

# Chapter : Introduction

Every day, people live their lives in different ways. I’ve spent so long watching others, feeling jealous, and imagining what I would do if I were healthy. I always told myself that if that day ever came, I would do everything—run marathons, box, play music, dive, learn to dance— anything my body could handle. And finally…

*That day has arrived.*

The day my body became strong again, thanks to a new heart. A heart that beat so loudly I could almost hear it in my ears. A small scar in the middle of my chest had turned into a keloid scar, a mark that symbolized my new life.

I touched it every day with pride, never feeling ashamed of it. In fact, I was grateful. Thankful to the person who gave me this heart, which fit me so perfectly.

*This heart made my dreams come true.*

For the past three years, since I regained my strength, I’ve done everything I once dreamed of. I’ve lived like a normal person. And I’ve promised myself that I will stay healthy and take care of this heart every single day.

I don’t want the person who gave it to me to regret their gift. I will live for them, too. I don’t want to let them down.

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"I’m going to work now!"

Today is another special day. I get to live like everyone else—go to work, enjoy my youth, and experience life outside my home. On Thursdays, employees have to wear orange uniforms, and today is my first day at work.

My parents stood at the door, watching me with worried faces. To them, I was still their small, fragile child.

"Let Dad take you to work."

"No way! I need to live my own life. I want to be independent—it’s one of my dreams."

I answered cheerfully.

We had talked about this for a long time. My parents didn’t agree with me working a regular job—waking up early, working all day, and coming home in the evening. They thought I should just stay home like before.

"You have so many dreams, but I don’t think anyone dreams about going to work as much as you do."

"Well, maybe other people don’t, but I do!" I grinned.

"Don’t worry about me. I need to meet new people—some will be nice and always smile at me, and some might be jealous and try to cause trouble, just like in dramas and novels. It makes life more exciting!"

"How is that exciting if someone bullies you? Will you be able to handle it?"

"Of course!"

I flexed my arms for them to see.

"Mom, you’ve seen everything I’ve done in the past three years—dance classes, self-defense training, diving, running a half-marathon. I’ve already proven I can take care of myself!"

"But…"

Dad still looked uncertain, but I waved my hand like a stop sign.

"No, Dad. I’ve already made up my mind."

Once I’ve decided on something, no one can change it. My parents sighed in defeat. Since they couldn’t stop me, they had no choice but to accept it.

"Fine, but I’m picking you up after work today."

"Oh, come on, Dad! I already said I’ll take the bus home."

"I let you do everything your way, but on your first day of work, I *have* to pick you up."

"But..."

"No but...I’ve made my decision."

I got my determination from my dad and my kindness from my mom. So when Dad said he had decided, I knew there was no changing his mind. I pouted, my bright smile fading.

To show my frustration, I stomped my feet a few times as I walked outside, but of course, Dad didn’t care one bit.

"I’ll take you to the bus stop."

"Dad, you’re treating me like a little kid!"

"You will always be a child in your parents’ eyes. That will never change."

Well, since they were letting me do what I wanted, I figured I should let Dad do what he wanted too. It was only fair. He dropped me off at the bus stop and waited until I got on.

But as soon as the bus started moving, I noticed his car following right beside it.

I couldn’t help but smile and shake my head. His worry was *way* too much.

Alright, I’d let it slide today. Maybe he just wanted to make sure I really made it to the office like I said I would.

It felt like he was dropping off his daughter at school, scared she might skip class and go hang out somewhere instead.

But today was a good day. I wanted to focus on the positives.

It was my first day at work, my big day. Everything was going to go smoothly—I was sure of it. My heart told me so. Even though I was nervous, it was beating steadily, like it was cheering me on.

Sometimes, it felt like this heart could talk, like it was always giving me strength.

I wished I knew who had donated it. It was a shame I would never find out.

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Finally, I arrived at the company. As I got off the bus, I waved goodbye to Dad, who obviously knew I had noticed him following me. He rolled down his window and reminded me again, firmly:

"I’m picking you up this evening."

"Dad! I *told* you not to!"

"I’ll be waiting."

No room for negotiation.

I let out a sigh and mumbled under my breath. Dad was still as protective as when I was sick all those years ago. But what could I do? If it made him feel better, then fine—he could pick me up today.

But I would have to make it clear that this was a one-time thing. From tomorrow onward, I’d go home on my own.

Once Dad saw me walk into the building and disappear from sight, he finally drove away.

I stood in front of my new office building, adjusting my orange uniform casually. Taking a deep breath, I told myself,

“I can do this. I’m ready for anything.”

Just a little pep talk before stepping inside.

The lobby was busy, filled with people from different companies walking in and out. I blended into the crowd waiting for the elevator to take me up to the 11th floor, where my new job was.

As everyone squeezed into the elevator, my heart suddenly started pounding for no reason.

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***Thump...Thump. Thump...Thump.***

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It beat harder and faster—so fast that my smartwatch sent me a warning about an abnormally high heart rate.

Just as the elevator doors were about to close, they slid open again.

A tall, elegant woman stepped in, her hair tied back carelessly yet still looking effortlessly graceful. She had the same commanding presence as the day I came for my interview.

“Hold the door, please.”

As she stepped inside, our eyes met for a brief moment.

This wasn’t the first time my heart had gone wild like this. The same thing happened on my interview day—my watch had sent the same warning. But back then, I brushed it off as nerves.

Today, though, it felt different.

My heart was working harder than ever before. No amount of exercise had ever made it race like this.

***Thump....Thump Thump....Thump***

My new boss, **Ms. Mantana**, entered the elevator and stood beside me. The doors shut, and silence filled the space. No one spoke—probably because we were all strangers. This was a corporate building shared by multiple companies, so not everyone here was a coworker.

***Ding.***

As the elevator stopped at different floors, people gradually stepped out, leaving only four of us inside. I assumed the two others were heading to higher floors.

Just as I started to breathe normally again, my new boss turned slightly, glanced at me, and gave a warm smile.

"We meet again."

She greeted me casually.

My heart pounded even harder, so loud it drowned out every other sound. But I forced myself to stay composed and returned her smile.

"I’m happy to see you again too."

"And we’ll be seeing each other every day… ***forever***."

***Ding.***

The elevator chimed as we reached the 11th floor.

Ms. Mantana stepped out first, while I remained frozen in place, replaying the word *forever* in my head, trying to decipher its meaning. Did she really mean… forever?

Noticing that I hadn't moved, she turned back and called out to me.

"Are you not coming out?"

"H-Huh? Oh! Yes, I am!"

I hurried after her, trailing behind like an awkward duckling following its mother. And honestly, *awkward* wasn’t an exaggeration. Compared to my boss, who carried herself with elegance and confidence, I felt incredibly plain.

Her voice was smooth and calming, her every movement poised and deliberate. She had this aura that made people instinctively pay attention to her.

Seeing that I was following behind her like a lost puppy, she slowed her pace until we were walking side by side. Then, in a tone that sounded more like an instruction than a suggestion, she said:

"Walk slower."

"Huh?"

"So we can talk while we walk."

"Oh… okay."

She wanted to *talk* to me?!

I quickly licked my dry lips and clasped my hands together, trying to present myself as a humble subordinate.

"Today is your first day at work, right?" she asked.

"Yes, it is."

"Are you nervous?"

"A little… I'm worried I won’t fit in with my coworkers. And I’m scared I’ll mess up and won’t pass my three-month probation."

"So you're a worrier, huh? Don't worry—you’ll pass."

"Thank you for the encouragement."

"I meant it. You *will* pass."

She said it with such certainty that it almost felt like a guarantee.

By then, we had reached the office.

The moment Ms. Mantana stepped inside, the lively chatter in the room immediately died down. The entire atmosphere shifted—from warm and bustling to cold and tense.

Everyone seemed on edge, their backs straightening, their movements becoming more cautious.

It was a stark contrast to how I had just felt walking beside her.

Ms. Mantana glanced around the office, meeting the eyes of every employee before speaking.

"You all look so focused,"

She remarked, her voice smooth yet carrying a weight that made everyone listen.

"With this level of dedication, our company is bound to go far." Everyone exchanged glances, looking just as confused as I felt.

Ms. Mantana gestured for someone to come forward.

"Phim."

A woman quickly stepped up.

"Yes, Boss? How can I help?"

"This is our new employee. Show her the ropes, will you? If she has any questions, she can ask you. And if there's anything you can’t explain, send her to me. We work like a family here."

She then pointed to a desk placed conspicuously near her frosted-glass office.

"That’s your desk. If you need anything, let Phim know."

"Thank you, Boss."

I called her *Boss* just as everyone else did, and with that, she retreated into her office.

The moment the door closed behind her, the entire office let out a collective sigh of relief, as if they had all been holding their breath. Even Phim, my new coworker, looked visibly more at ease.

I turned to her with a smile.

"Nice to meet you, Phim. My name is **Phuean**."

She gave me a once-over before asking bluntly,

"Are you connected?"

"Huh?"

"Are you a VIP hire or something?"

"What? No! Why would you say that?"

Phim crossed her arms.

"Boss has never personally introduced anyone before. And you walked into the company with her. Are you close?"

"Not at all. We just happened to take the same elevator up. I applied like everyone else."

Before Phim could respond, another voice chimed in from behind me.

"But Boss personally selected you."

I turned to see a familiar face—one of the interviewers from when I applied. Unlike Phim’s skepticism, her expression was friendly, which made me feel a little more at ease.

"She handpicked you herself."

I instinctively glanced at Ms. Mantana’s office again, feeling my heart race.

*She personally chose me?*

"I had no idea until now,"

I admitted, still processing the information.

"Are you related to Boss?"

Phim pressed.

"No, not at all!"

"Then why would she do all this? She picked you, walked in with you, and even assigned me to mentor you. Boss has never done that before."

"Maybe she was just looking out for a new employee? I don’t think it’s anything special,"

I replied, trying to sound casual.

Phim narrowed her eyes.

"Then why is your desk placed right in front of her office? There’s plenty of space elsewhere."

That one caught me off guard. I glanced at the lone desk again.

"Uh… I have no idea."

"Boss probably wants to keep an eye on the new hire and see if you're as good as she expected. Oh well, in three months, we'll know if you're staying or not. In the meantime, I'll teach you what I can,"

Phim concluded quickly, then took me around to introduce different departments.

As we walked, I kept glancing at the frosted-glass office, my heart pounding.

*She really picked me herself? How lucky am I?*

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The first day went smoothly. Everyone seemed friendly, but I wasn't sure if it was genuine or just the usual excitement over a new employee. Still, it was a good day.

Just as promised, Dad came to pick me up after work. It was a bit frustrating, not being able to go home on my own like I had planned, but I arrived home safely and had plenty to tell my parents about my first day.

I was so happy that I hummed through dinner, washing dishes, and even while getting ready for bed. Standing in front of the mirror, I grinned at my reflection and gave myself a wink.

"You did great today, Phuean. May every day be just as good!"

Feeling proud, I started removing my makeup. But as I focused on my reflection, a strange sensation crept over me.

*It felt like... I was being watched.*

But that was impossible. This was my bathroom. I was alone.

**"Hello."**

The bottle of makeup remover slipped from my hands. I gasped and stumbled backward.

The voice hadn't come from outside the room. It had come from the mirror.

Slowly, I lifted my gaze.

My reflection didn’t move.

The girl in the mirror looked exactly like me—but she wore a black T-shirt and raised an eyebrow at me in amusement.

I wanted to scream, but no sound came out. My entire body froze with terror.

"Don't scream."

"...."

"Hey, don't make that face. **I'm you. And you're me**."

I took another step back, covering my mouth, my eyes brimming with tears. I started mumbling prayers under my breath.

"Namo... Ta... Ta.. Sa.."

**"You idiot, I'm not a ghost! I'm just another version of you!"**

She took a step closer.

***Thud!***

And that was the last thing I remembered before everything went black.

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**Title: Mirror**

**By : Chao PlaNoy**

# Chapter 01: Faen

I don’t know how much time has passed, but as soon as I opened my eyes, I immediately sat up. I found myself lying on the bathroom floor in front of the mirror. I slapped my face once, but it hurt more than I expected.

Maybe I was just dreaming. How could there be another me in the mirror? Ghosts don’t exist… right?

"Wake up?"

"Oh sh—!"

I cursed, even though I never usually say bad words. The person in the mirror stood with her arms crossed, rolling her eyes in pure annoyance.

"Stop being so scared. I'm not a ghost."

"Not a ghost? T-Then what are you?"

I backed away until my back hit the cold, wet bathroom wall. My eyes filled with tears—I was terrified. I slapped myself again, but I was still here. This wasn’t a dream.

"I'm just like you. The only difference is... we're from different sides."

"Different sides? Are you saying you're behind the mirror? That's impossible. It's just a wall!"

"Ugh, why are you so slow? I'm you—from another world. Can’t you see how similar we look?"

She put her hands on her hips, looking even more annoyed. Her brown hair had red-dyed tips—nothing like mine. The only thing we had in common was our face.

"...."

"Calm down so we can actually talk."

"This... this is insane."

"I know it’s hard to believe, but you have to accept it. Now, get up and be strong! Move it!"

She barked the order like a strict commander. I slowly pulled myself up, still pressing my back against the wall, watching her cautiously.

"I'm not gonna bite, okay? I can't even cross over."

"You sure about that?"

"If I could, I would’ve done it already."

I swallowed hard, trying to make sense of what was happening. Gathering my courage, I stepped toward the mirror. But instead of my reflection, I saw her—moving differently from me, like a separate person.

"How is this even possible?"

"Heaven must be playing a joke on us. I have no idea how it happened, but... it did."

"Why don't you look surprised?"

"I already was. I got over the shock before you did."

"That was you being shocked?"

"Yeah, and now I’m done. So stop asking so many questions, process this quickly, and let’s have a proper conversation. I’m actually excited to talk to you for the first time."

The girl in the mirror rubbed her hands together. She didn’t really seem like a ghost—just a normal person who happened to look exactly like me. At least she already said she couldn't cross over, which meant I was safe.

"Don’t make a weird face at me."

*“Bleh.”*

"...."

"Wow, even making faces, I still look beautiful. Not scary at all."

"You're so full of yourself."

"Don’t forget—we have the same face."

"Give me a little more time to process this. Five minutes."

"Too long. Two minutes."

I closed my eyes, my heart still racing, but I wasn’t as terrified as before. This wasn’t a dream—it was real. There was another me from another world.

When she stuck out her tongue, it wasn’t scary at all. She actually seemed friendly and was trying to chat with me. Maybe I should just go along with it for now.

"Okay, I’m good now."

"That was less than two minutes. Impressive."

"How can you even talk to me?"

"I have no idea. I've been watching you for a while now."

She said it so casually that I suddenly felt embarrassed. I started thinking about all the things I’d done in front of the mirror—talking to myself, putting on makeup, even… changing clothes.

"You’ve seen me completely naked, haven’t you?"

"Why are you embarrassed? Our bodies are identical. Seeing you is like seeing myself."

"So that means... you've been watching me talk to myself in the mirror this whole time?"

"Yep. It’s pretty funny. I even saw you performing concerts in front of the mirror. Your singing's kinda bad, by the way."

"My voice should sound exactly like yours, though!"

"But singing skills are different. You're an office worker, but in my world, I'm a musician."

"I'm a musician in your world? That’s so different from me. I'm an accountant."

"If we were exactly the same, would it even be a parallel world?"

"So, all that relativity theory stuff is actually real?"

"What’s that?"

"Never mind. The point is, I'm still shocked, but I’m starting to understand. But why did you suddenly appear today?"

"I wanted to see if I could talk to you, so I tried. And it actually worked!

Since we’re already talking, let's introduce ourselves. What’s your name?"

"**Phuean**."

**"I'm Faen."**

Okay, so at least we’re not completely the same. This parallel world has some differences. She seems bold and confident, while I’m... pretty plain, especially when it comes to style.

"So, I’m not you, and you’re not me. We’re different people—we just happen to look alike and live in different dimensions."

"Finally, you get it. At least you’re not calling me a ghost anymore."

"Then… what do you want?"

I asked cautiously. There had to be a reason for her appearance. I wasn’t sure why she decided to show herself now. She crossed her arms and made a face, like she was annoyed.

"If I wanted something, would you even be able to give it to me? I already told you—I just wanted to show myself. I got tired of watching you all the time. Also, your singing was unbearable."

"I'm not a singer! And this is a bathroom. If I can't have concerts here, then where?"

She laughed, clearly entertained by my frustration.

"We’re getting closer now. You’re even pouting! You’re more comfortable with me, and that makes me happy. So, no more freaking out, right?"

"If someone saw me talking to myself in the mirror like this, they’d think I was crazy. Or… am I actually crazy?" I scratched my head.

"Maybe I should see a psychiatrist."

"You still don’t believe I’m real?"

"Has anyone else ever done something like this? What if I’m just imagining you? Maybe you’re just my imaginary friend."

"So damn annoying."

"Rude."

"But it's true! We've been talking for this long, and you still don’t believe

me?"

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

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The sound of someone knocking on the door made us both fall silent. My mom called out from outside, forcing me to shift my attention away from the girl in the mirror.

"What is it, Mom?"

"What are you doing in there? Are you okay? I came by earlier, but you didn’t come out. And who are you talking to? I can hear your voice from outside."

"Oh…" I quickly thought of an excuse.

"I was on the phone with a coworker, Mom. That’s why I haven’t come out yet."

"Come out now. Don’t make me worry."

"Okay!"

"Go on, then. We’ll talk later."

"Wait, we’re going to talk again?"

"You don’t need to use the bathroom anymore?"

"What if I need to… you know?"

"Then I’ll watch you. And if I go, you’ll see me too."

"Fair enough. I’m leaving now."

That was all I said before opening the door and stepping out to face my mom. She gave me a suspicious once-over from head to toe.

"You haven’t showered yet? What were you doing in there for so long?"

"I told you, I was on the phone."

"Wow, first day at work, and you already made friends. That’s great!" Mom smiled and patted my head.

"But don’t stay in there too long next time. I was worried you might have passed out."

"Mom, you worry too much. I’m healthy now. Don’t you remember?"

"I’ve spent my whole life worrying about you. How can I just stop? What if your heart acts up again?"

"Mom, I’m really fine now. Let me live my life the way I want."

I hugged her, trying to reassure her.

"You have to let me experience the outside world, do the things I love. You know my dream is to go on adventures. And right now, you’re already worrying too much about a bathroom break. I’m grown up now!"

"I've never seen you as grown up, not even for a day. But fine... if you're really better, that's good. Go shower and get some sleep. Stop talking on the phone. If I check on you again and you're still awake, I won't be able to sleep either."

"Okay, okay! For your peace of mind, I'll shower and go straight to bed."

"My good girl."

We hugged again before Mom left. I closed the door and sighed, staring at my bathroom. It felt like my whole world wasn't real. Even though I had forced myself to believe the girl in the mirror was real, part of me still wondered if I was hallucinating.

Maybe I really should book an appointment with a psychiatrist.

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The next day, I went to work feeling refreshed but still distracted by what had happened in the bathroom. I planned to request half a day off to see a doctor. But I'd only been at this job for a few days—asking for time off already didn't seem like a great idea.

