectly fine being alone. Having you lot in my life just makes me ashamed of myself—raising a bunch of misfits. One is a freak, the other got a woman pregnant. At first, I thought it was just their nature, but now I'm wondering where I went wrong raising you."

"Stubborn old man!" Mom shouted, something she had never done before.

"Your children are trying to make amends, and you push them away? Fine! Die alone, you crazy old man!"

"You're the crazy one!"

"Let's go!"

Mom's commanding voice made all of us immediately retreat. Just as we were about to step out of the gate, Dad suddenly asked, not addressing anyone in particular:

"What's its name?"

"What?" Mom snapped at him in frustration. "What are you talking about?"

"The child you're holding. What's its name?"

"Suriya Jakkawan," I proudly answered.

Dad remained expressionless, unlike others who reacted the first time they heard the name.

"That name is as long as Bangkok's full name. What part of the brain did the person who named it use?"

I had heard similar complaints before. Was it really that long? I thought it sounded unique and cool.

"Does it have a nickname?"

Even though Dad pretended to focus on his plants, he continued asking as if he was curious. Everyone exchanged glances, unsure of the answer, until all eyes turned to me. After all, it was my job to come up with my child's nickname.

"Storm Justin."

"What?"

"Huh?"

Both Dad and everyone else gasped in shock. I looked at them all and shrugged.

"Why? It sounds cool."

"Of course, you would name your kid something ridiculous. Get lost already. 'Storm Justin'—what kind of name is that? Sounds like a football boot brand!"

Since he had officially kicked us out, we had no choice but to leave. Before getting into the car, Wan Yiwa pinched my waist and glared at me.

"We need to talk."

"About what?"

"About this ridiculous 'Storm Justin' name of yours!"

Life isn't a novel, huh? Not every story gets a happy ending. You can't always have everything you want. Take my father, for example—everyone else has accepted my relationship with Wan Yiwa and the fact that the baby is now ours. But my father still refuses to acknowledge it.

Once we got in the car, everyone kept complaining about Dad's behavior. Wan Yiwa remained silent, knowing she had no right to voice an opinion on this matter. But when we finished venting about Dad, the conversation immediately shifted to my son's nickname.

"What were you thinking when you named him that? Who's going to call him that? Don't you feel bad for him when he starts school?"

Why was everyone so concerned about school? Where else would you find such a cool name? I had researched to make sure no one else had the same one. It was unique!

"Come on, Mom, it's stylish."

"No, it's too long. My tongue twists just trying to say it."

"So, aside from fighting with Dad, now you're all going to fight me over my son's name?"

"Yes!"

They all answered in unison. I scratched my head as we hit a red light. Wan Yiwa immediately cut in.

"I let you have your way with his full name—Suriya Jakkawan, fine. But I can't accept this nickname. You're insane."

"You too? If not this name, then what? Come up with one!"

Everyone went silent, struggling to think of something. I smirked and snapped my fingers.

"So, 'Storm Justin' is official."

"No!!!"

Why does no one understand me...?

I dropped off my mom and brother at their house, but it took almost thirty minutes because Mom refused to let go of Storm Justin, claiming that since Wan Yiwa and I had never raised a baby before, we wouldn't know how. But I insisted, and eventually, we managed to take our son back to our condo. There was still so much to do—I had no idea what raising a baby entailed. Aside from the essentials we had prepared, like diapers, baby bottles, cradles, and soft toys, there was still one crucial thing missing.

"Breast milk."

Wan Yiwa was most worried about this. Every baby needed their mother's milk, and this was something I couldn't provide. Formula was just a substitute, and we weren't sure if he could even digest it. If he got sick, what would we do? I even hung my car keys around my neck in case of an emergency, ready to rush him to the hospital without delay.

As we walked in, a condo staff member informed us of a refrigerated package delivery.

"A refrigerated package? For me?"

"Yes, it just arrived. The sender said it's very important and needs to be delivered to you immediately. This way, please."

I followed him to the package—a foam box, not heavily sealed, so it was easy to open. My first thought was that it might be seafood from the market, something my mom sent over. But when I opened it, I found carefully packed breast milk, kept cold with ice packs.

I exchanged glances with Wan Yiwa before turning back to the staff.

"Who sent this?"

"A woman. She said you'd need it. She'll keep sending more regularly."

"Ann," Wan Yiwa muttered.

It was the same name I had thought of. I nodded slightly in acknowledgment before carrying the box with her toward the elevator.

"Maybe she's not as cold-hearted as she seems. Maybe... she's just hiding behind a thick mask, refusing to admit her bond with the baby."

"As long as she means well. Just don't take him away from us."

"She won't. She's not ready to raise him. Her decision is clear—I saw it in her eyes. This breast milk... it's a gesture of kindness, of a mother's love. She knows a newborn needs milk directly from their mother."

We both fell silent as we entered the elevator, looking down at Storm Justin and smiling.

"Today, we have your first meal, sweetheart. Your mother's milk."

# Chapter 33: Love a Little More Each Day

"Waaah! Waaah! Waaah!"

The loud, heart-wrenching cries forced me to cradle my son and rock him back and forth in an attempt to soothe him at two in the morning. Luckily, the room was soundproof, so our neighbors wouldn't be disturbed. No matter how sleepy I was, I was more than willing to wake up and comfort my little one until he quieted down. At first, I tried giving him milk, but he hadn't burped yet. So, I had to keep holding him against my shoulder until he let out a burp. But it seemed like this little guy had no intention of stopping his wailing.

"My little Storm, are you planning to stay up all night?" I cooed at him with a smile. I wasn't irritated at all—babies cry, after all. By now, I had become a mother who was completely smitten with her child. The only thing that slightly annoyed me was that Storm Justin had ended up becoming "Pāyu" (which means storm in Thai) because no one in the house, not even Wan Yiwa, would call him by his original name. In the end, I had to give in and change it. Maybe if he had kept the name Storm Justin, he wouldn't be crying so much, just like a storm.

"Hey, Mommy! Up late rocking the baby to sleep?"

Wan Yiwa appeared as I was pacing back and forth with our baby in my arms. She smiled at me, showing no signs of sleepiness since she was still working—at two in the morning, no less.

"What about you? Still not going to sleep?"

"I've got things to do."

"What kind of things?"

"Just a little something."

"Are they working you that hard? You need a raise."

"Remember those words—you said I need a raise. But no, I'm not working."

"Then what are you doing?"

"Well..."

"Hm?"

I sat beside her, looking at her laptop screen. It displayed a petition on Change.org regarding same-sex marriage. I turned to my partner with a surprised expression.

"You're interested in this kind of thing?" I asked, still rocking Storm in my arms to help him burp. Wan Yiwa nodded with a serious expression.

"I'm going to the protest, too."

"Really? Do you think signing this petition will make a difference?"

"I don't know, but I'll do whatever it takes to make sure I can legally marry you, no matter how long it takes."

"You want to be my official partner that badly?" I nudged her playfully, laughing. She grinned but remained earnest.

"It's necessary."

"You don't need to register our marriage. You already get half of everything I own—I made a will, remember?"

"That's not what I care about. I want legal rights over you."

"..."

"You don't understand... When you collapsed, besides donating blood, I couldn't do anything. Even though we were already married in every way that mattered." Her voice tightened, as if something was caught in her throat. Tears welled up in her eyes as she took a deep breath to push back her sadness. "I had no legal authority to make decisions for you. If your parents hadn't been there, you might not have made it."

"Don't think about it too much..."

"I can't help it. Who knows what the future holds? If I fall seriously ill one day, you'll understand how painful it is to have no say in the decisions that could save the person you love. We live together, we love each other, we're married, yet I have no legal rights over you. It's not fair."

I looked at her, understanding her pain. Before, I had made her worry so much. Her signature meant nothing when I was in a critical state. I reached out to stroke her back and nodded.

"I get it."

"I'm asking my friends to sign, too, but I don't know if people will actually do it."

"I'll sign. How many signatures do you need?"

"At least 200,000."

"Do you think it will actually work?"

"It might make the government pay attention. If it doesn't, I'll go protest in person. I'll do whatever it takes to have equal rights as your partner."

The word *partner* made me smile. She was so serious about this because she cared about me. She wanted the right to make emergency decisions for me. She valued me so much.

"Then hold the baby for a second. I'll sign too. And when there's a protest,

take me with you—I'll march by your side."

I handed Storm over to Wan Yiwa and signed the petition. Within three minutes, our little boy let out a burp. I turned to glare at him in mock annoyance.

"What? I held you for ages, and you wouldn't burp! You just kept crying." "It's all about technique."

"Ugh."

As I looked at the laptop screen, a thought suddenly popped into my head. "Hey... Have you ever thought about how our wedding felt kind of incomplete?"

"Hm? Not really... Even though you collapsed at the end, everyone already saw us as a couple."

"No, I don't mean that. I don't like how it turned out. It was supposed to be a joyful celebration, not some dramatic cliché with my dad ruining it."

"But it's in the past. Let it go."

"I can't."

"You can't change the past."

"I can." I finished signing my name but continued staring at the screen, avoiding her gaze. "Let's make it perfect this time."

Wan Yiwa fell silent, as if she were trying to read my mind. I slowly turned to look at her and nodded. "Marry me again."

"You don't have to—"

"Marry me."

"Meena, I'm not upset about it—"

"Marry me."

"..."

"This time, Storm will be in the pictures too. Let's wait until he's a little older—maybe two or three years, so he can walk. He'll be our little flower boy at the ceremony."

Tears welled up in Wan Yiwa's eyes.

"You're making me emotional... You don't have to do this. I already know you love me."

"It's necessary. It's very necessary. This time, everyone will celebrate with us, and we'll have our son there as our witness."

She pulled me into a tight embrace, holding Storm close, who had already fallen asleep on her shoulder. I smiled and rocked them both gently.

"I love you, Minn. I love you so much."

"I love you more."

"I love you even more than that." I wiped away her tears, though my own eyes were filled with them too. "I don't know if the law will change, but let's make it perfect this time. I want our son to know just how much his moms love each other."

She sobbed softly and nodded.

"Yes... I'll marry you."

"..."

"I'll marry you."

We had been through so much together. Everything we had faced had shaped us into one, even without the law recognizing it. But in our country, we still weren't granted the legal rights we deserved. The best thing I could give her was a perfect wedding—a celebration of our love and family.

What's the point of wealth if we aren't happy?

Living without purpose doesn't bring joy, but being with her does.

"You're my happiness, Wan Yiwa."