I paced back and forth in front of my supervisor’s office, rehearsing what to say. Before I could knock, a familiar voice startled me.

"Why are you walking back and forth? I've been watching you for a while now."

I flinched, then turned to see my beautiful boss standing there. I gave her a sweet smile, and she returned it warmly—making my heart race, just like always.

*Why does she make me feel this way? I don't understand it at all.*

"Oh, um… I wanted to ask for half a day off."

"You've only just started working, and you're already asking for leave?"

Even she questioned me. Of course, I knew it wasn’t the best thing to do, but what choice did I have?

"I… I need to see a doctor."

"Are you sick?"

Without warning, she reached out and placed her hand on my forehead. Everyone in the office glanced our way, curious about the scene.

But Ms. Mantana—or the boss everyone admired—didn’t seem to care about the attention at all.

I quickly stepped back, trying to be polite.

"I'm just a little worried... not sure if I'm sick or not."

"You don't feel hot to me."

"I just want to get something checked out."

"Then I'll go with you."

"Huh?"

"I’m giving you permission to take half the day off. I’ll take you myself. Wait here—I’ll grab my bag."

"Boss—"

I tried to call after her, but she disappeared into her office. Moments later, she walked out, grabbed my wrist, and started leading me away.

"Let’s go."

"Aren’t you supposed to be working?"

"As the owner, I can work whenever I want. This is the advantage."

She smiled and winked at me. My heart pounded so fast I was afraid she could hear it, so I just forced an awkward smile and followed her out, all while feeling the weight of everyone’s stares.

She held my hand the entire way to the elevator. Only when we got there did I gently pull away, rubbing my arm awkwardly.

"You really don’t have to take me, Boss. Just letting me go is already a big favor."

**"Mui."**

"Huh?"

"When we’re alone, call me Mui. And stop using such formal language— it’s too distant."

"But—"

"No but. The elevator’s here. Which hospital are we going to? I’ll take you."

I stared at her, feeling overwhelmed. She was so effortlessly kind. The stunning woman held the elevator door open, tilting her head slightly with a raised brow.

"What are you doing? Get in."

"You’re… really nice to me. Now everyone thinks I got this job through connections."

"Well, they’re not wrong."

"...Huh?"

**"You did get this job through connections. I hired you out of affection."**

***Thump....***

***Thump....***

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# Chapter 02: I Hired You Out of Affection

That sentence kept repeating in my head ever since I heard it. Now, I was sitting in the car with my beautiful boss, Ms. Mantana. As she drove, I couldn't help but observe her-her slender fingers gripping the steering wheel, the sleeves of her blouse rolled up past her elbows, revealing her fair skin with a warm undertone. The scent of *Chanel No. 5* filled the air.

I was just a junior employee who had been working for less than a week, yet here I was, sitting beside her in her car.

My heart pounded like a drum for no reason. It had been this way since the first time I met her, and it happened every time I saw her. It was a strange feeling, hard to explain.

"If you have something to say, just say it. Staring like that makes the driver nervous,"

She said, eyes still focused on the road.

I flinched slightly at her words and sat up straight.

"N-No, it's nothing."

"Nothing? Then why are you staring so much? What's on your mind?"

"I was just wondering... how did a new employee like me end up sitting so close to the company owner like this?"

I nervously fidgeted with my fingers and licked my dry lips.

"Really, Boss, you don't have to-"

"Mui."

"Yes?"

"I already told you, when it's just the two of us, call me Mui,"

She said, glancing at me with a soft smile.

"At work, you can call me '*Boss*' like everyone else."

"It feels kind of... awkward. Are you sure?"

"Of course! It'll help us get close faster. From now on, I'll call you Phuean too."

"Are you always this nice?"

I asked hesitantly. She was really kind to me. Just telling her I felt unwell was enough for her to rush me to the hospital. Or maybe she thought I was faking it, so she brought me herself.

But looking at her now, she didn't seem to have any bad intentions. In fact, she seemed more than willing to help. It made my heart waver a little.

"I'm always nice. But I choose who to be nice to."

"And you chose me as a friend?"

"Let's just say you hit the jackpot."

"Why did you choose me as a friend, Khun Mui?"

She just smiled and looked ahead without answering. My question remained a mystery, but I didn't push for an answer.

Not long after, we arrived at a private hospital. I wanted to tell her that it was expensive, but since we were already here, I didn't know how to bring it up. Oh well, might as well go with it-how bad could it be?

"We need to register first. This is probably your first time here."

"Yes, it is. I usually go to public hospitals."

"Try something different this time."

Trying something different was fine-but could she consider my wallet too?

I went to the reception desk to register as a patient. The nurse asked me a bunch of questions about my symptoms while my boss waited a little farther away. That was a relief-at least she wouldn't know which specialist I was here to see.

"The psychiatry department is on the fifth floor, Building Three. You can follow the nurse there."

"Thank you."

But even if I wanted to keep it a secret, I couldn't-because she walked right beside me, following the nurse without a word.

When we arrived, she didn't ask any questions or act curious. She was just there for me, as a friend. That made me feel something I couldn't quite explain. While waiting for my turn, I decided to talk to her.

"Khun Mui, do you think I am crazy?"

"No."

"But this is the psychiatry department."

"Seeing a psychiatrist doesn't mean you're crazy."

"But people see an orthopedic doctor because they have bone problems."

"You have a misunderstanding about this department. Don't worry, I don't judge you."

While we were talking, someone in a white coat walked by and greeted her like they knew each other well.

"Hey, Mui."

The way the doctor greeted her sounded way too familiar. Mui's expression immediately turned neutral, and she tilted her head slightly in displeasure. "Can't you be a little more polite? You're a doctor, aren't you?"

"So what? Just because I'm a doctor, I can't call my friend 'asshole' or 'bastard'?"

"Watch your mouth in front of my people."

Mui glanced at me for a second.

The doctor looked at me and quickly apologized.

"Oh, sorry! I thought you came alone. You two came together?"

"She's my employee. The patient today isn't me."

I almost turned to look at her in surprise. So even she saw a psychiatrist? No wonder she didn't judge me for coming here. I'd always been biased against psychiatry, but I guess nowadays, everyone has their own personal struggles.

"You brought her here yourself?"

The doctor glanced at me with a small smirk.

"What a kind and caring boss."

"Talk less. Don't you have patients to treat instead of joking around?"

"Always so cold. Hey, how did you even end up with her? Don't you feel uncomfortable being around this emotionless face?"

I blinked in surprise before smiling and shaking my head. I wanted to be friendly-just like how Mui had been kind to me.

"Not at all. Khun Mui is really nice."

"Interesting. We'll talk later. And I know for sure we *will* talk soon, Mui."

With that, the doctor excused herself and disappeared into the consultation room. Mui let out a sigh and gave me a side glance.

"Don't take anything she says seriously. She may be annoying, but she's a great doctor. Once she takes off that white coat, though, she's a completely different person."

"Okay,"

I nodded to show that I understood.

"And just so you know, you're not the only one seeing a psychiatrist. I come here too."

"You don't have to tell me that, Khun Mui."

"Your eyes were screaming that you wanted to know."

She could read me so easily-it made me feel a little embarrassed. Did she think I was nosy?

Soon, a nurse came over to check my blood pressure, height, and weight before calling me into the consultation room.

As if fate had a sense of humor, the doctor I was supposed to see turned out to be Mui's close friend. That only made me more nervous about explaining why I was here.

"Don't worry,"

The doctor reassured me,

"A patient's confidentiality is protected. It's part of our ethics."

Why could everyone read me so well? I hadn't even said a word yet.

"Okay."

"So, tell me-what brought you here today? From now on, everything stays between us. No need to worry."

I hesitated for a moment, pressing my lips together before finally speaking, afraid of being judged.

"I think....*Phuean* might be going crazy."

"And why are *you* the one seeing the doctor? Why didn't that "friend" of yours come themselves?"

"Uh... actually, my name is ***Phuean* *('friend')****."*

The doctor looked stunned for a second before clearing her throat. I tried to hold back a smile at her reaction, but I didn't dare laugh, afraid she'd feel embarrassed.

"Oh, I see. I thought you were talking about someone else. Alright then, I'll call you *Phuean* from now on. So, what makes you think you're going crazy?"

"I keep seeing hallucinations... of myself. Like, my reflection in the mirror talks back to me."

. .

After my consultation, I thought I'd be heading straight back to work. But then, my beautiful boss was called in for her own appointment. She gave me a small smile as she stood up.

"Wait for me, okay? I just need to consult about something real quick." "Okay."

I watched her walk away, feeling strangely uneasy. To be honest, I was worried she might ask her doctor friend about why I was here today. But after half an hour, she came out-not just empty-handed, but with her own bag of medicine.

Now we were both carrying prescription bags. I eyed hers curiously, and as if reading my thoughts, she spoke up.

"I see a psychiatrist too."

"Oh... I see."

"So, does that mean I'm crazy?"

She teased with a playful smile.

"Bet you were wondering if I went in there to ask about you."

"Not exactly..."

Had I been *that* obvious again? I had to admit, I was worried about the doctor sharing my details with her. But then again, medical ethics wouldn't allow that. A patient's secrets belonged to them alone.

"If you ever feel unwell or need someone to talk to, you can come see Ying. She's really good at this."

"You don't seem like someone who would need to see a psychiatrist."

"What makes you think that?"

"You seem so perfect. I don't see why you'd need to see a doctor at all." "I have trouble sleeping," she admitted.

"So I came to ask for medication. But to get sleeping pills, I have to be evaluated first to see if I really need them."

"Oh, I see."

"That should clear up your curiosity, right?"

"I wasn't curious at all!"

I quickly shook my head, my voice rising so much it nearly shattered the air.

She chuckled softly, her face lighting up like a child who had just found something amusing.

"You're a terrible liar. Everything you're thinking is written all over your face."

"I swear, I wasn't thinking anything!"

"You're cute."

She ended the conversation just like that and headed to the driver's seat. My heart started pounding again at her unexpected compliment. I hurried to open the passenger door and got in beside her.

"Oh, I have something for you."

"Huh?"

She reached into the back seat and pulled out a long-stemmed yellow tulip, handing it to me.

I stared at the flower, confused. I hadn't noticed it in the car before, but I admired its simple beauty.

"Why are you giving me this?"

**"Maybe because I like you."**

.

❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **sunyan**

# Chapter 03: What About the Giver?

The whole way back, I just sat there quietly because I didn't know how to act. I couldn't describe how I felt or even understand why I felt that way.

I didn't know if I should be embarrassed, uncomfortable, or something else.

In the end, I just held the flowers and looked out the window.

The driver, on the other hand, stayed silent as well, not trying to start a conversation-until she finally spoke up to ask for directions.

"Which way to your house?"

"Huh?"

I glanced at her and met those light brown eyes before quickly looking away.

"Aren't we going back to the office?"

"By the time we get back, work will be over anyway. I figured I'd just take you home instead. Tell me the way, I'll drop you off."

"It's okay, Khun Mui. Just drop me off at any bus stop. I can-"

"Just tell me."

Her firm tone made me flinch, so I didn't dare argue. Instead, I told her my house was in Bang Phlat and explained which alleys to take.

After about thirty minutes of heavy traffic, we finally arrived-right at 5 PM. I noticed that my dad's car wasn't there, which meant he had probably gone to pick me up from work like he always did. And I had completely forgotten to tell him not to.

He must've gone there for nothing... I'm definitely getting scolded when he gets back.

"Your house looks safe and private. Do you live alone?"

She asked after parking the car, leaning slightly to look at my house through the window. I answered softly, feeling guilty that she had gone through the trouble of bringing me here.

"I live with my parents."

"That's good."

Should I invite her inside for a drink? Would that be the polite thing to do? While I was debating, the beautiful woman spoke up, almost as if she could hear my thoughts.

"Go on inside. If I get the chance, I'd love to stop by next time to say hi to your family and have a drink."

"Okay."

*If there's a next time... does that mean she's planning to come again?*

"Don't forget your medicine bag."

She reminded me just as I was about to step out of the car, still a bit dazed. My hands were holding only the tulips, and I had completely forgotten about the bag of medicine.

Hearing her reminder, I gave an awkward smile, realizing I had really forgotten. I quickly grabbed the bag, then stood there watching her car drive away until it disappeared from sight.

. .

My mom, who had been waiting for me, must have heard the sound of the engine because she walked out to the front of the house. She looked surprised to see me standing there alone.

"You're back? Where's your dad?"

"I forgot to tell him not to pick me up today. My boss gave me a ride home instead."

"Your boss?"

Mom looked even more surprised.

"Why would your boss drive you home?"

"I had to go to the hospital, so she offered to take me." I sighed.

"Can you call Dad and let him know I'm home? If he hears it from me, he'll definitely sulk about why I didn't tell him first."

"Wait, why did you go to the hospital? Are you hurt? Or... is it your chest?"

Mom's eyes widened in panic. "No, no! Nothing to do with my heart!"

I quickly reassured her.

"Then why did you see a doctor? And why do you have medicine?"

She snatched the bag from my hand and looked at the label. But since she couldn't figure out what it was for, I casually blurted out an excuse.

"I just had a fever. Felt a bit off and got worried it might be COVID."

That was probably the worst excuse ever, but it was all I could think of.

"So, do you have it?"

"Nope."

"Then why do you have medicine-oh! And flowers too?"

I hadn't hidden the tulips in time, so all I could do was give her a sheepish smile.

"My boss bought them for me... as encouragement."

"What kind of boss buys flowers for their employee?"

"My boss."

"That's a little strange, don't you think?"

"Mom, can we not do the interrogation right now? Just call Dad, okay? I need a shower. It's been a long day."

"We are not done talking about this."

I hurried inside, knowing I had to come up with a better explanation-why I went to the hospital and why my boss gave me flowers for encouragement.

*"Maybe because I like you?"*

When I think back to her short sentence, my heart starts beating fast and out of rhythm. I can't really explain what I'm feeling. Is this normal?

Does Khun Mui always treat her employees this well? Or am I a special case?

*"Maybe because I like you?"*

If a man had said that, I'd understand what he meant. But coming from hera woman like me-it just confuses me. I can't figure her out. I don't dislike it, but I don't know what to make of it either. Everything feels so uncertain and full of questions.

Once I'm in my bedroom, I do what I told my mom-I go straight to the bathroom to freshen up. At the same time, I try to come up with a good excuse to explain to my parents why I had to go to the hospital.

But the moment I step in front of the mirror, the reflection that isn't really me speaks up in an excited voice.

"You're finally back! I was so lonely."

I ignore her. I refuse to believe that the person in the mirror is from another dimension. It has to be a hallucination-just like the doctor said today. Maybe it's from stress, or maybe my brain is just broken.

"What? Are you ignoring me?"

"....."

"What's with that flower?"

"This?"

I accidentally respond before snapping my mouth shut. My reflection grins, pleased that I answered.

"Stop pretending, will you? You're not crazy. If you are, then I must be too. I'm talking to my own reflection just like you are."

"I'm not crazy. It's just a hallucination."

I mutter to myself.

"Probably just stress from starting a new job. That has to be it."

"I know this is hard to believe. It's not like I've never seen a psychiatrist before."

"Wait... you have? What the hell?!"

I blurt out again. In the end, I give up and just talk to the reflection, sighing.

"Fine. I'll play along. You're just another side of me-another personality hidden inside."

"You've watched too many movies. You're not crazy. If you were, I'd be too."

"Then why am I talking to my reflection?" "Maybe other people do too. We just don't know."

She means both of us.

"But right now, it's happening, and we can really communicate. Besides, if you were actually insane, you'd just be talking to your own reflection, mumbling nonsense like in those soap operas. It's not like you're hurting anyone."

"Why are we even talking? There's no point."

"There has to be a reason. We just haven't figured it out yet, that's all."

The person in the mirror smirks and winks at me. She's nothing like meshe's playful, a little mischievous, and has a tomboyish vibe.

"One day, we'll understand why."

"Is God playing some kind of joke on me? I finally got to live a normal life, just like everyone else, and now I have to talk to a hallucination of myself in the mirror? How far is this prank going to go?"

I press my hands together in a dramatic prayer, my eyes welling up with self-pity.

My reflection bursts into laughter, making me snap my head toward her, annoyed.

"What's so funny?"

"You, obviously. You're the one acting crazy right now. But hey, it's not that bad, is it? We can talk, and I'm not trying to hurt you. And if I really were just another personality of yours, that means... you can play the guitar, right?"

"Guitar?"

"Yeah. I'm a musician. Can you play?"

"No."

"If you've never learned, then how would another version of you know how to play? Here, I'll show you."

Before I can respond, she quickly grabs a guitar. I glance into the mirror and realize that there's actually a guitar in the reflection of my bathroom. Who the hell keeps a guitar in the bathroom?

Then-*strum, strum, strum.*

A melody starts playing. It's a song I've never heard before, but it's beautiful. She's not just playing; she's singing too, effortlessly strumming the chords and adding little flourishes like a pro.

She doesn't play the whole song, just the solo and the hook. But by the time she finishes, I've completely forgotten that I was supposed to be freaking out. Without thinking, I start clapping.

"Well? What do you think? Am I good or what?"

"That was amazing."

"Can you do it?"

"I've never even touched a guitar before."

"Then how could I be another personality of yours? Face it-we're just two different people in two different places. It took me a while to accept it too. I thought I was crazy at first, just like you. But trust me, you're not crazy."

I groan, pressing my fingers to my temples.

"My head hurts. I feel like screaming. This is all too much!"

"Don't be so serious! Just think of it as getting a new friend. A friend who looks exactly like you."

She grins at me like a mischievous child. Her smile is identical to mine, but somehow, it looks cheekier. I sigh, letting my arms hang loosely at my sides, giving in.

"Fine. Whatever happens, happens."

"That's the spirit-accepting reality! So, how was your day? Tell me about that flower."

Even though I feel like I might be losing my mind, having a full-blown conversation with my reflection, I still haven't let go of the yellow tulip my gorgeous boss gave me.

I give her a quick rundown-how I went to the hospital to see a psychiatrist, and how my boss gave me the flower. As expected, this piece of information makes my reflection very interested.

"Wow, bosses like that exist? Is she handsome?"

"She's beautiful."

"Wait, she's a woman?"

"Yeah."

"That makes it even more exciting!"

"Exciting? Why?"

"Because your female boss has a thing for you, obviously! How can that not be exciting?"

My reflection giggles, thoroughly enjoying this. I blink, taken aback, then quickly shake my head.

"No way! She just gave it to me because she's kind."

"Oh really? Is it normal for bosses to personally take their employees to the hospital?"

"If they're a good person, then sure."

"Does she treat everyone this way?"

"I don't know... but I'll try asking other people if they've ever had something like this."

"And what if she's never done this for anyone else but you?"

"Then it means she care for me."

"You're fooling yourself. Deep down, you're wondering if she likes you, aren't you?"

"Mui is a woman. And I'm also a woman."

"So? Is your world that old-fashioned? In my world, women date women, live together, even get married. No one sees it as weird. Or is your world still stuck in the mindset that only men and women can be together?"

"Well, it's just-"

Before I can finish, she smirks teasingly. I scowl, frustrated by that smug look on her face.

"Don't smile at me like that."

"Do you like it?"