"And you're mine."

No matter what obstacles lay ahead—my father's disapproval, legal battles —we would face them together. It didn't matter. As long as we had each other, that was enough.

Step by step, little by little, loving each other a little more each day.

This was our kind of love.

**The End.**

# Chapter  special 1: Approaching [POV Wan Yiwa]

It has been four years since our last wedding... Today is another important day—our second wedding. This time, the event is simpler than before, with only our closest friends and family attending. On my side, it's just my family and very close friends, while Meena invited only her family and closest relatives. Unlike the previous time, we both have come to realize that a wedding is just a ceremony—a way to announce to the world that we belong to each other.

Instead of a buffet where guests serve themselves, we opted for a Chinese banquet-style setup in a small hotel ballroom. Still, everything was beautifully decorated with meticulous attention to detail—every piece of cutlery, glass, lighting, and even the music was of the highest quality. The only extravagant part was hiring a well-known singer and an experienced host to oversee the event. Of course, that was Meena's idea. She insisted that even though the wedding was small, it had to be perfect.

She's still the same... Meena.

Ever since our school days, she has always given her all in everything she does—whether it was academics, sports, or work. At the office, she was a strict and demanding boss. I had even been on the receiving end of her temper when I made mistakes, even though everyone in the company knew what we were to each other. But the moment she got home, she would transform into a little kitten, clinging to me and apologizing whenever she saw that I was upset. She always explained that it was just work, that she needed to be strict, and that even I couldn't be an exception.

Now, her company has gone public, making her a bona fide millionaire. Yet, she remains the same loving partner—attentive but never overly dramatic. The only difference is that my love is now shared with our little one, Payu. But that's something I'm willing to accept because I, too, pour my love into our child.

"Mom... Can I eat the flowers?"

"No, sweetheart."

Payu toddled over and asked with innocent curiosity. He had grown up well —a fair-skinned, adorable child who looked exactly like Meena, even though she wasn't the one who gave birth to him. Anyone would believe he was her biological son.

"Then what are flowers for?"

"They're for you to throw."

"Okay! I'll throw them!"

Payu ran off to play with the other children from our close-knit family circle. Watching him, I couldn't help but smile before turning my gaze to the guests, feeling a deep sense of gratitude and warmth. Everyone understood why we were having a second wedding—it was to make up for the imperfections of the first. No one judged us; instead, they were happy to celebrate with us. The singer on stage kept the energy high, entertaining everyone, while my bride was busy running around, making sure everything was just right.

"These aren't the plates we chose!"

Meena was talking to the hotel manager, her expression serious. I smiled and gently tapped her shoulder before offering the manager a reassuring smile.

"It's okay. I'll handle it."

"But..."

"Meena... today is a day for us to be happy. You can't let little things like this ruin it."

"But I want everything to be perfect."

Because our first wedding had been full of mishaps, Meena was determined not to let history repeat itself. I knew I had to calm her down before frustration got the best of her.

"Nothing in this world is perfect," I said gently. "The plates may not have the pattern we chose, but they still serve their purpose. No one cares about the design of the plates—just look around."

"They might not, but I do."

"Well, technically, this wedding isn't perfect either."

Her eyes widened in shock.

"What's missing?"

"Your father."

Again.

She was visibly stunned, swallowing hard. I gave her a small smile and sighed.

"See? Nothing is ever truly perfect. Let go of the little things. I am already so happy today, just knowing you put so much effort into this. But if you spend the day being frustrated, how can I enjoy it?"

That got through to her. She exhaled and finally smiled.

"You're right. I'm being too serious. I just don't want anything to go wrong this time. How many people get to have two weddings in their lifetime?"

"If this one isn't good enough, we'll have a third."

"Hmm... not a bad idea."

I was joking...

But at least she let it go and focused on welcoming our guests. She held my hand, guiding me through conversations with different people. Everyone was laughing, talking, and genuinely enjoying themselves. There was no need for explanations anymore—everyone understood our love and why we had a second wedding.

As I continued greeting guests, I caught sight of someone standing by the entrance, hesitating. I quietly excused myself and walked toward the door. The moment I saw who it was, my heart tightened.

There, standing stiffly with a serious expression, was the most intimidating figure in our love story. Dressed sharply in a suit, his presence was as formidable as ever.

"Dad."

"It's me."

And just like that, my mind flashed back to four years ago—the day of our first wedding. The day he stormed in, causing chaos and scattering guests in fear. That day was the worst of my life. It was the day Meena nearly had a heart attack. The day I realized that I couldn't live without her.

"What now?"

That day's event happened so suddenly. Meena collapsed to the ground, completely still, unconscious. The people at the event rushed to perform CPR and carried her to the hospital. Luckily, the venue wasn't far from the hospital. If we had waited for an ambulance, I was afraid it would've been too late. So we carried her there ourselves.

And that was the moment I realized—I had no rights over her. Not even the slightest.

"Only family members can sign."

"But I'm her wife... her husband—no, we're married!"

"Only family members."

The words "wife" and "husband" in this country only apply when one person is a man and the other is a woman. We had no legal rights, even though we had gone through all the formal ceremonies that declared us as partners. That day, it was her mother who signed the papers, allowing Meena to be taken into surgery for a bypass.

I was completely useless.

I had no value—I couldn't do anything for her at all.

I remember just sobbing uncontrollably, powerless. Meanwhile, Meena's father stood frozen outside the operating room, silent, his eyes red with guilt. And all the blame was placed on him—by my mother-in-law.

"Because of you."

*Slap!*

A sharp slap landed on the older man's face. Meena's father looked at her mother, both shocked and enraged, but he didn't retaliate.

"Will there ever be a time when you do something right?"

"..."

Maybe because he was still in shock, he didn't say anything back. He just stood there, unmoving. Methas, Meena's younger brother, quickly stepped in to prevent the situation from escalating.

"Mom, this is a hospital. If you want to argue, do it at home. You're disturbing other people."

"If we go home, that would be *his* territory." Mom said the word *him* with complete disdain. Normally, she would always go along with whatever my father-in-law said, never opposing him. His word was law. But today, she was a completely different person—because her eldest daughter was hovering between life and death.

"I didn't want it to be like this." Meena's father spoke in a firm tone, unwilling to back down. But he still didn't move after taking that slap.

"Then why did you come to this wedding? Just to ruin it?"

"You've gone too far."

"I can go even further. Today was supposed to be the happiest day of our daughter's life, but you turned it into this. Do you even have a heart? Or is your brain the size of a pea?"

"Happiness? Marrying a woman—*that's* what you call happiness? Besides, I didn't come to stop the wedding. I came to take them back home."

"If I was going to take her home, why would I have attended her wedding?"

"Are you saying you accept this unnatural, twisted love?"

"If it makes my child happy, I accept anything. *You're* the one who's twisted. You've been insane from the start—everything has to go your way. Everyone's life has to revolve around you. But you never once tried to move along with the world!" Mom was crying as she spoke, but her voice was filled with fury. "If my daughter dies, I will kill you. I swear it."

"She's my daughter too."

"If she was your daughter, you wouldn't have pushed her to the brink of death like this. I can't take it anymore. I can't live under your oppression any longer. She tried her whole life to make you proud, and this is who she became—Meena. Instead of being proud of her, you crushed her. You never appreciated her. You never once acknowledged her achievements. And now, when she finally tried to live for herself, you destroyed it all. What kind of father are you?"

"You—"

"I want a divorce."

The words dropped like a bombshell. Even the person who said them looked stunned. Meena's father widened his eyes in shock, pointing at my mother-in-law.

"Don't test me."

"I'm not testing you. I want a divorce. I can't watch my daughter suffer like this a third time. And I won't let my other children go through the same pressure."

"It's because you spoil them that they've all gone astray!"

"Then maybe you should ask yourself why they became this way. If it's not in their nature, then it must be yours."

"You—"

"Tomorrow, we're going to finalize the divorce."

She looked him straight in the eyes, unwavering. The fear and submission I had always seen in her were gone. Meena's father clenched his jaw, glaring at her before turning away.

"Let's talk about this when we've calmed down."

"Even if I calm down, I will still want a divorce. I'll be at the district office. If you don't show up... you lose."

"I don't lose!"

"Then show up!"

Meena's collapse changed everything. While she was still unconscious, her parents actually went through with the divorce. Her mother moved out of the house, taking Methas with her, and they stayed at Meena's place. Both of them seemed hesitant around me, which was completely unnecessary.

"I won't stay long. Just until Meena wakes up," her mother told me as she set up a sleeping area on the floor. I tried to insist she take the bed, but she refused, leaving me feeling guilty for sleeping comfortably while she didn't. "Mom... are you sure about this? You've been with him for so long."

"I've never been more sure. Meena made me realize how short life is. If you're unhappy, you need to find happiness. Right now, all I'm waiting for is for her to wake up. That's my only happiness, my only hope."

"But... what about Dad? Who's going to take care of him?"

"If he can't fend for himself, he can starve."

It seemed like she had completely cut him off. I couldn't help but worry about the old man, now alone in that big house with no one to cook for him. So, despite being worried about Meena, I secretly arranged for food deliveries to his house. But every day, the meals were thrown out. It was frustrating, but I didn't give up.

Finally, I decided to go there myself.

"Father."

"Why are you here?" His voice was sharp and commanding. I nearly dropped the food and ran, but I forced myself to stay.

"I brought you food."

"So it was you, sending all that food. I thought..." He trailed off. "Doesn't matter. I don't care who sent it—I won't eat it."

"Please, just eat a little. I know you're barely eating at all. Part of it is because you're worried about Meena. The other part... is that you don't know how to cook."

I glanced at the dining table. Every dish consisted of eggs—omelets, boiled eggs—nothing but eggs.

Bracing myself, I went into the kitchen, plated the food, and set it before him. He looked at it, then turned away.

"I'm not eating."

"Please eat. You need your strength."

"I get by just fine without your help. Don't try to act kind. Even if you bring an entire temple's worth of monks, I won't believe you're doing this out of goodwill."

"I *am* doing it out of goodwill."

"I don't accept it."

"I'll make you accept it. If you don't eat today... I'll come back tomorrow."

"Don't come."

"I will."

"Whatever you bring, I won't eat it!"

He spat his words like a storm, but I held my ground, locking eyes with him.

"You *will* eat it."

His face twisted in shock, like he'd seen a ghost. I left the food on the table, picked up my bag, and turned to leave.

"I'll come back tomorrow."

"You rude little brat."