"Like what?"

"The flower."

"There's no reason for me to hate it."

"And what about the person who gave it to you?"

"...."

**"Do you like your boss?"**

.

# Chapter : 04. Straightforward

I keep tossing and turning restlessly because of Faen's words. She asked me before we ended our talked,

"*Do you like your boss?*"

My mind immediately said no, but my heart wouldn’t stop beating fast. It’s already past 2 AM, and I still can’t sleep. In the end, I turned on the bedside lamp and reached for a book, hoping the book would make me sleepy.

But—ugh! There was a tulip on top of the book. That stopped me from touching it completely.

Then, the image of the person who gave it to me appeared in my mind.

And my heart started wandering.

Ugh! Just because she was a little nice to me, my thoughts are going all over the place. She’s my boss! And she’s a woman! She’s just being kind, and I shouldn’t twist it into something else and make her uncomfortable.

And that girl in the bathroom… whether she’s real or just my imagination, I refuse to lose to her.

"Faen!"

Before long, another world appeared.

My reflection in the mirror looked sleepy. I was a little surprised that the moment I called her, she appeared instantly.

What’s her bedroom like? Why is it so easy to reach her? And did my voice seriously travel all the way to her room?

"What? It’s two in the morning. You scared me awake!"

"I can’t sleep because of you."

I pointed at the mirror like I was arguing with myself.

"You confused me."

"You mean *made you doubt yourself*."

"Yeah, that."

"Doubt yourself about what? Why are you waking me up at this hour?"

"What you said earlier. You asked if I liked Mui."

"Oh."

She was so sleepy that her eyes were almost closed.

"So? Do you have an answer?"

"My heart is pure! There’s nothing like that at all!"

"If your heart is pure, then go to sleep. Why wake me up?"

"Because you made me think about it!"

"That means your heart isn’t pure."

Then, the girl who could barely keep her eyes open suddenly widened them and smirked like she had figured something out. No, not figured it out—she was *acting* like she knew something.

But I wasn’t thinking anything like that.

*Really.*

"Tomorrow, I’ll talk to Mui and clear things up. I don’t have feelings for her."

"And what if this Mui person has feelings for you?"

"That’s her business. But I don’t think she does. Someone that perfect— why would she like me? She’s a woman, and I’m a woman."

"So old-fashioned."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Is that all? If you feel better now, go to sleep. And update me tomorrow on what Mui says."

The girl in the mirror yawned loudly.

"And don’t wake me up again. If you can’t sleep, just stare at the ceiling. Seriously, who argues with their own thoughts? You say you don’t like her, but you’re restless over one flower."

She acted like she knew everything and then disappeared.

I walked out of the bathroom, and just as she said—

*I didn’t sleep the whole night!*

. .

The next morning, I looked like a zombie, completely drained. I didn’t even have the energy to go for my morning run, so I skipped a day. That alone shocked my parents. My mom placed her hand on my forehead, tilting her head in confusion.

"You’re not sick, right? You don’t have COVID or anything?"

Yesterday, I barely scraped by with an excuse about going to the doctor, even though all I got was vitamin C. They totally believed me. No way was I going to tell them I was losing sleep over my own reflection.

"I just didn’t sleep well. My body feels exhausted, so I’m skipping running today."

"Then how will you have the energy for work?"

Dad asked, concerned.

"Want to take the day off?"

"The more I rest, the harder it is to sleep. I have to go to work today— there’s something I need to take care of."

I spoke with determination and stuffed my mouth with food, trying to get as much energy as possible. At least I needed some strength to fight the battle I’d been having with myself all night.

As usual, Dad drove me to work. No matter how many times I told him I could go by myself, he insisted on picking me up later, too. At this point, I felt like a schoolkid getting dropped off and picked up every day.

. .

Today, I was determined. I had to talk to my boss about the flower she gave me—and that last comment that almost made my heart flutter.

Since my desk was right in front of her office, I waited for her to arrive. The moment she walked in, my jaw nearly dropped. She was wearing a deep blue dress, her hair falling perfectly over her shoulders. She looked like a model walking down a runway.

"Good morning."

She smiled and walked straight into her office like it was nothing.

I took that as my chance. I followed her inside, knocking three times out of politeness, and spoke before she even had a chance to sit down.

"Boss, can I talk to you for a moment today?"

"Hmm? You sound so serious. And why do you look like a ghost today? Didn’t sleep?"

Guess my concealer wasn’t enough. Cheap makeup really gives itself away.

I seriously need to rethink my belief that *any* makeup can do the job. Focusing too much on price over quality led me to this disaster.

"I wanted to talk about… us."

Before I could say anything more, there was a knock on the door. A delivery employee stepped in, carrying a large bouquet of flowers.

"Miss Mantana?"

"Yes, that’s me."

"Please sign for this."

She walked past me to accept the bouquet—deep red roses so striking they almost hurt to look at. There was a small card tucked inside. I leaned in out of curiosity, but Boss quickly closed the card and smirked.

"You’re so nosy."

"Who’s it from?"

"Not telling."

She placed the bouquet on her desk, then sat down gracefully, resting her chin on her hands like a queen on her throne.

*Why does she look so beautiful today?*

Meanwhile, I looked like a restless ghost haunting the office.

"So, where were we? I think I heard something about… **us**?"

She emphasized the last word, making my heart skip a beat.

Ever since she said, *"Maybe because I like you*"—and my own reflection in the mirror asked me—it was like my brain shattered into pieces, scattering everywhere. I still hadn’t managed to put myself back together.

"Well…"

I hesitated, struggling with where to begin.

"Yesterday, when you said that thing before we ended our conversation…"

"What thing?"

"You know… *that*."

"Venus?"

*No.*

"Paradise Lost?"

*Not that either!*

"Boss, don’t joke around."

"If we’re having a discussion, it should have a proper title."

She chuckled, clearly in a good mood today. Was it because of the flowers? Or was it just me, irritated ever since that huge bouquet arrived?

"Fine. Let’s call it… ‘*When the Boss Likes Me*?’"

"Oh, sounds fun! Definitely a romantic novel. Long title and all."

"To be honest, it’s been bothering me a lot." I bit my lip.

"Why bothering?"

"Why not?"

"...."

"It can be interpreted in many ways… and it kept me up all night."

"Wow, I never knew I had that much influence over your thoughts. All from just saying, *‘Maybe because I like you*.’"

"It was vague."

"So, you want a clear answer?"

She nodded, rocking her chair slightly, fingers laced under her chin in the same elegant posture.

*Even her fingers look perfect today.*

"What do *you* think?" she asked.

"I… haven’t dared to think about it. But I was curious, so I came to ask."

"Words are never as clear as actions. It’s like being in a relationship—if you never say *I love you,* it feels incomplete."

"Relationship?!"

My heart skipped a beat. I had never even been in one before.

"I like you."

"Huh?"

"Is that not clear enough? No more *maybe* this time."

Her gaze turned intense. Unlike before, when she seemed playful, now she looked serious. It made my heart pound. But I still wasn’t sure what *like* meant in this context.

"You mean… like a lover?"

"....."

"But you’re a woman."

"And I like women."

"But… I don’t like women. I like men."

"That’s okay. No problem."

She plucked a flower from her bouquet and held it out to me.

"I’ll just keep pursuing you. Eventually, you’ll like me back."

"...."

**"It's a symbol of my love for you."**

I stared at the flower in my hand, unsure of what to do. Yesterday, it was a tulip. Today, a rose. There was no way to misinterpret this now.

"Why do you like me, Khun Mui?"

I had always told myself to call her *Boss* at work, but right now, I completely forgot about that.

"That’s a good question."

She leaned back slightly, watching me with a soft smile.

"I like you because you're small, adorable, and your eyes sparkle like stars. Is that a good enough reason?"

"Is love really that simple?"

"It is for me."

"From now on, I’m going to court you."

"Huh?"

**"When you’re straightforward, so I’ll be straightforward too."**

.

❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **sunyan**

# Chapter 05: Thump-thump

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

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

Oh no, my heart is acting up again. It’s pounding like a drum, as if it’s happy to hear that. But my brain is fighting hard to deny it—I don’t feel anything at all.

It’s just shock. Yeah, I’m just surprised.

“Boss, we’re just employer and employee.”

“We’re not siblings, though.”

She replied casually, her eyes sparkling like stars in the sky.

Wow, brain. Where did that description even come from? Sparkling? I don’t even use that word in daily life.

“It’s not appropriate. In the workplace, we should just be colleagues.”

“I don’t want to be just friends.”

“It’s like a monk eating the temple’s chicken.”

“Well, at least he’s full.”

“You’re really pushing this, huh?”

“My job is to flirt with you.”

She got up, walked around the desk, and traced circles in the air with her slender fingers—so effortlessly charming. Then she sat on the edge of the desk, crossed her hands on her lap, and said,

“Your job is just to accept it.”

“Are you forcing me?”

“I’m just informing you.”

“What if I don’t accept?”

“That’s your problem.”

She leaned in slightly and reached out to pinch my nose. She didn’t care how firmly I rejected her. Determined to stand my ground and convince myself that I didn’t have feelings for her, I took a step back.

“Cute.”

“Whatever you say, boss.”

“When we’re alone, call me Mui.”

“No. That sounds too close.”

"You’re so reserved."

She still spoke with amusement.

"But you're cute anyway."

"I'll get back to work now."

"At least you're not quitting."

She teased, while I quickly walked away and sat at my desk outside her office. I had no idea what expression I was making—was I pouting or secretly smiling? I tried my best to keep a straight face. Everything inside me was contradicting itself, and it was frustrating.

"But you're still cute anyway." *Ugh! What am I supposed to do now?*

. .

She wasn’t just saying things—she really acted on them. It started with her coming to eat at the canteen on the ground floor. It was more like a food court, lined with different food stalls, where employees from all the offices in the building gathered for lunch.

The place was always packed, so it was my chance to sit with my coworkers and listen to their random conversations.

I was enjoying the chatter when suddenly, the whole table fell silent. Someone had arrived, standing confidently at the head of the table, holding a plate of food.

"Mind if I join you?"

Mui didn't wait for an answer. She placed her plate down and sat directly across from me. Instantly, everyone stiffened, as if they were back in the office. No one dared to even lift their spoon.

"What's wrong? Why did you all stop talking? I wanted to hear the conversation too."

She said casually. She wasn’t smiling, but she also wasn’t frowning. Her natural authority, combined with her high-ranking position, made everyone too tense to eat.

Since no one else moved, I took the lead and started eating. Slowly, the others followed, but the usual lively chatter was gone.

"Who would dare keep talking when the boss is sitting right here?"

I spoke up, hoping she’d understand. Not that she didn’t already know—she just didn’t care and was saying it for fun.

"Oh? Did I interrupt a conversation about me?"

"What else would employees talk about all day if not gossiping about their boss?"

"Hey!"

One of my coworkers whispered, scolding me. Funny how I seemed more afraid of my senior colleagues than the company owner sitting right in front of me.

"This is great. If I sit here, no one will dare gossip anymore. I guess I should join you every day."

"Then no one will sit here anymore."

"Really?"

Mui swept her sharp gaze over everyone, her eyes as keen as a blade.

"In that case, I should sit here even more often so everyone gets used to it. Don't you think?"

"...."

"No one’s answering, so that means I’m right."

"I'm done eating."

I set down my spoon and fork and stood up. Everyone stared at me in shock —they probably didn’t expect a junior like me to be this bold.

"Excuse me."

"Me too."

Even though she hadn’t eaten a single bite, the moment I stood up, she did too. Then she followed me to return our trays together. I tried to walk faster, but she kept following—like someone herding a buffalo.

No, wait—I am not the buffalo! I just meant I was walking fast, but she was still keeping up.

Eventually, I gave up and stopped in a quiet spot by the emergency stairs.

"Let's talk."

"That’s more like it."

She smiled like she had just won a game.

"I’ve been dying to talk to you. Why so cold today?"

"I’ll be honest. I don’t know how to act around you… And I don’t like you, Boss."

.

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

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

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I say I don’t like her, but my heart is racing. I know I can’t control my heartbeat, but still—why is it beating this fast without my permission? It makes me look like a liar, like I’m fooling myself.

"Not today? Don’t worry, tomorrow you will."

"The more you push, the more annoying it gets. Do you get that?"

"Wow, that was harsh. And yet… you’re still cute."

I was really starting to get mad now. She kept looking at me with that affectionate gaze, like an adult watching a stubborn child.

"The more you act like this, the cuter you get."

"Enough already! You've been calling me cute all day. It’s too much!"

"But you are cute. How can I not say it? Hey, tell me something—"

She stepped closer, leaning in.

"Since when have you been this cute?"

I was trying to keep an angry face, but my lips betrayed me and curled into a tiny smile. Before I could stop myself, it was already there.

I quickly turned away and crossed my arms, pretending to be mad. Damn it! I like being complimented by her. This is so embarrassing.

"Alright, I’ll let you off for today. If I didn’t have plans later, I’d take you home myself."

She glanced at her watch—it was almost 1 p.m.

"I haven't finished work yet."

I blurted out before I could stop myself.

She just shrugged.

"What can I say? When the owner of the company wants to leave, she just leaves. I’ll take you home tomorrow instead."

"That won’t be necessary."

"Let your family know, just in case. I heard your dad picks you up every evening—I wouldn’t want him to wait for nothing."

"I already told you, there’s no need!"

"Do you like mountains or the sea?"

"The sea—wait, what does that have to do with anything?"

I answered automatically, and she immediately smiled and snapped her fingers.

"Alright then, Hua Hin beach."

"What does that mean?"

She didn’t answer. She just turned and walked away, leaving me standing there, completely confused. What was that question even about? What is she planning?

. .

Once work resumed, everyone seemed more relaxed, since the boss had left the office. My coworkers, who had eaten lunch with me earlier, suddenly gathered around like they were watching a cockfight, all curious and eager for gossip.

"What’s going on between you and the boss?"

"What do you mean?"

I was taken aback and, for some reason, my mind went straight to something inappropriate.

"We’re both women—how could there be anything?"

"Ugh, what are you thinking?"

One of them rolled her eyes.

"I mean, what did you do to make the boss target you? She even followed you to the canteen!"

"No one thinks she’s flirting with you."

Another coworker added, sounding annoyed.

I almost snapped back, but I held my tongue. And what if she is flirting with me? What’s wrong with that?!

"Yeah, besides, the boss already has someone."

"She does?"

"Of course! Her boyfriend."

"Boyfriend?"

My voice went a bit higher than I intended.

"Boss has a boyfriend?"

"Well, everyone knows about it—oh, right, you’re new here. It’s the owner of that wood company, the one who dropped her off this morning. That red sports car—you saw it, right?"

"Was it a man or a woman?"

"Obviously a man. What kind of question is that?"

I bared my teeth for a split second before quickly masking my expression, afraid they’d catch on. She has a boyfriend, yet she tells me she likes me? Compliments me like that? If I had a fan in my hand right now, I’d be waving it dramatically. Unbelievable!

"So, what’s the deal? What’s going on between you and the boss?"

"Nothing at all."

"Really? Because the way you two were acting at lunch, it sure seemed like something. And you? You talk to her like you’re equals—no respect, no hesitation."

"Do I really come across as that aggressive?"

"Yes."

They all answered in unison, staring at me without blinking.

"There’s really nothing going on. The boss probably just wanted to mess with the new employee for fun."

I had no better excuse, so I just went with that. But my coworkers shook their heads, clearly unconvinced.

"Boss doesn’t mess with people. I’ve worked here for nearly five years, and I can count on one hand the number of times she’s talked to me. And every time, it was strictly about work."

"And lately, she’s been really tense—almost sad. It’s only recently that she started smiling again,"

Another senior coworker chimed in, as if they had planned this conversation just to explain things to me.

"Today was the first time she’s ever sat with us at lunch. Even during company outings, she stays off in a private villa by herself."

"Our boss is do arrogant. She’s always been distant,"

Someone else added.

"That’s why we’re curious—what did you do to make her pay so much attention to you?"

"She was… sad?"

That part surprised me the most.

"I couldn’t tell at all."

"Like I said, she only just started smiling again. And it seems like that happened right around the time you started working here."

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# Chapter : 06. Be Aggressive

Every weekend, I have to wake up early and go for a run at Lumphini Park to practise for the upcoming half-marathon. Of course, my parents never let me go alone because they worry about me like I'm a fragile egg.

They always try to stop me from pushing myself too hard, but I don’t listen much since I believe my body is strong enough.

It’s a dream of mine—someone who never really got to run and play freely as a kid—to finally stretch my legs and run at full speed. Now that I have the chance, I won’t waste it.

Right now, I’m standing proudly in front of the medals hanging on my wall. The next one will be my tenth. And after that, I’ll make it eleven, twelve, and more.

. .

“Do you think we’ll ever meet somewhere else besides the bathroom?” Faen asked as I stood in front of the mirror, filling in my eyebrows.

At first, I was going to ignore her because I still wasn’t sure if she was just a hallucination. But whatever. Talking to myself is one way to relieve stress.

“I guess we would—if I were really hallucinating.”

“But when you go to work, I never see you anywhere except in the bathroom. Hey!”

She suddenly grinned like she had an idea.

“Let’s meet outside for once. I want to do an experiment—let’s see if we can actually meet somewhere else.”

“What kind of experiment?”

“I’ll go to the same place as you. Wherever there’s a mirror, try looking into it. Maybe we’ll find each other.”

I pursed my lips, clearly not on board with this plan.

“I’m already losing my mind seeing you at home. If I see you outside too, I might actually go insane. No way.”

“It’s just an experiment. If we can really meet, maybe we can cross over and visit each other’s worlds.”

“Like in that drama *Twi-Phop*?”

“What’s *Twi-Phop*?”

“Never mind. Do whatever you want. But do you even know where to find me? Is your world exactly the same as mine?”

“Maybe not, but that’s what experiments are for. Just give me a general location, and I’ll try to go there. When you find a mirror, stop and wait. If we can see each other, maybe we’ll figure out how to cross over.”

“If I go to your world and you come to mine, we’ll basically be ghost twins.”

“Why do you always say such creepy things?”

"Someone came to love me."

"Oh wow, ever since your boss called you cute, you haven’t stopped bragging. And here you are, acting like you don’t like women."

I glared at her reflection in the mirror, feeling my face heat up.

Ever since that day when she confessed her feelings, Mui had been openly pursuing me—leaving a tulip on my desk every day. I had no idea why she specifically chose tulips.

Everyone at the office was curious about who was sending me flowers. They kept trying to investigate, but I knew they’d never find out. Mui was just too good at this.

Strangely enough, I didn’t mind at all. Even though I pretended not to care —sometimes even ignoring the flowers on purpose—I always ended up taking them home. Some of them eventually wilted.

My mom, who often came into my room to clean, always asked who sent them. I told her the truth: my boss. It was my way of hinting that yes, *your daughter has a secret admirer*.

.

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"I really don’t like her." "Then why is your face red?"

*You can see it!!*

"Of course I can see."

"I only thought that—I didn’t say it out loud!"

"I think I heard it from inside your head. We have the same face, so maybe we can communicate telepathically too."

"Oh god, I survived a heart disease just to go insane. Is this hell’s punishment or heaven’s prank?"