# Chapter  special 2: Sowing Seeds [POV Wan Yiwa]

Since I can remember, I have never given up on anything...

If I had to give an example, it would probably be the time I fought with a senior in the bathroom—and won. Even the hardest thing in my life, like confessing my love to Meena, I managed to succeed. So, winning over my father, who is as tough as nails, doesn't discourage me at all. Even if I had to fight him to win his heart, I would do it until I won.

But I didn't have to fight.

All this time, I had been sending food to my father, only to have it thrown into the trash. Whenever I visited, I was chased away. And this happened over and over again. So today, I decided to use my ultimate weapon—one that melts the hearts of everyone who sees it. Even someone as stubborn as my father.

"You have to take care of Payu alone today. Will you be okay?"

"Of course. I usually take care of him alone anyway."

"What are you talking about? I help too." Meena pouted and glanced at Payu, who was sleeping soundly in his crib. "I may not be able to do much, but when it comes to financial support, I never fall short."

"That's your strong point. People can't be good at everything. Are you heading to the warehouse today? Go on, don't worry about things here. I'll take care of the little one myself."

"I'll come back quickly."

"No need to rush. Just finish your work. Taking care of Payu is my responsibility today."

Meena planted a big kiss on my cheek before grabbing her bag and stepping out. The moment she was out of sight, I quickly shut my laptop, scooped up our still-sleeping baby, and took a taxi straight to my father's house.

The same wooden house still stood tall, unchanged. Every time I came here, I couldn't help but feel a little nervous. But I was ready to walk into the lion's den. Today, I brought along my little round bunny, who was now awake. Payu was in a good mood, smiling and babbling all day. I sincerely hoped his chattering would win over his grandfather's heart.

"I'm here!"

I announced as I opened the door. My father, who was watching boxing on TV, whipped his head around and glared at me like a lion ready to pounce. He had never shown me even a hint of friendliness. But still, I faced him with unwavering determination.

"Why are you here? How many times do I have to tell you that you're not welcome? Next time, I'm locking the door."

"But you didn't lock it today."

"When I say 'next time,' I mean starting tomorrow. And what is that?"

Even though he could clearly see that I was carrying a baby, he pretended not to. I beamed at him and stepped closer, showing off.

"Your grandchild."

"That is not my grandchild."

"Ah-goo! Ah-goo!"

Payu cooed, looking up at his grandfather with big, bright eyes. My father examined him for a moment before turning away.

"Take him back."

"No. Today, I came to cook for you."

"Are you deaf or just shameless? I told you—I don't want anything. I'm not eating."

"Here, hold this."

I shoved Payu into my father's arms. The elderly man was startled, quickly adjusting his grip as if afraid the baby might fall. Seeing this, I took it as a good sign.

"Why are you leaving him with me? I don't want him."

"I'm going to cook."

"I'll throw it away."

"Then I'll just keep making more until you eat. You've lost a lot of weight, you know. You don't look as strong and intimidating as you used to."

"No wonder you're not afraid of me anymore."

"You need to regain your muscles to be as fearsome as before. Please take care of Payu... Oh, and he needs some sunlight. He's always in the condo and never gets any sun. If it's not too much trouble, could you take him outside for a walk?"

I dumped the responsibility of watching Payu on my father and disappeared into the kitchen. But as soon as I opened the fridge, I found nothing—not even vegetables or ice. Everything was empty except for some drinking water.

What does he eat all day? No wonder he's so thin. Probably because no one cooks for him. And when someone does, he throws it away out of pride. Realizing this, I walked back to my father, who had placed Payu on the sofa and was sitting beside him.

"I'm going to the market to buy groceries and cook for you. Please watch Payu."

"Hey! Why are you just leaving the baby with me?"

"Diapers are in the basket. If he pees or poops, please change him. You've raised two kids—you should know how."

"Wait a minute... Hey! You crazy girl!"

I dashed out, hopped on a motorcycle taxi, and rode to the market to buy ingredients. Honestly, I was worried about how my father would handle Payu. Would he really just let him lie there like he said?

I was back within twenty minutes, groceries in hand, and found my father holding Payu outside, letting him soak in the sun, his face stern.

"You were gone forever. How could you leave a baby with me?"

"Finally, Payu is getting some sunlight."

"He pooped."

"Then change him."

"I don't know how."

"You'll learn."

"Ugh."

Okay, that's one less thing to worry about. Despite his cold demeanor, my father still brought his grandson outside for some fresh air, just as I asked.

After cooking a simple meal and serving it, my father only glanced at the food before turning away. He handed Payu back to me and said briefly,

"Go home."

"At least eat something."

"I'm not eating. And don't come back. Next time, I won't open the door.

This house does not welcome strangers." He shot a sharp glance at Payu. "Or children that are not my son or grandson."

I pursed my lips and nodded. Okay, today wasn't a success. But at least I was sure now—my father wasn't as heartless as he pretended to be. At the very least, he held his grandson.

"I'll come again."

"Shameless."

"See you next time."

"Get out."

This battle isn't over yet. Even though I've been chased away like a stray dog, whenever I get the chance, I'll bring Payu to see Dad from time to time. And as expected, Dad does exactly as he said—he locks the doors and bolts them, refusing to let any strangers into the house. I have to press the doorbell about twelve times before he finally comes to the door, looking grumpy and yelling loudly.

"I already told you not to come!"

"Waaahhh!"