"Hey, that rhymed! Where’d you get that phrase?"

"It’s from a song in my world."

"Hmm, maybe I’ll write that into a song here. It might become a hit!" She scribbled something furiously on the mirror before looking up.

"Anyway, don’t forget our plan. We’re meeting outside. Give me the location and coordinates."

And just like that, this became our first official meeting.

I had a feeling we’d see each other again anyway—because she was just a hallucination. This wasn’t some magical fairytale where anything was possible.

After giving her the location, I went to Lumphini Park with my parents for our usual run. My dad hated this activity the most. He was always the first to get exhausted and ask for a break.

"You guys go on ahead. I’ll just sit here and wait."

"Mom’s tired too," she grumbled.

"Exercise is good and all, but do you really have to go all out like this? Can’t you just run on the treadmill at home?"

"I already told you—you didn’t have to come. Besides, running outside once a week lets me enjoy the fresh air. Just go along with it for my sake."

"We *are* going along with it. That’s why we’re here running with you. But fine, we give up. You go ahead. Dad and I will wait on this bench."

"Well, you might as well have stayed home, then."

I giggled and waved.

"See you after my run. Just sit and wait for me, okay?"

At that, my parents waved me off, letting me run alone. I felt completely energized, my body fully warmed up. The lush green trees cast cooling shadows over me, the morning sun gave me a healthy dose of vitamin D, and the pond nearby filled the air with a fresh, lively scent. The world felt beautiful.

But honestly, this was part of my plan. My parents never lasted more than two laps before taking a break. Once I was alone, I could start my experiment—looking for a reflective surface, just like I had planned with *her.*

Would we really be able to see each other in different locations?

Eventually, I found a mirror-like surface in the park and stopped, jogging lightly in place while waiting. A few moments later, I heard a loud.

"Hey!"

"We really can meet outside!"

Faen appeared about five minutes later, waving enthusiastically from the other side of the mirror. I was just as excited.

"So that means your world has a park like this too?"

"Looks like it! It’s almost like we’re on a date."

"So if we stand in front of the same mirror, we can talk like we’re in the same place."

I sighed dramatically, pretending to be annoyed, even though I didn't really feel that way.

"Ugh, I’m getting sick of your face."

"You’re saying one thing, but your face says another."

"What?"

"You act like you don’t care, but you’re totally excited. Your face gives it all away—so cute!"

She pressed her hands to her cheeks, smiling.

"Complimenting you is like complimenting myself. Since we look the same, that means I’m cute too!"

"You’re so full of yourself."

"Am I wrong?"

"I think I’m cuter. *I did my eyebrows today.*"

"No wonder your eyebrows are so prominent?"

"I didn’t say that!"

A voice behind me made me snap my head around. To my shock, Mui was standing there. I had no idea where she had come from or how she got here. My mouth hung open in surprise, and I started feeling awkward—she had caught me talking to my reflection.

"Boss?"

"Talking to your guardian spirit?"

"Huh?"

"I’ve been watching you talk to the mirror for a while now."

Mui glanced into the mirror as well. My reflection—who was seeing my boss for the first time—froze, unsure of what to do. Meanwhile, I was anxiously wondering whether Mui could see what I saw.

"Are you that lonely?"

"Who’s this?"

My reflection suddenly asked. I couldn’t answer, so I simply referred to Mui as Boss to give her a hint.

"Boss, how did you get here?"

"I told you already—when it’s just the two of us, call me Mui. And how else? I ran here."

"...."

"Answering your question. I ran here."

"She’s gorgeous,"

My reflection blurted out, eyes wide with admiration.

"How did someone with a monkey face like mine manage to attract someone this stunning?"

"You’re the monkey—I’m beautiful,"

I retorted without thinking.

Mui gave me a weird look.

"Did you just… compliment yourself?"

"Ah, it’s a self-esteem technique,"

I said quickly.

"If you keep telling yourself you’re amazing, your brain will start to believe

it."

"You can’t just randomly praise yourself like that."

"Why not?"

"It makes you look… silly."

She deliberately avoided saying crazy, probably to soften the blow. And honestly, she had a point—normal people don’t just announce how pretty they are out of nowhere.

I needed to ignore my reflection now. No matter what she said, I had to act normal and stay grounded in reality.

"But," Mui added with a small smile,

"it’s kinda cute."

"Am I still cute?"

I was the one caught off guard this time. Mui giggled and looked at me fondly.

"You remind me of someone."

"Who?"

"Aren't you going to keep running?"

She changed the subject. I glanced at my reflection in the mirror for a moment, then turned my attention back to Mui.

"I am."

"Great! Let's run together."

Even on my day off, I still ran into her. Mui took the lead, so I ran beside her, even though my legs were shorter. I struck up a conversation as we ran.

"Did we really meet by coincidence?"

"Probably."

"There's no such thing as coincidence."

She kept running without responding, just smiling, which made me think of what the other employees had said:

*"Ever since you came, the boss has been smiling more."*

That one sentence alone made me so flustered that I didn't know what to do. But I had to act normal, pretending I didn't care, and tried to tease her instead—to corner her into admitting something. "Did you come here with a friend, Khun Mui?"

"You could say that. Ah, you caught me right away."

"Because coincidences don’t exist."

She answered so casually, completely unfazed. Meanwhile, I tried my best to avoid looking at her directly, unsure how to act.

"That's true, coincidences don’t exist. But some people really do meet by chance."

"But not with you, Khun Mui. We've been seeing each other every day lately—at work and even on our days off."

"What can I do?"

"Do about what?" "I just want to see you."

***Thump thump.***

My heart was beating out of rhythm. It was strange. I had told myself countless times that I didn't feel anything for women, but with her, it was the complete opposite. I didn’t want to admit it. There was no reason for a perfect woman like her to be pursuing me.

I wasn’t that special—short legs, short height, and compared to her, I looked so plain. How could I believe that she was actually courting me?

There had to be some kind of logical explanation, some kind of supporting reason.

"Khun Mui, can we stop and talk for a moment?"

She slowed her pace but kept jogging lightly, maintaining her balance as her heart still raced from the run.

"You're always so serious. Relax a little."

"Why do you like me, Khun Mui?"

"You're asking for a reason again? I already told you—you’re cute."

"But just being cute wouldn’t make you pursue me this hard. There has to be another reason."

"Fine, another reason then…"

"Which is?"

"You're strong."

"What kind of reason is that?"

"A supporting reason for why I’m courting you."

"Be serious, please."

"I am. What kind of answer are you hoping for?"

"Something deeper than that. People don’t just fall in love so easily after meeting a few times."

"Then what about love at first sight? What do you call that?"

"Well…" I mumbled to myself.

"Are you saying I’m your love at first sight?"

"So cute."

"You're joking again! I’m being serious here."

"You can think whatever you like. If you want to believe it’s love at first sight, then sure, let’s go with that."

She started running ahead again. Her answers seemed so playful that it was hard for me to believe she was genuinely interested in me. But I wasn’t giving up yet—I kept running after her, pressing for more answers.

"Besides being cute and strong, is there anything else?"

"I could list a hundred reasons, and you wouldn’t be able to take them all in. Just know that I’m pursuing you, and your only job is to acknowledge it and accept it."

"Is that an order? That last part about me having to accept it?"

"That depends on whether you want to accept it or not."

"I don’t want to accept it yet."

"Yet. That means there’s a chance."

She grinned widely, her eyes squinting into crescent shapes. Sweat trickled from her temple down to her cheek, making her look even more captivating. It was clear she was serious about running—whatever she did, she gave it her all, and that was impressive.

"What if I can’t accept your feelings, Khun Mui?"

"Then I’ll keep trying."

We kept running until we reached the spot where my parents were sitting cross-legged on a bench. I stopped briefly to greet them and introduced Khun Mui, since their curious gazes made it obvious they were wondering who my new running companion was.

"Dad, Mom, this is Khun Mui, my boss at work."

As soon as they heard her title, my parents immediately smiled in a welcoming manner—maybe even more respectfully than I did—knowing who she was and her position.

"Hello, Khun—"

She glanced at me briefly before continuing,

"Dad, Mom."

"Hello."

Both of them returned her greeting. Instead of calling them "Uncle" and "Auntie," she addressed them as "Dad" and "Mom," making it clear she was earnestly trying to get close to them.

"How did you two run into each other?"

"By coincidence."

She answered casually, completely different from how she had answered me earlier.

"I usually come running here anyway. I happened to see your daughter, so we ran together."

"What a real coincidence,"

My dad said, nodding in agreement. I was probably the only one here who didn’t believe in coincidences at all.

"Aren’t you two going to continue running?"

"Oh, no. We’re too old for that. Young people like you still have lots of energy. Just one lap was enough to exhaust us."

Mom smiled before adding,

"But it’s nice to meet you, Khun—"

"Mui."

"Khun Mui. It’s reassuring to see you running with our daughter. Honestly, I don’t like letting her run alone. I always worry."

"That’s great, then!"

Khun Mui responded with a cheerful smile.

"From now on, you don’t have to worry anymore. If possible, I’ll run with your daughter every weekend."

She said it so smoothly, as if she were either accepting an invitation or outright declaring that we would now be running together every weekend.

"That way, Dad and Mom won’t have to tire working out."

"That’s great,"

Mom said with a pleased smile.

"It makes me feel better. I don’t like her doing things alone."

"Mom, you worry too much," I pouted.

"So, are you two going to keep running?"

"That’s up to your daughter. If she’s still up for it, we’ll keep going. If not, we’ll stop."

"Honestly, I still have energy, but I’m done running,"

I said, pretending to refuse.

"I want to go home."

"Good idea. It’s hot, and I’m getting old. Let’s head home and get something to drink. I’m starving,"

Dad said before glancing at Khun Mui, as if something had just occurred to him.

"Are you tired, Khun Mui?"

"If your daughter says she’s tired, then I’ll be tired too," she replied.

"I don’t want to run alone. It’s lonely."

"Perfect, then let’s go."

Dad took charge of the decision before extending a polite invitation.

"Why don’t you stop by our house for a drink first? You can rest a bit before heading home."

"Khun Mui, you don’t have to go if you don’t want to—"

"I’d love to!"

She cut in before I could finish.

"I could use a break too."

Dad’s invitation was like handing her an opportunity to get even closer to me.

"I’d also love to see my employee’s home life."

"It’s just a typical middle-class house,"

I replied flatly, trying to discourage her.

"Sounds perfect. I’d love to have a drink in a middle-class home. It’ll be nice to see how you live. Of course, I must ask for your parents’ permission first."

My parents exchanged glances. It had started as a polite invitation, but since the guest had already accepted, there was no way to refuse.

"In that case, I’ll make a simple meal too," Mom said.

"It doesn’t feel right to just offer you a drink."

"That sounds wonderful. I’m actually really hungry. Thank you so much,"

She said, clearly pleased.

. .

Now, the living room was filled with laughter, all thanks to my new boss, who had effortlessly won over my parents. She was great at talking to older people, fitting in so smoothly that it made me pout.

As the reason she was even here, my job had been reduced to serving drinks while watching my parents warm up to her way too quickly.

She took the glass of water from me, glanced at me briefly, then took a sip before flashing me a small smile.

"Refreshing."

"...."

"It must be because of the water you served me,"

She said with a knowing tone. But my parents didn’t pick up on it and quickly started showing off the new water filter they had just bought, which required a monthly payment. "It’s probably the alkaline water,"

Mom said proudly.

"We just got this new filter. It works great and is really good for your health."

She was clearly pleased with her decision to install it.

"That’s an excellent choice. I should get one too."

"You’re such a lovely person, Khun Mui,"

Mom praised her, clearly encouraged by having someone agree with her purchase. It made her feel even better about the monthly payments.

"I’ll have to come by often to drink this water, then."

"Of course! Just let me know in advance, and I’ll cook something for you. Oh, and why are we all still standing?"

"There’s nowhere to sit,"

I replied flatly, glancing at my boss knowingly.

"You’re really enjoying yourself, aren’t you?"

"Your parents are fun to talk to. You should chat with them more often."

"Don’t you have your own parents to talk to?"

I shot back without much thought. But her answer made the whole room go silent.

"No. I don’t."

"I’m on my own now."

*Crap. What did I just say?*

My parents shot me a sharp look, clearly scolding me for my thoughtless and insensitive words. Even if they hadn’t, I already felt guilty. I hadn’t meant to hit a sore spot.

"If you ever feel lonely, you’re always welcome here, Khun Mui,"

Mom said warmly.

"This house will always be open to you."

"Thank you,"

She replied, smiling softly.

"You’re such a warm family."

"Would you like a little tour of the house?"

Mom offered, eager to make her feel at home.

"It’s not very big, though. I hope you don’t mind."

"Not at all. I’d love to take a look."

"Great. Go on, dear, show your boss around."

"Mom, is our house a car showroom or something?" I grumbled.

"Don’t be such a smart mouth. Now, go take Khun Mui to freshen up. You’ve both been running. If you don’t want to leave yet, you’re welcome to stay as long as you’d like."

"Excuse me for being nosy,"

Mui smiled at me knowingly, as if she knew she had the upper hand.

"Go ahead,"

I replied indifferently before leading her through the house as my mom had asked.

.

There wasn’t much to see—just a small living room, a compact kitchen, and the bedrooms upstairs. But it seemed my boss was most interested in my bedroom.

The moment she realized which room was mine, she walked in without hesitation, ignoring the rest of the house entirely.

"So, this is where you stay,"

She said, scanning the room as if she were evaluating something.

"Neat. Lots of stuffed animals. And I’d say… you like sleeping."

"What makes you think that?"

"You have a ton of pillows and plushies on your bed. People who surround themselves with comfy things usually spend most of their time in bed… probably scrolling on their phone all day and night."

She said it like she had security cameras in my room, then casually sat down on my bed, making herself comfortable.

"Why are you so interested in me?"

I asked, genuinely curious.

"You have wonderful parents."

"You always have a supporting reason for everything, huh?"

"Well, you keep asking for reasons. So, I make sure to have answers."

"You’re good at getting close to people."

"Only to people I want to get close to."

"If you don’t succeed in courting me,"

I said, choosing my words carefully before deciding to be blunt,

"will it affect my job?"

She smiled, fully understanding what I meant. If I didn’t go along with her or rejected her feelings, would my position at work be at risk?

"No, it won’t. What kind of person do you think I am?"

"Someone people are careful around."

"That much?"

"Everyone is careful around you."

"Except you. You’re not afraid to talk back."

"…."

"I like that."

.

***Thump…***

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Again. Why does my heart always race whenever she teases me? It’s ridiculous how easily I get flustered. But my brain constantly tells me to resist—like a warning not to fall for sweet words so easily.

"You’re coming on too strong."

"At least you know I am. No need for any pretense."

"I admire the persistence."

"And I intend to succeed."

"Don’t be too confident. The more certain you are, the more I’ll resist." "That’s even better. If something comes too easily, it wouldn’t be meaningful, would it?"

She got up from my bed, leaned in close, and met my eyes. I lost the staredown immediately, turning my face away—only for her to gently hold my chin and make me look at her again.

"Hey."

"Y-Yes?"

Her next question was so direct that I froze, my heart pounding a hundred times faster.

**"Will you be my girlfriend?"**

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# Chapter : 07. Water Droplets on Stone

"No."

I answered almost immediately to that proposal. The beautiful-faced woman raised an eyebrow slightly. She didn't seem surprised by my response, nor did she seem to expect anything. It felt more like she was just testing the waters.

Honestly, I nearly fainted when she asked so directly, but I wasn't really into this kind of thing yet.

"That was a quick answer. Didn't even think about it?"

"What's there to think about? You weren't even serious."

"What do you mean? I'm totally serious!"

She put on a deadpan face, unfazed, and placed a hand on her chest.

"You just broke your boss's heart, you know."

"And you already have a boyfriend, yet you still have the nerve to ask someone else out so casually."

"Who said Mui has a girlfriend?"

"The owner of that huge bouquet of flowers, obviously."

"So just because someone gives flowers, they're automatically a couple?

Then, since I give you tulips every day, does that mean we're dating too?" "You're such a tease,"

I muttered, pouting.

"Forget it. I'm not playing along anymore. I am going to take a shower and freshen up. You can sit here and chill, or go downstairs and chat with my parents."

I cut the conversation short, but she fanned herself, acting like she was unbearably hot.

"I feel sticky too,"

She leaned in with a playful smirk, winking.

"Can I shower with you?"

"Absolutely not!"

"Aww, so cute...."

I stomped into the bathroom and slammed the door loudly to let her know I had no interest in continuing this conversation.

But the moment I was out of her sight, I leaned against the door, placed a hand over the left side of my chest, and patted it gently, as if trying to calm my own heart.

"Stop pounding so hard already. You're getting annoying."

"Your face is turning all red,"

Came a voice from the mirror.

I flinched slightly, then quickly straightened up, pretending nothing had happened-though now with a hint of irritation.

Was there nowhere I could have a moment of privacy? Not even in the bathroom?

"Worked out so hard, my blood's pumping like crazy."

"Or is it because of that beautiful boss of yours?"

"Whatever the reason, I'm taking a shower."

"Hey, from what I see, your boss seems to really like you. Stop playing hard to get."

"I'm not playing hard to get. I'm just not into it. That's all."

"You don't like her?"

"I don't."

I blurted out, then pressed my lips together as if my body didn't agree with my words. My mouth said no, but my heart was racing like it wanted to say yes.

"If you like her so much, you can have her."

"You're only saying that because you know I can't cross over. But if I could, I'd throw myself at your boss without hesitation."

"Then go ahead. Find a way to cross over. If you can do it, she's all yours. I'm done. I just want to shower."

I stepped away from the mirror, stripped down, and let the cold water refresh me. I washed my hair, hoping it would clear my mind, but all I could think about was Mui's face. It was everywhere, invading every thought, until I had to shake my head so hard that droplets of water splattered all around.

This was a new reality I had to face. A boss who wanted to date me as her employee-who had even come all the way to my house to ask me out. Did she forget that she was a woman?

"What's the reason you don't like her?"

The voice from the mirror kept the conversation going.

I shrugged under the shower, answering like someone who refused to admit the truth-that I was impressed by my boss but just didn't want to believe it.

"A million reasons. It's too fast. We just met, and now she's saying she likes me and wants to be my girlfriend?"

"Then try dating her."

"She came at me too fast. I wasn't ready. And most importantly, she's a woman."

"Why does it always come down to that? So old-fashioned."

"I want to be sure first. I don't really believe she actually likes me."

"If she didn't like you, why would she say it? She's been showing it clearly. If she says she really likes you-?"

"It doesn't make sense."

I slumped my shoulders under the shower.

"I don't have any good memories with her. We've never been through anything tough together. There's no real bond. So I don't understand why she thinks of me that way. What's her reason?"

"Why do you need a reason so badly?"

"Because it doesn't make sense."

I turned off the shower, stepped into the dry area, and got dressed. At this point, I was practically undressing in front of the person in the mirror, but I didn't feel particularly embarrassed-after all, she had the same face and body as me. The only differences were the clothes we wore and the way we spoke.

"Keep playing hard to get, and someone else might snatch her away."

"If I'm good enough for her and she truly means what she says, she won't leave."

"Good people get abandoned all the time. There are a million reasons why someone might stop loving you. Life's short, you know. Wouldn't it be better to just give it a chance?"

"If you like her so much, why don't you date her yourself? I'm not interested."

With that, I walked out of the bathroom-only to find my boss fast asleep on my bed.

I stopped and stood still, watching her for a moment. Normally, she was the one constantly approaching me, always talking with that smooth, playful charm. But right now, she was quiet. Peaceful. Like a young girl in an adult's body, sleeping soundly without a care.

Why does she like me? What does she even see in me? Someone this perfect...

I leaned in closer, studying her face. Even after working out, the scent of her perfume still lingered in the air, tempting me to take a deeper breath. I examined her delicate, oval-shaped face, taking in every detail.

She is beautiful. Even in sleep, she had a certain allure. When she is awake, she is the picture of a flawless boss.

*Someone like this... liking someone like me?*

"Smells nice."

"Hmm?"

I flinched slightly-only to find my neck trapped in a loose but firm embrace.

My beautiful boss opened her eyes, and despite having just woken up, her gaze was bright and alert, nothing like someone who had been sleeping. "Were you faking it?"

"I wasn't. Just resting my eyes. You smell really good right after a shower."

"Khun Mui, you're holding my neck too tight. I can't stand properly."

"Then lie down."

"Ahh!"

She yanked me forward, flipping me onto the bed and pinning my arms in place.

*"You in this position... it really makes my heart race."*

I wanted to tell her that seeing her from this angle, hovering over me like this, was just as breathtaking. But my stubborn mouth refused to admit it, so instead, I squirmed and acted like I was resisting.

"Let me go, Khun Mui. You smell bad."

"No way. You were just bending down, staring at me a second ago."

"I was just looking at you while you were sleeping."

"So, do you like me now?"

"Since when does just looking at someone mean you like them?"

"Anyone who looks at me falls for me."

She spoke with full confidence in her own face.

"People say my eyes can kill."

"Exaggeration. Whoever said that was being dramatic. No one dies just from being looked at."

"It's a figure of speech. No one can resist me when I look at them. And now, I'm going to use that special power on you."

She locked eyes with me, staring intently. My heart pounded so hard I was afraid she might hear it. The only thing I could do was turn my face away and stare out the window instead. I stopped struggling-too tired to resist anymore.

"It won't work because I won't look at you-ah! What are you doing?"

I jolted when she suddenly dropped down and rested her head against the left side of my chest.

"Stay still."

Her voice was firm, not playful like usual. It made me freeze without even realizing it. She stayed like that for a while before speaking again.

"Your heartbeat sounds nice. It feels familiar... like a warm hug."

"Get off, Khun Mui. This is weird. It's kind of... creepy." "Heh, creepy?"

She lifted her head to meet my gaze, raising an eyebrow.

"And yet, you're getting flustered over a '*creepy*' person."

"Anyone would get flustered in this situation! It feels like I'm about to get attacked."

I shoved her off and jumped out of bed, putting as much distance between us as possible. Not because I was actually afraid she'd do anything, but because I didn't want her to hear how loud my heart was beating.

"You should go home now, Khun Mui."

"Kicking me out so soon? Why don't we love each other equally?"

"You say these things too easily."

"What things? Love?"

"Yes! We just met. How can you already like me?"

"Love at first sight exists, you know. Like, just one glance and you can see straight into someone's heart."

"Cringe."

"Fine, I'll go. But I'll be back to listen to your heartbeat another day."

I folded my arms over my chest protectively.

"There won't be another day. This is already too much."

"That's okay. I'll keep courting you until you give in."

She grinned before adding,

"Anyway, do you prefer a quick trip to Pattaya or a flight to Phuket?"

"Phuket... Wait, you're changing the subject again. And why do you keep asking about places I like to go?"

"Because I want us to go together."

She answered briefly, then finally left my room. Before leaving, she went downstairs to say goodbye to my parents, waving cheerfully as she walked out. Meanwhile, I mumbled complaints under my breath about how carefree she was.

My heart was still racing, just as it had been since the moment I saw her. It was frustrating-I couldn't control this annoying organ at all.

"What a sweet boss,"

My dad commented, full of praise. My mom immediately backed him up. "Yes, she's beautiful, talented, and judging by the car she drove, quite wealthy. Oh, wait-don't tell me she was the one who drove you home that day?"

I shifted my eyes around, unsure of how to respond. In the end, I just nodded and admitted it.

"Yeah, Khun Mui drove me home."

"Such a thoughtful boss,"

My dad continued, but somehow, his words made me feel like a cow with fresh wounds all over its back. I didn't even know why.

"She's just a kind boss. That day, we were at the hospital, so she offered to drop me off."

"In that case, we should invite her over for dinner more often. She seems really nice," Mom said, beaming.

"And she looked like she really enjoyed my cooking."

"She was just being polite, Mom. If there's food in front of you, you can't exactly refuse to eat-it'd be rude. And if she said your food wasn't good, you'd get upset. So, of course, she had to say it was delicious."

"Excuse me?!"

Mom reached for her slipper, ready to smack me.

I yelped and darted behind Dad, using him as a shield.

"Are you seriously about to hit me over this?"

Mom huffed, clearly annoyed, as if I'd just claimed her cooking was terrible and that Mui had only eaten out of obligation.

"Are you even my child?"

"I'm just stating facts."

"The more you talk, the more irritated I get."

"Oh, come on," Dad chuckled.

"Let's not ruin the mood. The boss came to visit-so, what did she think of our house?"

"She said it felt warm and welcoming."

"Then we should invite her over more often. She can even drive you home again like last time. That way, I won't have to pick you up."

"There's no need to bother her that much. I'd rather just take the bus. It's easier."

"Why are you being so difficult?"

Mom's patience started to wear thin as I kept disagreeing with everything.

"Do you not like your boss?"

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

"So that means you like her."

"Not liking her doesn't mean I like her!"

I shot back quickly.

"I just feel... neutral."

"But she's such a sweet boss. Let's do this-from now on, if she's free, let her drive you home. I heard she doesn't live far from us. I'll talk to her about it myself."

"Talk to her? Wait, Dad, do you have her number?"

Dad grinned and waved a business card in his hand.

"We exchanged numbers."

"What?! You didn't even ask me first!"

"It's not a big deal. Why would I need to ask? Anyway, I'll check with her about giving you a ride home, and in the mornings, I'll drive you myself. Deal closed."

I opened my mouth, but no words came out. Mom and Dad seemed so impressed with my boss-did they even realize she was trying to flirt with their daughter? But saying that out loud would just make things more complicated, and I didn't have the energy to explain. Whatever.

"Fine! Do whatever you want. I'm not talking to you anymore!"

With that, I stomped off to my room, slamming the door shut behind me. She was too much-flirting with me wasn't enough, now she was winning over my parents, too? She was pushing so hard that I had no way to react.

No. I needed to talk to her and set things straight!

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I arrived at the office, fully prepared to confront Mui about crossing the line. Not only had she pushed into my personal space, but now she had my dad's number too. Someone had to rein her in before she went even further.

But when I got there, a crowd of employees had gathered in front of the company's whiteboard, which was usually used for announcements. My plan to storm into Mui's office was momentarily put on hold as curiosity got the better of me. What was going on?

Unfortunately, I was too short to see over the crowd. After a few moments of futile stretching and craning my neck, I gave up and nudged one of the marketing employees, trying to get some answers.

"What's happening? Why is everyone so excited?"

"Oh, you're new, right? Boss just posted the announcement for our company outing."

"Outing?"

"Yeah, like a trip. It's a reward for all our hard work and the company's profits."

Oh. That made sense.

I really was new, so this was my first time hearing about something like this. I wasn't particularly thrilled-I wasn't close to anyone here yet-but I was still curious. Where exactly was this outing going to be?

"So, what exactly did the announcement say?"

"Just the usual-dates, location, all that. Boss picked the second week of next month. We're going to Phuket!"

"Phuket?"

"Yep! Normally, we go somewhere close like Pattaya or Suan Phueng, but this time we're flying to Phuket! Ahh!"

Everyone was buzzing with excitement, already making plans for what they'd do once they got there. The marketer I was talking to suddenly gasped dramatically.

"I need to start prepping! This trip, I'm gonna sunbathe until I'm golden brown. Foreigners love that. Woohoo!"

And just like that, she squeezed into the crowd, joining in on the excited chatter.

Meanwhile, I just stood there, stunned.

When I turned toward Mui's office, I found her leaning against the doorway, watching me. She smiled and raised an eyebrow in amusement.

Without saying a word, I already knew.

She formed a little heart with her fingers, making sure no one else could see.

I pretended to catch it, then threw it to the ground and stomped on it.

Mui clutched her chest dramatically, as if I'd wounded her, then laughed. I almost smiled back-almost-but I quickly held my expression firm. No way was I giving her the satisfaction.

While the rest of the office stayed caught up in the excitement of the trip, I walked straight over to her, narrowing my eyes like I was interrogating a suspect-but not too seriously.

"You didn't pick Phuket because of me... right?"

"If not for you, then who else?"

"You really went this far?"

"I'm courting you, aren't I?"

"This is way too aggressive."

"And? Is it working?"

"No."

"Hmm. Not so sure about that."

"It's NOT working."

I snapped, but she didn't seem bothered in the slightest. Instead, she pulled out a tulip from behind her back and handed it to me-this time, directly, not just leaving it on my desk like before.

**"Water drops on stone every day, and eventually, even stone erodes."**

"This stone isn't playing along." "Oh, it will."

"And what makes you so sure?"

**"Your heartbeat is beating out of your chest."**

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# Chapter 08: Tulip

"What's wrong? Why do you look so upset?"

After coming home from work, I headed straight to the bathroom to wash my face. I felt like a little embarrassed today—especially when that lady boss spoke in a way that made it seem like she knew my heart was racing.

Did I really show it that much? Was it so obvious that my heart was practically shouting out loud? And what’s with this ridiculous heart of mine? Every time I get close to her, it always starts beating fast.

"I'm annoyed at that big mouth."

"You mean Mui, right?"

"Don't say that name! It's annoying."

I stared at the mirror, where someone who looked exactly like me was staring back with a smile on her lips.

"How did you even know?"

"You’re ridiculously easy to read. The slightest thing shows on your face." "Don't exaggerate! Now you’re just nitpicking, too."

"Hey, I’m just stating the truth. Why are you so mad? So, what exactly did your boss do to you?"

"She didn’t do anything."

"Then why do you look so miserable?"

"I don't talk to the mirror anymore. It's like being crazy."

I cut off the conversation, finished washing up, and walked out of the bathroom. Then I threw myself onto my bed to relax. Honestly, working outside the house is exhausting. But if the alternative is being stuck at home, sick, unable to go anywhere or do anything, I’d rather be tired from work.

As I lay there lost in thought, I suddenly felt like something was off in my room. I sat up straight and looked around. My eyes landed on the vase where I usually kept the tulips I received daily from Mui.

It was gone.

I gasped in shock. No matter where I looked, there was no sign of the flowers. Panicked, I ran downstairs to ask my mom, who would know better than anyone—she was the one who cleaned my room when I wasn’t home.

"Mom! Where did the flowers in my vase go?"

"Oh, I threw them away,"

She replied casually.

"Some of them were rotting and smelling bad. The whole room stank, so I got rid of them. Why?"

"Nothing,"

I answered weakly, feeling a sudden wave of irritation so strong that I bit my lip. My mom, noticing the change in my expression, widened her eyes in surprise.

"Did I do something wrong? Were those flowers important?"

"It's nothing."

"It has to be something. Your face says it all."

"Why is everyone trying to read me today?"

I snapped, baring my teeth slightly in frustration.

"Whatever. They were rotting anyway. It's good that you threw them out."

With that, I turned and ran upstairs. My mom, seeing me disappear so quickly, called out with concern.

"I just finished cooking. Aren't you coming down to eat?"

"No. I'm on a diet."

***Bang!***

I shut the door and closed my eyes, trying to calm myself down. I didn't want to be mad at my mom for meddling in my room. She meant well. And honestly, some of the flowers *were* rotting. Keeping them wouldn't have been a good idea.

Mom did the right thing.

I kept repeating that to myself as I flopped onto my bed again, staring at the ceiling with an odd sense of unease.

*It's just flowers. No big deal. She'll bring new ones tomorrow anyway.*

Just let it go.

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Four hours passed, and I was still lying there, wide awake, staring at the ceiling. I tried thinking about work, about office gossip, about random things other people had going on.

But no matter what, my mind kept circling back to the tulips that had been thrown away. Even after taking a shower to clear my head, I couldn't shake it off.

Finally, I sprang up from bed and ran out of my room. It was already past 10 PM. The house was dark—Mom and Dad had gone to bed. I took the chance to slip outside, determined to do something I never thought I would.

*I dig through the trash.*

In front of the house, there were two separate bins—one for wet waste and one for dry. I opened them one by one, rummaging through the garbage like a stray dog looking for scraps.

I tossed things left and right, nearly ending up rolling inside the bin myself. But the flowers weren’t there.

So, I moved on to the second bin—the wet waste. And it *was* wet. The stench of rotting food filled my nose. There was probably even dog poop in there, though I tried not to think about it.

And finally, at the very bottom, I saw them.

The tulips, lying there, wilted and rotting.

"Found them."

I grabbed all the flowers and held them tightly against my chest. All my frustration disappeared in an instant. Even though they no longer smelled sweet like before—now carrying the rotten scent of wet garbage instead— just having them in my arms made my heart feel lighter. I let out a deep sigh, closed the trash bin, and carried the flowers back into the house.

I went straight to my bedroom and carefully placed them back into the vase. Of course, I didn’t forget to wash them first—after all, they had just come out of the garbage.

Just like my mom said, some were rotten, some were dried up, but looking at them still gave me a strange sense of comfort.

I smiled at the flowers and spoke to them as if they were alive.

*“It’s okay now. Let’s stay together like this.”*

As soon as the words left my mouth, I frowned, suddenly realizing what I had just done. I took a step back, unable to believe myself.

Why did I do something like this? They were just flowers—flowers that were bound to wither and die.

Why did I bring them back?

My eyes widened in shock and confusion, and I collapsed onto the bed, still reeking of the garbage I had just dug through. I didn’t understand myself. My heart pounded uncontrollably and I was slowly coming to my senses.

Little by little.

It wasn’t about the flowers, but because of the giver.

Mui’s face flashed in my mind, overlapping with the flowers I was staring at. My breath hitched. I suddenly didn’t know what to do. I got up and paced around, desperately trying to figure out why I had rushed to retrieve the flowers like they were the most important thing in the world.

They were just rotten flowers. I barely even noticed their presence in my room before. I didn’t think much of them when she gave me one each day, either. But now that I thought about it, the number of flowers I had received matched the number of days I had been working.

Mui gave me a flower *every single day* without fail.

She cared.

She was consistent.

She showed me exactly how she felt.

***Thump...***

***Thump....Thump.***

My heart pounded as I stared at the flowers. I placed a hand over my left chest and lightly patted it, telling myself to calm down.

*It’s nothing. It’s not a big deal.*

But my mine refused to accept that, as if it was screaming, "**No."**

“…Shit.”

That was the only word I muttered after realizing how strange my emotions had become tonight.

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This morning, I still showed up for work as usual, but I could feel the amused stares from my coworkers. It wasn’t surprising—after all, not many people wear sunglasses indoors at the office. But what else could I do? I hadn’t slept at all last night, restless because of the flowers in the vase.

I lost count of how many times I picked them up to throw them away, only to put them back again. Over and over, all night long. I finally managed to fall asleep at 5 AM, only to wake up an hour later to get ready for work.

My whole routine was a mess—I didn’t go for my morning run, barely touched my breakfast, and still hadn’t eaten since skipping dinner last night. My stomach was growling, but I couldn’t bring myself to eat. I was thinking too much.

*They were just flowers.*

But somehow, they had changed something in me.

It was 9 AM now. I took off my sunglasses and sat at my desk, trying to focus on some minor accounting tasks. But my concentration was completely shot. My eyes kept drifting to the clock, and I found myself wondering why the person responsible for my sleepless night hadn’t shown up yet.

*Was she sick?*

*Where did she go?*

*Why didn’t she say anything?*

…Wait, why *would* she tell me? It’s her own business. I’m not her secretary. I have no reason to be this curious.

But still—where *was* she?

By the time it was past 11, my beautiful boss—the one I had been anxiously waiting for—finally arrived. She walked into the office in a casual yet effortlessly stunning outfit: a white button-down shirt and tight-fitting jeans. Her long, wavy hair cascaded down her back.

The moment she entered, the office, once buzzing with chatter, fell into complete silence. Only the sound of keyboards clicking remained.

For a brief second, our eyes met. She raised an eyebrow at me before walking straight into her office, switching the glass partition to opaque mode—something she *never* did.

I had already been struggling to focus. Now that she was here acting all mysterious, I could barely function. Eventually, my patience snapped. I grabbed a random file—one that had nothing to do with her—just so I wouldn’t look like I was going in empty-handed, then marched straight to her office.

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***Knock, knock.***

“Come in.”

Her voice made me push the door open, walking in with a deliberately neutral expression. I kept my face composed, refusing to show any emotion. I stood there silently, still holding the file, waiting until she finally looked up from her computer screen and met my gaze.

"Is there something you need?"

“…Where did you go?”

“Huh?”

She looked surprised that I had blurted out the question so directly.

“Why are you late today? You always get here before everyone else, but today is different.”

She paused for a moment, then leaned back in her chair comfortably, clasping her hands together while giving me a knowing smile.

“…Why should I tell *you*?”

I swallowed hard. Good question. Why *should* she have to tell me where she’s been? My eyes darted left and right, scrambling for a logical explanation for my own behavior.

“…?”

“It’s nothing. I was just surprised, that’s all.” She chuckled, clearly amused.

“Since when do you care about me, hmm?”

I instinctively hugged the file closer to my side and quickly changed my tone from neutral to defensive.

“I *don’t* care. I was just worried—thought maybe you weren’t feeling well, since you were so late today.” “That’s called *caring*.”

“…You didn’t have to tell me.”

“I went out for breakfast,”

She said casually.

“Satisfied now?”

“You didn’t have to *tell* me,” I repeated stubbornly.

“I was just asking to be polite.”

“If you were *really* just being polite, you wouldn’t have barged in here and interrogated your boss like this.”

“…Fine, call it whatever you want. I don’t care,”

I snapped, feeling irritation bubbling up. I was definitely short-temper today —probably from the lack of sleep.

“You seem upset.”

“I should go.”

“So, you came in here just to ask where I was? That’s progress.”

“…Progress in what way?”

“In our relationship.”

She said and suddenly stood up and walked around her desk, stopping right in front of me.

I froze.

Her eyes locked onto mine.

“Your face says it all. You’re not happy. What’s really bothering you?”

“Nothing,” I shot back, voice tight.

“I was just asking out of concern, like any normal employee.”

She smiled.

“You’re getting attached.”

"No."

"I don't believe you. Let me listen to your heartbeat."

"Huh?"

Before I could react, she threw herself at me, pressing her face against the left side of my chest without even asking for permission. My body froze, too stiff to move. I couldn’t quite describe how I felt about her doing something like this.