Payu, who was already in a bad mood today, immediately started wailing at the sound of Dad's shouting. Dad glared at the child in my arms as if he was about to devour him, then lowered his voice a little.

"Make him stop crying."

"How am I supposed to do that when you yelled so loudly?"

"Then do something to make him stop."

"The one who made him cry should be responsible, don't you think?"

"Oh, for crying out loud! How shameless can you be?"

Dad picked up Payu in his hands, holding his arms and legs in a strange position before gently rocking him. "There, there, don't cry, kid." "..."

"Just a bit of effort—can't you even manage that?"

"I didn't know you could do that."

"This is what happens when someone's never had kids."

"Well, that's perfect, then. You can take care of him for a bit while I cook today."

I quickly slipped into the house. Dad yelled after me, but it was no use. I shamelessly continued making meals, despite being rejected over and over again. But I believe that where there's a will, there's a way. Persistence is key. Even water droplets can wear down stone if they fall every day—so what exactly is your heart made of?

Whether this strategy will work on Dad, though, is another matter.

"Take him back."

And so, every day, it's the same routine. After I finish cooking, Dad refuses to eat and chases the two of us away without a second glance, as if we're completely insignificant. Even after a whole month of persistence, I'm starting to feel discouraged. I slump in front of my computer, struggling to focus on work. Of course, Meena notices my unusual behavior. She comes over, resting her chin on my shoulder while looking at my screen.

"What's wrong? You're so quiet today. Is your kid acting up?"

"No, I'm just lost in thought. I can't concentrate."

"I think your baby's skin looks darker. Have you been taking him out in the sun a lot?"

Her sharp observation makes me flinch, but I quickly play it cool by raising an eyebrow.

"Kids need sunlight for vitamin E. A little tan won't hurt. Your whole family is naturally fair-skinned—he'll lighten up eventually."

"I wasn't complaining, just surprised. You're really good at raising him. You work and still make time to take him out for fresh air. I should take him for a walk sometime to give you a break."

"You don't have enough work already?"

"Work has nothing to do with spending time with a kid. Oh, he's crying... my sweet little Payu!"

Meena rushes to comfort him and tries feeding him, but no matter how much she offers, he refuses to stop crying. I sigh, get up, and pick him up, mimicking Dad's earlier technique. I gently hold his little hands together, tilt him at a forty-five-degree angle, and rock him back and forth until he calms down. Meena looks at me as if she's seen a ghost, pressing a hand to her chest.

"How did you do that?"

"Not every cry means hunger."

"Where did you learn that move?"

"From a good teacher."

Even though I was starting to feel discouraged by my father's stubbornness and strong will, I still took Payu to visit him at home. However, work had been quite busy lately, so I hadn't been there for about two weeks. But when I came back this time, I found that the house wasn't locked as usual. As I stepped inside, I saw my father watering the plants. I quickly shielded my child, fearing that he might spray us with water like he had done before.

My father glanced at me and spoke in a firm tone.

"What's with that posture?"

"You're not going to spray us with water, are you?"

"What kind of person do you think I am?"

Exactly the kind I thought. I still held my child close, ready to protect him. My father turned off the hose and walked toward us with an expression of boredom.

"Give me the kid."

"Huh?"

"If you won't stop coming, then go inside and cook something you're just going to throw away anyway. I'll hold the baby for you. You have twenty minutes."

My father took Payu from my arms and waved me off toward the house. I was left utterly confused but did as I was told, making a simple meal of fried eggs and rice—knowing that if I put too much effort into it, he'd just throw it away.

Since cooking didn't take long, I had a chance to sneak a look through the kitchen window. I saw my father holding Payu, pointing at birds in the sky as if explaining what species they were. My heart swelled with happiness. It seemed that the ice around my father's heart was finally starting to melt. "Ahem. The food is ready," I announced.

"Hurry up and take it."

As soon as my father saw me, he immediately handed the baby back to me.

But Payu clung tightly to my father's necklace, as if he didn't want to leave. When I finally managed to take him back, he started crying loudly.

"Looks like Payu is getting attached to you, Dad."

"Don't be ridiculous. I didn't do anything... Just make him stop crying already."

"How am I supposed to do that? Oh! Should I do what you did? Hold his hands and rock him?"

I tried to imitate my father's actions, but he quickly took Payu back into his arms.

"You idiot. You have no strength. What if he slips and falls?"

"Well—"

"If my grandson dies, who will take responsibility?"

"What?"

"I mean..."

"It's okay. I didn't say anything," I said with a smile. "This is your real grandchild, after all... See? He stopped crying now. You're actually pretty good at taking care of kids."

"Of course. I raised two kids myself. Why wouldn't I be good at it?" he said, looking proud for a moment before quickly putting on a stern face again. "But I'm not taking care of this kid."

"Do you hate Payu that much?"

"Yes."

"Then... I guess I won't bring him here anymore."

I pretended to be disappointed. My father hesitated before scowling again.

"If you won't bring him, then don't. Did I ever ask you to bring him? Take your kid and don't come back here again. That food you made—I'll give it to the dog. Now get out!"

I was kicked out as usual. Honestly, I wasn't upset at all. This time, I just wanted to test something. I feigned sadness, took Payu back, and left. Even as I walked away, Payu kept crying for his grandpa, but my father turned his face away. I pressed my hands together in a respectful farewell.