***Thump thump.***

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

"Your heart is beating so fast. I likes the sound of your heartbeat."

She pulled away and crossed her arms.

"It's full of hesitation and anger mixed with curiosity. You’re probably starting to have feelings for me." "Can you stop jumping to conclusions?"

I closed my eyes in frustration.

"But I can understand it. Do you know how loud your heartbeat gets when we’re together in silence?"

"Excuse me."

I turned around and ready to leave. Just as I reached for the door handle, I couldn’t stop myself from speaking. And the moment the words left my mouth, I regretted being this kind of person.

"Khun Mui, did you forget something?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"....."

"Okay."

Then, I walked out in frustration. Ugh. Forget it if you forget. If there's nothing, then there's nothing. What was I even expecting?

Back at my desk, I typed away furiously, the loud clacking of my keyboard echoing through the office, loud enough for some people to glance at me, wondering what could possibly warrant such an aggressive typing spree.

Not long after, the glass walls of the office turned transparent again, just like always. I could feel my boss's gaze on my back, just like before.

Strangely, it made me feel a sense of comfort—but I pretended not to care.

About twenty minutes later, a delivery worker walked into the office, calling my name.

"Is there someone named Phuean here?"

"Yes."

I looked up from my screen, only to freeze in shock at the bouquet of tulips being handed to me, along with a delivery receipt to sign. Staring at the flowers, I instinctively turned toward the boss’s office, its glass walls fully transparent.

She met my eyes for a brief moment and smiled faintly, while I kept a neutral expression as if I felt nothing—though my heart was pounding.

I opened the attached card.

***"I didn’t forget."***

Just that short message was enough to make me smile. But the moment I noticed Mui watching me, I quickly wiped the smile off my face and got back to work, setting the flowers beside me.

Ah… those tulips really changed my mood for the better.

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# Chapter 09: The Sound of the Heartbeat

"Hey, let me ask you seriously. Who sent you the flowers?"

Lunchtime is when employees have the most freedom. After receiving the flowers today, many of my colleagues stopped by to chat. But most of them were just curious about the flowers. I could only smile and answer,

"I'm not sure."

I didn't say I didn’t know because that would sound like a lie. But by answering like that, the conversation just kept going endlessly.

"So that means you do know who sent them? Is it someone from our office?"

"Well..."

I hesitated. It wouldn't be a good idea to say who it was. If people kept digging and found out, there would be even more questions.

While I was struggling with the questions and couldn’t find a good answer, my boss—who rarely came down to eat with us but had been showing up a lot lately, almost like she was keeping an eye on me—walked over with her tray and stood at the head of the table.

"Mind if I join you for this meal?"

The flood of curious questions suddenly stopped. But now, everyone started looking at each other suspiciously, though no one dared to say anything. Mui sat down across from me, rolled up the sleeves of her elegant shirt to her elbows, and quietly ate her food.

It was like she had come to rescue me at just the right moment.

"Why aren’t you eating?"

Whenever she joined the table, everyone would tense up. It always puzzled me why people were so overly respectful toward her. I had never seen her scold anyone. She was even playful and friendly at times. Yet, the employees still felt uneasy around her.

"We're eating. Excuse us, Boss."

"Go ahead."

She responded in a neutral tone. Even just eating lunch, people felt the need to ask for her permission, which I found strange.

"What were you all talking about?"

She suddenly asked, right as everyone was awkwardly eating in silence. They exchanged glances, silently hoping someone else would answer. But since no one dared to speak, I took the chance to reply casually, without fear.

"The senior was asking who sent me the flowers."

"Oh," she nodded as if she understood.

"So, who sent them?"

She asked with a neutral expression, even though she already knew the answer.

"Probably someone in the office."

"Boss, looks like you’ve got competition,"

One of my seniors teased, mustering up a lot of courage to joke around while trying to act natural during this tense lunch. She let out a small laugh at that.

"That’s true. I’m not the only one getting flowers anymore. I wonder who sent them to you. Do you have any idea?"

She threw the question right at me, making me want to glare at her. Couldn’t she change the subject? She was already sitting here—might as well steer the conversation away.

"I have a guess, but I don’t want to say. Dating someone from the same office doesn’t look good."

"That’s true," she agreed.

"But lucky for me, the person who sent me flowers isn’t from the office, so that problem doesn’t apply."

"But it’s kind of exciting, Boss. Our office has something to talk about now,"

Another senior chimed in.

"Flowers always brighten up the atmosphere."

"You all like flowers?"

She asked her employees. Everyone smiled and nodded. Seeing that, she pouted playfully before saying,

"Alright then, from now on, I’ll buy a flower for everyone every day. That way, the office will always be lively."

With that, she continued eating as if it was nothing. Meanwhile, I couldn't even smile. I felt an odd sense of irritation that I couldn’t explain.

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After lunch, I headed to the elevator to return to work. But as soon as I stepped in, my beautiful boss followed. Now, it was just the two of us.

Finally, we had a brief moment to talk without anyone else listening.

"Why do you look like that? You were in a good mood at lunch."

"I'm fine."

"People who say they're fine usually aren’t,"

She said, crossing her arms as she calmly watched the floors pass by. Meanwhile, I stood there, feeling annoyed and restless, my arms hanging by my sides as I stared at her.

"Are you really going to give flowers to everyone from now on?"

"I already said it, so I guess I have to. Why?"

"Nothing."

"‘Nothing’ means something,"

She smirked, as if she saw right through me.

"If I want to give you flowers without making anyone suspicious, this is the best way."

"It doesn't feel special."

"You want it to be special?"

I flinched slightly, realizing I had let something slip, and quickly shook my head.

"That's not what I meant."

"You’re always special. Let’s go home together today."

"Huh?"

She changed the subject so fast. I didn’t like that habit of hers, but I had to keep up.

"I can't. My dad usually picks me up."

"Not today. Your dad called and asked me to take you home."

"My Dad's called you? Wait—when did you even get my dad’s number?"

"We exchanged numbers. I once drove you home, remember? So he called and asked if I could take you home every day. Traffic is bad."

"And you actually agreed? Is my house even on your way?"

"It really is. You don’t believe me?"

"Not really."

"That’s fine..."

She left the sentence hanging as the elevator doors opened to our office floor. She stepped out first, then casually threw in,

"Then let's just go to my place today."

*What?*

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And now here I am, sitting in the passenger seat of her car with no way out. After she claimed my dad had asked her to take me home, I immediately called him to confirm. And to my surprise, it was true. No matter how much I refused, she was determined to take me home.

"You have to come with me."

It was strange. She was usually kind, but whenever she spoke in that calm, steady voice, without even raising it, I couldn’t argue. And, as she said, my house really was on the way.

But instead of stopping at my house, my elegant boss drove right past it and stopped at a luxurious condo instead. Now, I was sitting on her sleek sofa in her apartment.

It felt like everything was going exactly the way she wanted, and all I did was follow along. What was happening? Why was I so easily swayed by her?

"Have some water first,"

She said, handing me a glass before sitting beside me.

"Or do you not usually drink cold water?"

"I usually drink cold water, but lately, I prefer room temperature."

"Then take mine."

Without hesitation, she swapped our glasses and drank mine in a few gulps. I watched her every move with interest. From this side angle, she looked so stunning that I suddenly felt like... a monkey.

"What are you staring at?"

She turned to me with a smile after finishing her drink.

"Are you *that* thirsty?"

"My side angle is the most beautiful angle."

Wait—could she read my mind? My eyes widened slightly in shock. Feeling awkward, I quickly took a sip of my water. "But from the side, you really look like a monkey."

*Pfft!*

I choked, sending a spray of water everywhere. Coughing and spluttering, I tried to recover while she laughed and patted my back.

"So cute."

"Don't touch me! Didn't you just say I look like a monkey?"

"But you’re *not* a monkey."

"Of course not! Who could be as beautiful as you?"

"Oh? So do you think I’m beautiful?"

"*Ugh*."

I clicked my tongue. Lately, I had become bolder with her, completely forgetting that she was a boss that everyone feared. She simply smiled and grabbed a tissue to gently wipe my face.

"You're cute from every angle."

"Stop trying to sweet-talk me after calling me a monkey!"

"I'm just being honest."

We locked eyes for a long moment. I let out a fake cough and quickly looked away, unsure of what to do. That’s when it hit me—I was completely in *her* territory now. No way to escape. This was dangerous. And yet, I had followed her here so easily, like a fool walking into a trap.

"Alright, I believe you now. Your place really is on the way to my house."

"See?"

"Then you can take me home *now*."

“I am tired.”

She leaned back against the couch, looking completely drained.

“Let me rest for a bit, then we’ll go.”

“And how long is *a bit*?”

“Until I’m not tired anymore.”

“You’re so selfish.”

Instead of just leaning back, she shifted and rested her head on my shoulder instead. I froze, unsure what to do. We had been close before, but we had never actually touched like this.

“You smell nice.”

“It’s just cheap perfume from the market.”

“Still smells good. Stop talking—let me cuddle for a bit.”

“Are you really going to sleep?”

I asked again. She nodded slightly before suddenly sitting up straight.

“This position isn’t comfortable.”

“Then I’ll sit on the floor. You can have the whole couch,” I offered.

“No need. Just changing positions is enough.”

Before I could react, she pushed me down so I was lying flat on the couch. Then she climbed on top of me, adjusting herself until she was completely comfortable.

“Khun Mui…”

“Just stay still. Let me cuddle.”

“You’re literally lying on top of me.”

“I like touching you.”

She said it so casually, then lowered her head toward me. I squeezed my eyes shut, pressing my lips together tightly, my heart pounding wildly. My mind raced ahead, imagining what might happen next.

But instead of doing anything dramatic, she simply shifted down and rested her head on my chest, right over my heart. She draped her arms and legs over me like a human blanket.

“You said *let me cuddle*, but this is more like *trapping me*.”

She didn’t respond right away. Then, with a soft chuckle, she whispered,

“Your heartbeat is so fast.”

“Anyone’s heart would race in this situation. I’m completely pinned down.”

“I won’t do anything… unless you want me to.”

And what if I *did* want her to?

Of course, I didn’t say that out loud. I just lay there, staying still.

“Do you do this with everyone you bring here?” I asked instead.

“You’re the the only one. There’s no one else.”

"...."

"Thank you," Mui said softly.

"You've said that before," I replied.

"But I still can't figure out why. What’s so special about me that makes you keep saying thank you?"

She smiled gently.

"Because of the sound of your heartbeat."

"....."

**"I love the sound of your heartbeat."**

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# Chapter 10: Her Room

I thought she was just joking when she said she wanted to take a nap— especially since she lay right on top of me. But within less than five minutes, I heard a soft snore. Her steady breathing made me lie completely still, afraid to move in case I woke her up.

I had to admit, I was really excited about coming to her house this time. Deep down, I was curious about how she lived, and if I came here… what would happen between us?

And this is what happened—she just fell asleep on top of me.

“Khun Mui.”

"....."

She looked so peaceful that I stopped calling her name and simply watched her sleep, feeling a strange sense of fondness. I had tried to resist, but now I let her rest as she pleased. My fingers lightly played with her soft strands of hair.

She was beautiful. She smelled nice. Her personality was a little odd, but I had to admit—it was part of her charm. When I first found out she was pursuing me, I had some resistance. After all, she was my boss. It wasn’t appropriate. And on top of that, she was a woman. My whole life, I had believed that a woman was supposed to be with a man.

But now… my opinion has changed.

Was it because my heart raced every time I saw her? Or because of the way she made me feel important and that I exist? Maybe that's why I am shaken… even if she's a woman.

Yes… I was shaken. And badly. In such a short time, too. It made me feel like I was too easy to sway.

As I lay there, lost in thought and staring at the ceiling nearly three meters high, I suddenly heard a quiet mumble from the beautiful woman lying on top of me.

“Don’t stop stroking my hair. It feels nice.”

“Huh?”

“It’s relaxing. Keep playing with my hair.”

She wasn’t fully asleep. And now she was making requests like a child. I smiled softly and did as she asked. She hugged me even tighter, pressing her cheek against my chest as if she wanted to hear my heartbeat even more clearly.

“You’re such a cheat. I thought you were asleep,”

I murmured while still running my fingers through her hair.

“I was about to fall asleep, but when you started stroking my hair, I woke up a little… I just didn’t want to move. It would be nice to stay like this forever.”

“Please have some pity on the person you’re lying on. I’m getting sore.”

“Just a little longer,”

She said stubbornly.

“I’ll even give you a raise. Just stay, okay?” Her plea, almost like a whine, completely melted me.

“Fine,” I replied shortly.

“Only because of the salary increase.”

“You’re so sentimental.”

“Well, you’re rich.”

I chuckled softly and continued running my fingers through her hair. I was sure she was awake now, just refusing to get up. The whole situation felt so strange—how had we become this close, to the point where she could just lie on top of me like this?

And why, as someone who usually valued my personal space, was I letting her do it? I wasn’t even sure myself.

*“Meow.”*

A small, high-pitched cry came from somewhere in the room. Then, the owner of the sound appeared—jumping onto Mui’s back and locking eyes with me.

One of its eyes was blue, the other brown, giving it an unusual look. Its short fur and distinct features made it obvious that it was a foreign breed. It stared at me as if carefully evaluating who I was.

“A cat?”

“No,”

Mui replied, still lying down with her eyes closed, despite the cat now perched on her back.

“She’s my daughter. She’s not a cat in the way you think.”

That was clearly a cat. What else was I supposed to call it, a dog? I didn’t argue, just kept staring at it.

Mui, noticing my silence, lifted her head slightly and scolded the little troublemaker that had climbed onto her.

“Chepo, you’re being too bold. Get off me.”

Surprisingly, the cat actually listened. After a slight reprimand, it jumped down and crouched on the floor. I took the chance to sit up, just as my boss pushed herself up as well. She then formally introduced me to the cat.

“Don’t be alarmed. This is my daughter, Chepo Aloe Vera.”

“That’s… a cat’s name?”

“I told you, she’s not a cat. She’s family. You should get to know her.”

“Do I have to shake her paw, too?”

I asked, still somewhat baffled.

“By the way, does this condo even allow pets?”

“Nope. I’m not supposed to have one. But I’ve been secretly keeping her for a long time now. Chepo, say hello.”

"...."

“She might become your new mom.”

I snapped my head toward my boss, who had just casually thrown out that statement. I was both annoyed and—strangely—pleased by how she was trying to claim me so boldly. I ended up baring my teeth slightly in a playful growl before breaking into a small smile.

“Don’t just assume things on your own! Who said I’d be the new mom of

Chepo Aloe Vera—the cat with a name that sounds like an aloe vera plant?”

“You, of course.”

“I never agreed to anything.”

“But you’re already wavering.”

“Don’t—”

“The way your heart is beating says it all,”

She cut in confidently, knowing exactly how to trap me in a corner. Then, ignoring the cat, she locked eyes with me as she hovered over my body.

“So… has your answer changed since that day?”

“What question?”

“Will you be my girlfriend?”

“We just met. You barely even know me. Don’t you think this is a little too fast?”

“If you like someone, you go for it. Why play hard to get? It’s a waste of time.”

“But when things are too easy, the person on the receiving end can feel like they don’t matter. Like they’re not worth anything.”

“If I don’t think you’re easy, then don’t label yourself that way. So, what’s your answer? Will you be my girlfriend?”

She crawled closer, her eyes locked onto mine—just like how Chepo had stared at me from her back earlier. The owner and the pet really did have the same personality.

“Why do you even like me?” I asked.

“Because Chepo wants a new mom.”

“You never take anything seriously.”

“So? Yes or no?”

“No.”

“Aw, that answer leaves me at a dead end.”

She sighed dramatically, but she didn’t seem too affected by my rejection.

“Guess I’ll just have to keep chasing you then. But at least we’ve made progress—you’re in my room now.”

“I only came here because I couldn’t jump out of your car. So, are you going to take me home now?”

“Nope.”

“What now? You’re already courting me.”

“Can I kiss you?”

“…Huh?”

She was so direct that it was starting to scare me. There was no hesitation, no attempt to beat around the bush.

“Do you even know what subtlety is?”

“A good executive needs to make quick decisions. If I want something, I go for it immediately. So? Shall we? You’ve already come this far. If I just let you go home, that would be a total loss for me.” “How many people have you done this to?”

“You’re the first person I’ve ever pursued.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Trust me.”

She leaned in, and I instinctively leaned back—until our noses bumped. Our lips were just a palm’s width apart.

“You’re the only one who gets this privilege.”

“If I let you kiss me, will you finally take me home?”

“Consider it a gas fee.”

“Fine. Let’s just get this over with.”

I closed my eyes, waiting for her to make her move. After a moment, I felt her lips touch my cheek—just the lightest brush—before she pulled away. I opened my eyes, surprised that it had ended so quickly.

“…My cheek?”

She grinned.

“Oh…”

“Why are you disappointed?”

“Not at all,” I denied quickly.

“So, can you take me home now? You got your gas fee.”

“Alright.”

Still smiling, she grabbed her bag and car keys. Meanwhile, I just sat there on the sofa, feeling strangely irritated. Nothing had gone the way I expected. She said she was going to kiss me, and I had braced myself for it —but in the end, all I got was a peck on the cheek.

Now what was I supposed to do with that?

“You’re not coming?” she asked.

“I am.”

“You don’t look happy.”

“Nothing.”

Mui gave me a small smile but didn’t say anything. And just as promised, she dropped me off safely at home—without my dad complaining even once.

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“At least she only touched your cheek. That means she’s not rushing things and is giving you time to adjust.”

Now here I was, talking to myself in the bathroom mirror again. This was what happened when you had no friends—you ended up having conversations with someone who looked exactly like you, but you weren’t even sure if she is truly exist.

“I closed my eyes! She knew full well that I was willing to let her kiss me, but she pretended to aim for my cheek instead! Where am I supposed to put my face now?!”

I ranted in frustration, my face still puffed up with annoyance. My reflection smirked back at me.

“I thought you didn’t like women?”

“I don’t.”

“Then what’s this?”

“I don’t hate them either.”

“Exactly. If you really hated it, you wouldn’t have gone all the way to her place. You had some expectations, didn’t you? But in the end, nothing happened,”

My reflection said, sipping on a bag of soda she must have just bought.

Watching her made my throat feel dry too, but I ignored it for now.

“I didn’t expect anything.”

“Your face says otherwise. Listen, if you were just a little more honest with yourself, that boss of yours wouldn’t even be a problem. She’s already made it clear that she’s interested. She’s just waiting for you to admit it.”

“Admit what? I don’t feel anything.”

“Oh, come on. You got mad when she was late giving you flowers, and now you’re sulking because she only touched your cheek. Honestly, don’t you get annoyed with yourself? Even I’m getting frustrated just listening to you.”

“If you’re so impressed by her, why don’t you just go marry her yourself?”

“I don’t know who’s supposed to be the husband and who’s the wife… but honestly, I don’t care. Whoever’s who doesn’t matter. If it’s your Mui— drop-dead gorgeous, rich, and perfect in every way—what’s there to refuse?”

The second the conversation shifted to marriage, my skin crawled. Back in school, sex education only ever taught that a man and a woman had to, well… do the thing, and then a baby would be born.