"Alright. I won't come back. I give up."

"Good."

"Goodbye, Dad."

He begrudgingly returned my farewell. I walked away looking downcast and called a taxi home. But as I left, I peeked through the rearview mirror with a knowing smile. I had played my card. That stubborn old man, who had started bonding with his grandson, wouldn't be able to stand not seeing him for long.

When I got home, Meena, who had arrived earlier, tilted her head and eyed me suspiciously.

"Where did you go?"

"Hmm?" I faltered before replying nonchalantly. "Just went for a walk downstairs."

"You needed to carry all that stuff just for a walk?"

"It's just in case the baby needed a diaper change. Why are you questioning me like this?"

"I came home a few times during the day, but you were never here. This is the fifth time. Tell me the truth—where did you go?"

"I..."

"..."

"I went to see your father."

"You—what? My father? Whose father?"

"Your father."

"You're joking!"

Seeing her disbelief, I had no choice but to tell her everything—how I had been taking Payu to see her father while she was away. Meena looked at me in shock. She wasn't exactly angry, more like deeply concerned.

"What if he had thrown our baby to the ground? Why didn't you talk to me first?"

"Your father isn't that cruel."

"When has he ever been kind? No. From now on, don't go anymore. I don't trust him."

"You're exaggerating. Do you think you became who you are today without any contribution from your father? But don't worry—I already told him that I won't be going again."

As I spoke, I secretly smiled to myself. I didn't know if my plan would work, but when you plant seeds, you eventually reap the harvest. No matter how stubborn he was, he wouldn't be able to stand not seeing his grandson again.

As we continued our back-and-forth, Meena's phone suddenly rang. She stopped talking, picked it up, and froze as if she had seen a ghost. She turned to look at me.

"My dad is calling."

I immediately jumped up beside her, staring at the screen. Meena hesitated, not daring to answer. I urged her to pick up, but before she could, the call ended.

"Why didn't you answer?"

"I don't know what he wants to talk about."

"That's exactly why you should have answered. Call him back."

"No way. He's probably just calling to yell at us for visiting him too much. Oh no... he's calling again!"

The phone rang loudly. Annoyed, I reached over and pressed the answer button. Meena glared at me in frustration but reluctantly spoke into the phone.

"Hello, Dad... Huh? Okay..." Her expression changed from anger to confusion as she handed me the phone. "He wants to talk to you."

"Me? Okay."

I took the phone and put it to my ear. Meena leaned in to listen, so I put it on speaker.

"Hello, Dad."

[Why did it take so long to answer? So rude.]

The moment he spoke, Meena scowled in irritation. Her father never had anything positive to say. But I remained calm and responded sweetly.

"The phone was far away, so I couldn't answer in time. Is there something you need?"

[Of course. Do you think I called for fun?]

"Then please, go ahead."

[I'm hungry.]

"...Excuse me?"

[I want food.]

Meena and I looked at each other in shock. It felt like hearing the ghost of Mae Nak at the riverbank, waiting for someone to bring her offerings. But this was Dad. The odds of this happening were even lower than seeing a ghost.

[If you're not coming tomorrow...] He hesitated. [Order Pad Thai Firestorm for me. I like that place. It's expensive, but I doubt it'll make you go broke.]

I smiled knowingly. The seeds I planted were beginning to sprout.

"Alright. I'll place the order."

[But if you think it's too expensive and plan to come over anyway... bring groceries and cook at home. Your cooking isn't terrible. It's edible.]

"You didn't throw it away?"

[All the restaurants nearby were closed. Stop asking so many questions.]

"I see. So, do you want me to order delivery or visit?"

He went silent, clearly struggling with his pride. I turned to Meena, who was now smiling knowingly.

[Just come over. Bring that Storm Cluster kid too. I'll help take care of him.

That's all.]

The moment he hung up, I turned and jumped into Meena's arms, laughing.

"You did it! He's letting you visit. He's accepting you!"

"I did it! I really did it!"

The seeds I planted had blossomed beautifully.

# Chapter  special 3: Since I Met You, I've Been Happy [POV Wan Yiwa]

It had been four years since that day, and now my father was showing up at our wedding. However, he refused to step inside. He wore a cream-colored shirt with dark brown slacks, looking far more formal than the first wedding he attended in a t-shirt and shorts. He looked somewhat uncomfortable upon seeing me, but his neat attire and well-groomed hair made me smile immediately.

"Please come inside, Dad."

"No, I just..." He cleared his throat. "I just came to drop something off."

"Come on in."

"I said no."

I reached for his arm and tried to pull him inside. At first, he resisted and struggled against me, unwilling to enter. That was until Payu ran up to him, calling out in his small, slightly unclear voice—he was just starting to talk, after all—but the way he called "Grandpa!" was as clear as if it were etched into his little brain.

"Grandpa!"

"Payu." The moment my father saw his grandson, his resistance softened. He crouched down and scooped him up into his arms, momentarily forgetting to resist. "You look so handsome today, little man. What's in your mouth?"

"Flower."

"It's a flower, sweetheart. Mommy told you not to eat it."

"But it's tasty."

"Let's go inside, Dad."

"But..."

Despite his protests, I managed to drag him into the venue. The moment he stepped in, the lively chatter of the guests died down into an eerie silence. My mother, who had been talking to some guests, immediately stood up and marched toward us as if she were ready for a confrontation. I quickly stopped her.

"Mom, don't. Dad is here to attend the wedding."

"Attend? Are you sure he's not a ghost?"

"What the hell, woman? I'm just dropping by."

"Are you here to ruin this wedding like last time? If my child collapses for the third time, I swear I'll stab you with a fork."

"Excuse me?" My father set Payu down and straightened his clothes as if to emphasize that he was fully dressed for the occasion. "I just came to see what a wedding looks like."

Meena slowly approached, glancing at my father nervously, unsure of his intentions. He looked at his daughter, who was wearing a women's suit with a slightly plunging neckline, her hair pulled back into a neat bun. He nodded at her.

"Hello. Why is your dress cut so low? Your boobs are tiny."

"Dad!"

It was unclear whether he was genuinely reprimanding her out of concern or just teasing her, as his expression remained cold and unreadable, true to his usual demeanor. He glanced around the venue and gave a small nod of approval.

"Simple. Just close family, huh? Even my side of the family is here." He looked over at a table where his relatives were seated. "You invited everyone but me."

"I didn't think you'd want to come."

"I didn't want to come."

"..."

"I just wanted to see how Payu manages to call two people 'Mom' at the same time. Where can I sit?"

At that, Meena eagerly started looking for a seat for him. The wedding proceeded as usual. The band began playing, just like at any wedding. My father was about to take his seat but suddenly stopped, staring intensely at Meena as if he were looking right through her. The beautiful bride shrank slightly under his gaze. "What is it, Dad?"

"I want to dance."

"Huh?"

"This is a Western-style wedding, right?"

"Well, it's a mix."

"Doesn't the bride have to dance with her father?"

"..."

"Why don't you dance with me for one song?"

Meena froze, her eyes welling up with tears. Even my mother and I gasped, covering our mouths in shock. My father glanced at all of us and then looked away, muttering,

"What's wrong with you all? I just want to dance. It's not like I'm dying."

"O-Okay! Let me go tell the band!"

"Play Elvis. I want to rock and roll."

"Yes! Hic..."

Meena burst into tears. My father sighed and pulled her into a hug, something I doubted he had ever done before. His little girl was now in his arms, sobbing uncontrollably as if she had finally received the acceptance she had been waiting for. She cried openly, without shame. Even the guests watched with teary eyes, knowing well what kind of man my father had been.

"Stop crying and go request the song. I want to dance."

"What the hell, coming to someone else's wedding and making demands," my mother muttered before heading to the stage. "Fine, I'll request your favorite song."

She wiped her tears and spoke with the band. The music started—a rock and roll tune. The moment the beat dropped, my father began moving his hips, opening the dance floor. The crowd erupted into applause. Meena hesitated at first but then joined in, and soon the father and daughter were rocking and rolling together, spinning and jumping with wild energy.

I clapped along, standing beside my mother and Methas, who had just walked up, tears streaming down his face.

"How did Dad change this much?"

"Time changes people."

"Me too! Me too!"

Payu ran into the middle of the floor and danced with his grandfather. Laughter filled the air, and the guests cheered them on from their seats. As the song reached its climax, my father spun Meena around once before pushing her toward me.

"You guys keep dancing. I'm tired... I've opened the floor for you."

My father walked up to the stage and requested a song. But to my surprise, it wasn't another rock and roll tune—it was a new song, a Thai song that Meena and I knew well. It was almost unbelievable that someone his age would even know this song.

Now, it was Meena and me standing together, dancing as a pair. We felt a little shy, but we danced anyway because my father was watching us the entire time. Meena kept crying, and I had to wipe her tears away.

The tempo slowed down, and the soft melody of *"Since I Met You, I've Been Happy"* by Violette filled the room. The singer's beautiful voice made it impossible for me to hold back my own tears.

"Dad really thought this through before coming here," I whispered.

"He really did... and he even knows this song," Meena replied, looking past my shoulder at my father, who, in true fashion, simply looked away.

We held each other close and swayed gently to the rhythm, whispering in each other's ears as we danced.

"I'm the happiest I've ever been today," Meena said.

"This wedding is exactly how you wanted it," I told her.

"If it weren't for you, Dad might have never accepted us."

"It's not because of me. It's because of *us*... and because of Payu."

Right then, Payu was running around with his grandpa, proudly showing off the flower he still refused to spit out.

We continued dancing, and when the chorus arrived, we both sang along in unison:

*"Since I met you, I've been happy."*

Then, we both burst into laughter and pulled apart just enough to look at each other.

"Thank you for coming into my life," Meena said. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't know what love like this feels like."

I nodded in agreement.

"Same here. You make me happy every single day."

"Can we stay together for a long, long time?"

"No."

"..."

"Because we'll stay together forever—until we grow old, until the world crumbles, and even beyond that."

We embraced again, dancing to the sound of clapping hands that followed the rhythm. Everyone in the room was celebrating our love. This was the most perfect wedding reception, and I knew we had made the right choice in having it again.

For one, it gave us the chance to see that my father had finally accepted our relationship.

And two... it gave us a moment to cherish for the rest of our lives.

"I love you," I whispered.

"I love you more," Meena replied.

And this... this is our love story.

It doesn't have to be dramatic, overwhelming, or grand.

Just a little love each day, slowly filling up our hearts—until, one day, it overflows.