But with two women… what could they even do?

“I’m done talking to you. Go ahead and keep thinking about husbands and wives all you want.”

“Wait! There’s one more thing I want to ask.”

"What?"

I snapped, turning to glare at the person in the mirror.

"What else?"

"The company outing you're going on—so in your world, it's called

'Phuket,' right? When are you going?"

"Next month."

"I'm going too."

"Why are you going?"

"I want to travel."

"Do you even know where I'm staying? Just because you're in my mirror doesn’t mean we’ll end up in the same place. We have to be in the same location, the same latitude, right?"

"That’s easy. Just find me those numbers, and I’ll handle the rest. I want to travel with my friend from another world—without having to wake up and run at five in the morning."

"So even when I go all the way there, you're still going to follow me?"

"Come on, it's not like you have a ton of friends. Your coworkers already have their own groups, don’t they? Just think of me as an extra companion."

"You're such a hassle,"

I grumbled, but I couldn't deny she had a point. Having someone to talk to in the mirror was better than sitting in silence, letting my mouth go stale until my spit turned sour.

"Fine. I’ll get you the latitude coordinates or whatever."

"Awesome! See you!"

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# Chapter 11: The Owner of the Flowers

Time passed so quickly that it felt like a lie. In just a blink, the day of the company outing had arrived. Ms. Mui was very generous—she paid for plane tickets for all employees instead of taking a tour bus.

She was worried that everyone would get too tired, or maybe it was just because we only had three days for the trip. If we traveled by bus, it would take too long. It felt like a blessing that we got to travel in such luxury.

Everyone in the company was excited about this trip. Some even jokingly called me a lucky charm.

“This is the first time we’re flying for an outing! Normally, we only go to places nearby like Ratchaburi, Hua Hin, or Pattaya. But ever since you joined us, we’re suddenly going to Phuket. You really are a lucky charm!”

I smiled, feeling happy to receive such a compliment. But then, I suddenly froze and looked around in shock.

*What was that…?*

For the past few days, I had felt like someone was watching me. But no matter where I turned, I couldn’t figure out who it was.

Other than Mui, who often used her remote to turn her office walls into transparent glass so she could observe me during work hours, no one else seemed suspicious. But… this was different.

My boss’s gaze was always gentle, filled with admiration and affection. The feeling I had now, however, was unsettling—like an invisible stare piercing through my back.

"Are you okay? Why do you look like you've seen a ghost?" One of my seniors asked, noticing my odd behavior.

"I… I don't know. I just feel like someone is watching me."

"Maybe it's the boss?"

"Huh?"

I turned to look at her, startled. She noticed it too?

"W-Why would you say that?"

"Well, isn’t Ms. Mui always watching you? She made you work right in front of her office, keeps the glass wall transparent, and every time we look over, she’s staring at you. I feel sorry for you… What did you do to make her keep such a close eye on you?"

"Oh…" I let out a relieved sigh.

"She probably just keeps the glass open to see everyone working."

"No, she doesn’t. Normally, she only does that when she’s in a bad mood or wants to check if we’re actually working. But lately, it’s been open every single day. And when we sneak a look, all we see is her staring at you. Poor thing."

I gave a dry smile and didn’t bother arguing. If everyone thought I was being watched and targeted by the boss, that was fine by me. At least I wouldn’t have to explain anything.

"Come to think of it, I haven’t seen Ms. Mui yet."

"If I had to guess, she’s probably sitting in business class. She wouldn’t sit with us, would she?"

"Hey, do you think Ms. Mui brought her boyfriend along?"

Another coworker, who loved gossiping about the boss, brought up the topic. I perked up, listening intently.

"Which boyfriend?"

Everyone burst into laughter, except me. I kept my face neutral, pretending not to care, but I couldn’t help teasing back.

"Does Ms. Mui have a lot of boyfriends?"

"Well… how should I put it? No one really knows, but she never runs out of admirers. There’s always a steady stream of flowers being delivered. We’ve all seen it,"

My senior said, rubbing her chin thoughtfully.

"But none of them ever show up here. She’s a very private person. She’d never let them come to the office and give the employees something to gossip about."

"And yet, even without seeing them, just the flowers alone are enough for gossip,"

Another coworker added. The group laughed happily, delighted to have something to chat about. I could only go along with it, smiling.

"Wait a second… maybe Ms. Mui is upset with you because you’ve been getting flowers too?"

*That’s impossible. The one sending me flowers… is her.*

"It’s not like that."

"You never know. It’s a matter of pride. If someone was used to being the only one receiving flowers, and then a new employee suddenly started stealing the spotlight… But seriously, who’s sending them to you? It’s every single day! If not just a flower or two, then a whole bouquet. Your charm is too much—it’s annoying!"

"Oh, there’s really nothing to it,"

I said, brushing it off.

"You sound just like Ms. Mui—so secretive. Come on, share some details. We need more gossip material!"

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This trip really made everyone happy. Normally, these seniors didn’t talk to me much because they were afraid of being seen with me and catching the boss’s attention.

Everyone assumed Ms. Mui disliked me, so they kept their distance. But today, they were chatting away non-stop. It… felt nice, actually.

"Ms. Mui is here."

One of the employees whispered as they quickly greeted the boss. She walked in, pulling a small suitcase behind her. Today, she dressed casually in a T-shirt and loose pants, her hair flowing freely down her back.

Everyone was surprised—normally, she was impeccably put together, never a crease in her clothes. But today, she looked completely different.

"How’s everyone doing? You all got here early!" "I'm just excited. I've never been on a plane before,"

One of the employees responded confidently.

Ms. Mui nodded with a small smile, glancing at me for a brief moment— just enough not to draw suspicion.

"Have fun on the trip. Go check in first."

"Okay!"

Everyone replied in unison before going right back to their gossip. I watched her relaxed demeanor from behind, my heart pounding. No matter what look she went for, she always looked effortlessly good. She was naturally beautiful—there was no need for makeup or pretending to be cute.

Once we finished checking in, we sat in the waiting area for our flight to be called. There were about twenty minutes left. The others were busy chatting about their plans for the trip, while I sat alone, not joining in. Noticing this, Ms. Mui walked over, tapped my shoulder, and nodded.

"Come with me for a bit."

"Where to?"

"I need to eat something in the morning."

"And?"

"You have to eat too."

She spoke as she grabbed my hand, pulling me up. Luckily, I was sitting at the back, so no one really noticed. I followed her into the VIP lounge, which she could access with her membership card. The card also allowed her to bring one guest.

The lounge was private and quiet, with food, tea, and coffee available while waiting for boarding. I felt a little nervous—I had never been in this section before.

Whenever I flew to Chiang Mai with my parents, we just waited at the gate. Even though it was a simple thing—grabbing food and sitting down to eat —I couldn't help but feel excited.

"Stop just staring and get some congee. You need something in your stomach." "Okay."

"Are you happy?"

"Huh?"

I asked, my voice going up slightly.

"Oh… yeah, it's nice. We're going on a trip, after all."

"Let's share a room tonight."

"What?"

I was so shocked that I dropped the ladle into the congee pot.

Ms. Mui chuckled at my reaction, clearly amused.

"I just meant we'd be in the same room. What are you thinking?"

"Then say it clearly next time!"

"But if we shared a room and did all sorts of things like you’re imagining… that wouldn’t be so bad, would it?"

"Keep dreaming."

"Even in a dream, I’d be happy."

She spoke so casually before walking ahead to sit at the table. I scooped another bowl of congee and followed, sitting across from her. But the moment I sat down, I flinched, glancing left and right, a shiver running down my spine.

"What’s wrong? What are you looking for?"

"Lately, I keep feeling like someone’s watching me."

"Well, you’re not wrong. Who else would be watching you if not me?"

"It’s not that. It feels… sharp, like I’m being stabbed."

"It won’t hurt."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

I didn’t understand what she was implying. She simply smiled, eyes brimming with charm.

"I’ll only stab you gently."

"Khun Mui! Inappropriate!"

I bared my teeth at her. My voice was loud enough that the other passengers in the lounge turned to look. Embarrassed, I quickly lowered my voice, covering my face with my hands.

"How can a boss say things like that?"

"It’s not inappropriate. I’m just being direct."

"You’re too direct! And just so you know, you’re never getting what you want."

"The universe says if you truly desire something, you just have to wish for it. It’ll come true."

"Well, whatever this universe thing is, it’s not happening. Trust me."

"Nothing in life is certain, little one."

"I’ve lost my appetite."

I pushed my bowl away, even though I hadn’t taken a single bite.

"You’re being way too bold today. It’s overwhelming."

"We’re going to the sea. It’s the perfect time to be open, don’t you think? The sound of waves in the distance, the salty scent in the air, the golden sunset glow in the bedroom… It’d be a waste to just sleep."

"You’re talking like we’re actually sharing a room."

"Oh, we are."

"...."

"You’re staying with me."

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Even though I didn’t want to share a room with her, the moment we arrived in Phuket, all the senior employees had already paired up among themselves. As the newcomer, I didn’t have much choice. In the end, I had to share a room with my boss.

Everyone looked at me with pity, assuming I’d be extremely uncomfortable —being watched all the time and now having to sleep in the same room as someone I supposedly didn’t get along with.

They couldn’t have been more wrong.

Maybe this was part of her plan all along.

The room I had to share with my boss was a special suite—different from the standard rooms, naturally, since she was the company owner. It was spacious, complete with a kitchen counter, a living room, and a bed…

A five-foot-wide bed. No separate beds.

I stood there, staring at the bed, my heart pounding. I wasn’t exactly scared, but I did feel uneasy. If I had to be afraid of anything, it would be myself— because I seemed way too easily shaken.

"The bedroom’s nice and spacious,"

Mui said as she walked around, inspecting the place. Then she gestured for me to follow.

"Come see this. There’s a jacuzzi too."

Oh wow. Even the bathtub seemed to work in her favor.

And this atmosphere—the warm orange lighting, the soft sound of waves crashing against the shore… If I made it through tonight, I deserved sainthood.

"Why are you standing so stiff?"

"Can you promise me something?"

I asked, trying to sound braver than I felt.

"Promise that nothing will happen between us tonight."

She smirked, then let out a soft chuckle before quickly straightening her face. It was obvious she was just pretending to be clueless. Damn it…

"Sure. If anything happens, that means you were the one who started it."

"No way."

I declared confidently. Mui simply shrugged, unfazed.

"We’ll see. No one can resist me—not even if I just stand still."

"You sound very sure of yourself."

"Your heartbeat gives you away."

"You’re standing all the way over there—how could you even hear it?"

I crossed my arms over my chest, but she only raised an eyebrow, looking amused.

"Wait… Are you seriously nervous because of me? That’s progress."

She took a step closer. I instinctively stepped back—only to bump into the edge of the bed and fall onto my back.

Mui, seeing me sprawled out like that, climbed onto the bed, straddling me. Then she waggled her eyebrows.

"Are you offering yourself to me?"

"Hey!!"

"Oh… sure."

"Don't 'oh sure' me! Falling is falling! Now get off!"

I pushed her away and hugged myself, as if shielding my body.

"Stay away from me… We're keeping our distance from now on."

"Suit yourself. Just don't end up hugging me in your sleep."

She got up and walked over to her suitcase, unzipping it casually. I sat there watching her, my heart pounding out of control. My mind rejected her, but my body seemed to surrender so easily. I had even laid there on my back like an invitation. I hate myself.

I needed to say something.

"Aren't you bringing your boyfriend along, since we're at the beach?"

"Hmm?" She turned to look at me.

"Boyfriend? I don't have a boyfriend. Just a friend."

"When did you get a friend?"

"Right now,"

She said, eyes locked onto mine.

"I only have one friend. That means I only have you."

"You're such a smooth talker..."

I muttered. Then, after a pause, I swallowed hard and said,

"What about the person sending you flowers all the time? The coworkers talk about it a lot. I've seen it too." I hesitated before adding,

"But I've never met them in person."

"Oh… You will soon."

She didn’t even deny it. That annoyed me. I turned my face away, frustrated —only to be startled by a knock at the door.

Mui, still unpacking, got up and walked over, peeking through the peephole before smiling slightly and opening the door.

A huge bouquet of white flowers came into view. But this time, it wasn’t a delivery person like before. Instead, it was someone I had never seen before —a man in a loose, semi-formal suit.

He had a clean, well-groomed face, and honestly, he was quite goodlooking. He grinned mischievously at Mui before greeting her.

"Welcome, Mui."

Mui didn’t even accept the flowers. Instead, she turned toward me, hands casually in her pockets, and said,

"This is Watcharin."

"...."

"The owner of this hotel. And the person who's been sending the flowers you were asking about."

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# Chapter 12: I'm here

"Like a match made in heaven, they suit each other perfectly."

The senior employees, now gathered for a casual dinner, were gossiping about their boss, who was sitting at a separate table with someone else.

Right now, Ms. Mui and Mr. Watcharin—the one who regularly sent her flowers—were chatting happily. They laughed shyly and spoke in a way that showed how close they were.

I watched them for a moment before turning away in irritation.

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***Thump, thump...***

***Thump, thump...***

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My heart pounded fast, hard, and loud enough that I had to place a hand over my chest and pat it lightly. It was an unsettling feeling, and I had no idea how long I could endure it. I nearly wanted to throw water at both of them, just to make them scatter like ants whose nest had been disturbed.

*"Have they known each other for a long time?"*

Not wanting to stay too quiet—and being the new girl—I asked the question casually. The seniors nodded eagerly, pulling me into their gossip circle as if I were one of them now.

"Judging by how long he's been sending flowers, they must've known each other for years. But he only drops by the company once in a while since he's so busy. This hotel is just one of his businesses, not to mention all the consumer goods enterprises he owns... What else does he run, Jang? I forgot."

Jang, one of the senior employees, clicked her tongue knowingly.

"How could you forget? He owns that fish sauce factory—the one that’s everywhere in the market. My mom buys that brand all the time."

"Wow, he's really rich."

"They’re a perfect match. It's like I can see the aura of wealth radiating from them."

The more they praised him, the angrier I got. Without realizing it, I clenched my fists on my lap. Normally, I wouldn’t touch alcohol, but this time, I grabbed a beer bottle, poured myself a glass, and downed it in one go, letting out a loud "*Haah*!" afterward.

The conversation halted, and the others turned to stare at me instead.

"Whoa, drinking like that?"

"I don't drink often," I replied.

"But we're here to have fun. If I only drink soda, I won’t be good."

"You're good at adapting. This is a good idea."

The seniors were laughing loudly, gossiping about celebrities and all sorts of other things, completely drifting away from the previous conversation.

After two glasses of beer, I started feeling a bit lightheaded. From the corner of my eye, I glanced at my boss—who didn’t even spare me a look. Annoyed, I suddenly stood up, only to stagger slightly. The colleague beside me quickly grabbed my arm.

"Take it easy! If you stand up too fast, you’ll fall."

"I’m fine. It’s just two glasses. I can handle it."

"Then why are you getting up?"

"I need to go to the restroom."

"Want me to go with you?"

"No need. It’s just over there."

That’s what I said, but in reality, I didn’t go to the restroom at all. Instead, I walked in a different direction, away from the noise, trying to calm my heart, which was still racing with frustration.

I wanted to go back to my room, but there was nothing to do there. In the end, I found myself at the hotel’s swimming pool, sitting at the edge with my feet in the water, kicking at it absentmindedly.

"Hey!"

Then, a familiar voice—one I knew all too well—made me widen my eyes in shock.

My reflection in the water. No, the person who looked exactly like me was smiling and greeting me excitedly.

"You actually came?"

Before I left for this trip, I had shared my location, but I never expected Faen actually come looking for me. Now, we were in the same place, talking through our reflections in the water. This was the first time we had spoken to each other without using a mirror.

"We can talk through the water. Does this mean anything that reflects an image can connect us?"

"Well, at least you’re here. I was just getting bored."

"What the hell! I had to sneak into this fancy hotel even though I couldn’t afford a room. I was just wandering around the pool when I happened to run into you. And even if I had the money to stay here, it’d be a waste if we weren’t in the same room. Life is so unfair!"

"You did this to yourself. You could’ve just stayed home and avoided all this trouble."

"Wow, so rude! I came all this way because I wanted to travel with you!"

The beer I drank was definitely kicking in. A mix of boldness and tipsiness spilled out of me, leaving me with a ridiculous expression on my face.

"Are you in a bad mood?"

Faen asked. I could only laugh dryly, making a strange noise in response.

"Just a little."

"What happened?"

"I don’t want to talk about it."

"Did you forget that I’m your only friend? Just tell me what’s wrong. It’s not like I’d go gossiping about it to anyone."

"Are you trying to comfort me or just being nosy?"

"Both! They go hand in hand,"

My lookalike said, sticking out their tongue playfully.

"Are you upset because that boss lady isn’t paying attention to you?"

It felt like I had been smacked in the back with that comment. I bared my teeth in annoyance and turned away at a dramatic 45-degree angle. "Why would I be upset just because that woman ignoring me?"

"Oh? You’ve even stopped calling her ‘Khun Mui’ and switched to ‘*that woman*.’ So distant! What did she do to you?"

"She already has a boyfriend. How dare she flirt with me?"

"Oh, so you’re jealous."

"No!"

"You know, if you’d just admit your feelings, life would be much easier.

Instead, you’re sitting here sulking at the pool, pretending you’re not mad. Your face is red—did you drink?"

"A little."

"Wow, you’ve got it bad."

"I don’t like her!"

I quickly waved my hands in denial, trying to explain myself.

"It’s just annoying! She kept approaching me, acting like she liked me, and then suddenly, some random guy shows up with a huge bouquet, and they’re all giggling together. How am I supposed to feel?"

"It's like a toy."

"Exactly."

"Maybe she was just being polite."

"Polite, my ass. She looked really happy. That guy is handsome, rich, owns hotels and fish sauce factories. And me? I’m just a junior employee, don’t even own a car, barely make 18,000 baht a month. I can’t compare."

"Then why are you even comparing? You’re just you."

"I don't know," I grumbled.

"I don't even understand why I got involved with Khun Mui in the first place. She should just keep things professional—boss and employee, clear and simple! Not act all interested, say she likes me, flirt with me, make all these moves, and then the moment that guy shows up, she runs off giggling with him."

"You're so stubborn. It's really annoying, you know?"

My lookalike sighed.

"Just admit that you like her. Then go tell Khun Mui straight up that you don’t appreciate being treated like a toy."

I blinked.

"You're right. I should say that."

"Say what? That you like her?"

"No, that she shouldn’t treat me like a toy!"

"Still in denial, huh? Would it kill you to just admit that you like her?"

"Okay, okay. I am going to talk to Khun Mui. I'll tell her exactly this sentence: *'Don't treat me like a toy*!'"

Feeling more determined than ever, I pushed myself up from where I had

been sitting with my feet in the water. But just as I stood, a sudden force from behind shoved me forward—

***SPLASH!***

I didn’t even see who it was. Not that it mattered.

Because there was something far more important I had just remembered—

*I can't swim.*

Water rushed into my mouth, liters of it. I flailed, trying desperately to reach the surface. Through the shimmering water, I saw a shadow above me —someone standing at the edge of the pool, watching. Then they turned and disappeared.

No one was around to help me.

I kept struggling, but the pool was too deep. My limbs felt heavy. Slowly, my body began to sink. Water flooded my lungs. A strange, eerie calmness washed over me.

*Ah... so this is what drowning feels like.*

*Am I... going to die?*

Memories came rushing back—

My parents' faces, both in happy and sad moments. The time I was sick.

The day I got a new heart. Running marathons, feeling alive again. Moments flashing by like waves crashing onto shore.

And the last image—*her*.

My beautiful lady boss.... **Khun Mui.**

She had told me she liked me. She had her reasons. My heart had raced every time I saw her. Every moment spent close to her, the scent of her lingering in the air. What a shame. I'll never see her again.

If only I could turn back time—

I'd tell her that I liked her too...

...And now, at the moment of death, I finally admit it?

"Wake up! Hey! Don’t you dare die in front of me!"

A sharp slap landed hard on my cheek. I jolted awake, gasping, choking, and coughing up all the water I had swallowed. My vision blurred, everything around me just a haze of shifting shapes and shadows. Slowly, the image gradually became clearer.

And there she was. It was the same face as me

Het condition was no different as soaked as I was, her hair plastered to her face, eyes wide with fear. She shook me frantically, as if terrified that I would die.

"Are you awake now? Stay with me! Oh, shit—someone's coming! I gotta go!"

Her voice faded as she hurried away, her retreating figure growing smaller until it finally disappeared.

Before I could process what had just happened, another pair of hands grabbed me, pulling me up.

"Hey! Phuean, why are you lying here?! Don’t you dare—please, please be okay!"

Someone else's voice interrupted me. I blinked sluggishly, my waterlogged mind struggling to keep up. When I finally focused, I found myself looking up Khun Mui.

She had me cradled in her lap, shaking me, her face stricken with panic.

"Khun Mui…"

"Please don’t be hurt, I’m begging you!"

She whispered, hugging me tighter, rocking me back and forth.

"Please do whatever you want, but please just don’t let anything happen to you."

I swallowed, my throat raw, heart pounding. My lips moved before I could think.

"I think I… ch… ch…"

Her beautiful face twisted in concern.

"What? What are you trying to say?"

And then everything went black.

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❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **sunyan**

# Chapter 13: The Reason I Fell into the Water

When I regained consciousness, I found myself in the hotel room, with Mui sitting close by. The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was her gently stroking my face with such care. Instead of feeling startled like I usually would, I felt warm and touched. I could only smile at her.

"Khun Mui,"

I said as I sat up. I didn't feel weak or exhausted at all.

"You're awake!"

She pulled me into a tight hug, her heart pounding against my chest. I could tell just how worried she was. As for me... after escaping death and recalling my last feelings, I wrapped my arms around her in return, resting my head on her shoulder. "Yes, I am awake."

"You almost made me faint!"

"Hehe."

She wasn’t exaggerating for dramatic effect, but the way she said she almost fainted made her seem even more endearing. The beautiful-faced girl pulled away and frowned when she saw me still giggling.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing because you were so worried you almost fainted."

"Did you fall into the water?"

"Well..."

I didn’t know how to explain, so I added a little.

"Yes, I fell into the water. Probably got tipsy from beer. But I managed to crawl onto the shore and just lay there, trying to take deep breaths. And then you found me."

"Next time, don't drink that stuff anymore."

"Yes, I won’t."

"Don't just say that to brush me off."

"I promise, I won’t drink anymore."

I answered firmly, which made her hug me again.

"If something happened to you, what would I do?"

"You wouldn't have to do anything."

"You don’t have a second body, you know."

"Actually..."

I started to speak but stopped. In reality, I did have a second body, but it was better not to mention it.

"By the way, how did you find me, Khun Mui? You looked like you were having fun drinking with Mr. Watch—thought you’d forgotten about time and everything else."

I just couldn't resist being sarcastic. Mui looked at me with slight suspicion before smiling fondly.

"Jealous?"

"No."

"Don't tell me you drank that much beer just because I was talking to Mr. Watch."

"I must be crazy to do that."

Why was I insulting myself? Ugh. I was the kind of crazy that didn’t even realize it. So frustrating.

"You always act tough, but your face and actions give you away. It’s lucky you managed to get out of the water. If something had happened to you..."

"And if something had happened, then what?"

"I wouldn't forgive myself."

"This has nothing to do with you, Khun Mui. I tripped and fell in on my own."

"I should have taken better care of you. I shouldn’t have left you with colleagues while I went drinking with the hotel owner. I was so busy being polite that I left you alone at a table with people you weren’t close to."

"Do you knew that I wasn't close to anyone there?"

"Otherwise, would you be sharing a room with me? Everyone else already paired up."

"Ah..."

"But did you really just trip and fall into the water?"

She asked again, wanting to be sure. I avoided her eyes, unsure whether to tell the truth. Lying wouldn’t help; it would just make me seem like a dramatic TV heroine.

"I think... someone pushed me into the water."

Silence fell over the room. Mui bit her lip in anger.

"Who did it?"

"I didn't see. They pushed me from behind. When I fell in, I was just choking on water—I only saw a shadow."

"I have to find out who hurt you and why."

She suddenly stood up, looking ready to confront someone immediately. I grabbed the hem of her shirt.

"And how exactly are you going to find them? Do you already have a plan?"

"I don’t have a plan, but I will find out. There must be security cameras or some kind of evidence. I don’t believe they left no trace at all."

She turned to me, cupping my cheeks gently before pressing our foreheads together. The warmth of her touch told me just how much she cared.

"From now on, I won’t let anything bad happen to you again. I promise."

"Why do you like me?"

I asked again, but this time, I truly wanted to know. I was starting to understand my own feelings—I felt the same way she did. But I just wanted to hear her reason. Why did she love me this much?

"Because you fell into the water."

"...Huh?"

"Go to sleep. I’ll be back."

I blinked and watching her walk out, still baffled by her strange reasoning.

She likes me because I fell into the water? She always had her reasons, but they never made much sense. Still, her actions spoke louder than words— she truly did like me.

Just as I was about to lie down, the moment my head hit the pillow and I closed my eyes, there was a knock at the door. I got up to answer it, thinking Mui must have forgotten something. But as soon as I opened the door, my mouth fell open.

"You."

"Yes."

We only exchanged a single word, but we both understood. I was shocked to see Faen, while she could tell I was confused about why she was here. The person with the same face as mine slipped into the room, enjoying the cool air before dropping onto the bed. Even though we looked identical, our personalities were like night and day.

"Why are you just standing there, shock? It’s me."

"You crossed over? That means… when I was pulled out of the water, I wasn’t dreaming."

"That’s a bit dramatic. The one who gave you CPR and helped you cough up all that water—it had to be me."

"But how did you cross over?"

"No idea. I just remember seeing a shadow push you into the water. I didn’t know what to do, so I jumped into the pool too. I managed to save you… and now I’m stuck in your world."

Unlike me, who was still in shock, Faen seemed completely unfazed. Now there were two people in this world with my face. We weren’t twins, but if I told anyone she was me from another world, they’d think I was insane.

"So that means we don’t have to talk through mirrors or water anymore." "Yeah, we finally get to meet in person. Gotta admit, it’s weird seeing someone who looks exactly like me."

"How did you even know I was in this room?"

"I was secretly following that Mui-whatever..."

"Khun Mui."

"Yeah, yeah, Mui. When she brought you to this room, I was hiding nearby. I waited until she left, then knocked on the door to get you to open up. So, how are you feeling? Any side effects from almost drowning?"

"No."

"Good. I totally winged it when I helped you—just copied what I saw in TV dramas. Turns out soft power really works."

"You said you saw the shadow of the person who pushed me, right? Did you see their face?"

"I did."

"Who was it?"

"Prayut."

"...What?"

"How would I know who they are?"

"Then where did the name Prayut come from?"

"You just blurted it out randomly. Why?"

"Nothing. It’s just irritating when I heard that name. Makes me wanna throw a podium."

"I am confused. Who is Prayut?"

"...."

"Never mind."

I changed the subject, not wanting to explain any further.

"But thanks for saving me."

"No big deal. Anyway, where did your gorgeous boss storm off to? She looked so serious it was kinda scary."

"She went to find the person who pushed me into the water."

"And how exactly does she plan to do that?"

"Probably checking security cameras or questioning people one by one."

"Oh, sure, like someone’s just gonna admit it. What a waste of time... If you really want to find that person, I’ll do it. I saw their face and body clearly."

She rolled up her sleeves like she was ready to fight.

"For now, just rest. I’ll go help Muay."

"Mui!"

"Fine, Mui then. I’ll help her find the culprit myself."

"But—"

"You just woke up from almost drowning. Get some rest. I'll update you later."

She pushed me back onto the bed, then walked to the door and disappeared like the wind. But even though she said that, I felt even more worried. I had no idea what she was going to do. She didn’t understand the kind of person I was in this world or the environment I was living in.

That’s why I grabbed a jacket and rushed out of the room to go after her. But she was faster than I thought—by the time I stepped out, she was already gone.

If she was looking for a crowd, the restaurant was the most likely place.

The problem was, how could I show up without raising suspicion? If people saw two of me, they'd definitely be confused. So, I had no choice but to hide and observe from a distance.

And sure enough, my guess was right.

Mui had gathered all the hotel staff, lining them up in a row and questioning them one by one. Even I could tell this method wouldn’t work—who would just admit to something like that so easily?

But then… my lookalike appeared. Confident, smug, nothing like me at all.

*Oh, crap.*

"I know who did it."

She spoke while folding her arms, tapping her foot like she had the upper hand. Mui turned to her—mistaking her for me—and scolded,

"Why are you out here? I told you to rest."

"I'm fine now."

That short, blunt reply made me want to bang my head against the wall. Normally, I always ended my sentences with *ka*, except when I was upset and forgot. But this? This wasn’t me at all.

"You might feel better, but you still need to rest."

"Ugh, don’t be so fussy."

She waved Mui off dismissively, then started pacing down the lineup, staring each staff member in the eye. She finally stopped in front of a guy with messy hair and glasses—a total nerd type—who immediately looked down when she locked eyes with him.

Then, like something straight out of a romance drama, she lifted his chin with her fingers, making him look directly at her.

"Why are you avoiding eye contact? Feeling guilty about something?"

She was playing around so casually, like she hadn’t almost drowned just hours ago. I could only pinch my temples in frustration. What was she doing? She was completely ruining my image!

"I-I didn’t do anything,"

The guy stammered.

"If you didn’t do anything wrong..."

"..."

"Then why did you push me into the water?"

The moment my lookalike asked that question, the whole room erupted into murmurs and whispers, buzzing like a disturbed beehive.

I glanced over at Mui, who was watching everything with a hardened gaze, looking absolutely furious. But instead of lashing out, she clenched her fists tightly behind her back, suppressing her emotions.

"I didn’t do it!"

The messy-haired guy protested.

"But I remember your face,"

My lookalike said, crossing her arms.

"In case you didn’t know, there are security cameras here."

The second she mentioned cameras, his eyes widened in panic. His body tensed—then, without another word, he turned on his heels and tried to run.

But she was faster.

She grabbed him by the collar, stopping him in his tracks. The guy panicked and swung his fist at her, but she ducked smoothly and countered with a powerful Muay Thai knee strike to the stomach.

*"Ouch"*

The choked gasp that followed was painful just to hear. The guy collapsed onto the ground, groaning in agony. My lookalike rolled up her sleeves, clearly ready to stomp on him for good measure, but Mui stepped in, grabbing her shoulder to stop her.

"He’s already down! Where do you even get this kind of strength?"

"I have plenty of energy," she scoffed.

"Especially for disgusting scumbags like this."

"Hmm?"

Mui blinked in surprise at her crude language. Meanwhile, the guy on the floor pointed an accusing finger at both of them, unable to hold back any longer.

"Yeah, fine! I pushed her!" He spat.

"It was disgusting to look at!"

"What the hell?"

My lookalike took a step forward, ready to kick him again, but he scrambled backward, forcing himself to stand while gasping for air. **"It’s because you two are dating!"**

The murmurs in the room grew even louder. But instead of reacting with shock, my lookalike simply folded her arms, tilted her head, and sighed.

"And what’s wrong with that?"

"Miss Mui doesn’t belong with you! She’s mine!"

This time, Faen turn to look stunned—she clearly hadn’t expected the conversation to take this turn.

Meanwhile, I, still hiding in the corner, had to slap a hand over my mouth. What the hell is happening right now?

We weren’t even dating! At least… we hadn’t said anything about it. And we definitely hadn’t done anything obvious enough for people to assume.

"I’ve been in love with Miss Mui for years!"

The guy shouted, voice cracking with emotion.

"And then you came out of nowhere and stole her from me! I can’t stand

it!"

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# Chapter 14: Confession

That confession made me and everyone in the area freeze in shock. The only exception was Faen. The moment she heard it, she rolled up her sleeves, ready to charge in for another fight.

But before she could do anything, Khun Mui pulled her into a tight hug right in front of everyone. That made the situation even more shocking.

I secretly glanced at Faen's face. She looked stunned and a bit uncomfortable, but she didn't resist. She just stood there, watching how things would unfold.

"Is this how you feel about me?"

Khun Mui spoke in a cold, calm voice.

The person being asked, who had fallen for her completely, looked startled. He quickly responded, his voice a mix of confidence and hesitation.

"Y-Yes."

"What do you even know about me?"

"I know everything about you."

He spoke with determination, wanting to lay all his feelings bare. It was already a critical moment.

"Your height, your weight, what car you drive, what time you arrive at work, and everyone you're connected to."

"Then you should also know..."

"...."

"That I like women."

Everyone exchanged looks. Some even covered their mouths in shock. No one expected their boss to reveal something so personal when she didn't have to. But Khun Mui had chosen to say it.

"Y-Yes."

"It would be best if you kept your feelings to yourself. That way, you could continue working with me. Even if nothing can happen between us, at least you'd still get to see me sometimes."

"Just seeing you at work every day already makes me so happy."

"Then what about the jealousy that made you push someone into the water?"

"I..." His voice wavered.

"I was angry."

"....."

"She came after me, yet she gets to sit right in front of your office. She came after me, yet you keep looking at her. She came after me, yet you give her a flower every day. Even if no one else sees it, I do."

"...."

"Yes, those flowers are from me. That alone should be enough to show that I have feelings for her."

The man clenched his fists tightly.

"I can't accept it. A woman should be with a man."

"That's just what you think."

"I thought that when the last person left, their replacement should be a man... but you still like women. And that girl-she hasn't been working here for long, yet you're already so devoted to her. You take her out for meals, bring her to your condo, and go in and out of her house like it's your own."

"You've been following me that closely?"

Mui frowned, looking displeased.

"Are you a stalker?"

"I want to know everything you do. I like you. I love you."

"Why do you like me?"

It was a question I often asked her, but this time, the man's answer was different.

"Does love even need a reason?"

"...."

"I love everything about you-the good and the bad. I don't know why I love you, but I do!"

"We can't work together anymore."

"....."

"I'm firing you."

"Miss Mui..."

"Call me Ms. Mantana."

She looked at him with a cold, arrogant gaze that made it clear no one could challenge her.

"Only those I allow can call me that."

That was all she said before grabbing Faen's wrist and walking out of the restaurant. Faen stared at her wrist in shock before following her like a little duckling, completely losing the boldness she had earlier.

But suddenly, she seemed to realize something. She quickly pulled her hand away from Khun Mui and took off running so fast that even a halfmarathoner would struggle to keep up.

Meanwhile, I had been secretly watching the whole thing. When I finally snapped out of it, I rushed back to my room, jumped onto my bed, and pretended to be sick again.

A few minutes later, Khun Mui walked in, glancing between me and the doorway with a confused expression.

"You run really fast. I just saw you sprinting off a moment ago, and now you're lying in bed like this?"

*That wasn't me!*

I quickly sat up, pretending to look healthy, and smiled at her.

"I just remembered that I'm sick. I used up all my energy earlier, so I ran back to lie down before I fainted."

"Someone about to faint can run that fast? And besides... you weren't even wearing this outfit."

"....."

Just a moment ago, Faen was wearing a black T-shirt with a rock band print and tight jeans. Meanwhile, I was in my Uniqlo pajamas.

"It's a special skill. I can change clothes really fast."

"Are you hiding something from me?"

Did she notice something? It's tough being around someone smart.

"Hiding what?"

"I don't know... You were acting all suspicious, suddenly running away from me. And just now, I saw you run past this room, but when I opened the door, you were lying in bed."

"You must have imagined it."

"Maybe..."

She rubbed her temples and closed her eyes, looking completely drained.

k"I don't know what's going on today. It's ruining the fun. I brought you to the beach, and now we're dealing with this mess."

"Well, you're too charming."

"But that doesn't explain how you fell into the water. Who helped you out?"

Now, that's the million-dollar question. I glanced left and right, scrambling for a believable lie.

"I just climbed out on my own. The water wasn't that deep."

"Speaking of that... when I hugged you earlier-"

"Huh?"

"Your shirt was still soaking wet."

"Ah..."

Oh no. She must have forgotten about that. Probably didn't expect to end up hugging me.

"I just changed back into my old shirt," I said quickly.

"I couldn't exactly walk around in pajamas, right?"

"But earlier, you weren't wearing this shirt."

"....."

Why is she suddenly playing detective? I needed to change the subject. Fast.

"Ah... I feel a little dizzy."

The moment I said that, Mui's concern for me outweighed her curiosity about my clothes. She reached out and placed a warm hand on my forehead, and the gentle touch filled me with warmth and gratitude.

Without thinking, I took her hand, placed it on my lap, and lightly traced circles with my thumb.

"Thank you... for protecting me."

"Why thank me? It's my responsibility."

"What responsibility? As my boss?"

"The responsibility of someone who likes you."

She pulled her hand away, then lightly touched my cheek, brushing it with her thumb before absentmindedly playing with my earlobe.

"We got caught, by the way. About the flowers. The whole office knows now."

"So now everyone knows who sent you the flowers."

"Are you upset about it?"

"There's nothing to be upset about. It's better this way. No more sneaking around."

"But is it really okay? A boss giving flowers to an employee?" "It's not a bad thing. It's not like I sent you bitter herbs or anything."

She laughed.

"But I do wonder if openly showing it like that will make your coworkers resent you. I didn't reveal it at first because I didn't want people to think you had special privileges."

"Well, I do have some pretty big privileges."

"Yeah, pretty big ones."

We locked eyes in silence. There was an undeniable pull between us, making my heart flutter. Our bodies slowly leaned toward each other. I closed my eyes, waiting for her-

But suddenly, she pulled away.

"I'll take a shower first. I am all sticky."

"Huh?"

I opened my eyes and looked at her in confusion, then quickly shook my head to clear my thoughts before nodding.

"Okay."

"When I come out, I better see you asleep already."

"Is that an order from my boss?"

Without answering, she turned and headed for the bathroom. I bared my teeth at my pillow, rubbing my face against it in embarrassment. Why did I close my eyes?! What an idiot! Arghhhhh!

Still flustered, I suddenly remembered Faen, who was still outside. Pushing away all unnecessary thoughts, I grabbed some clean clothes from my bag, tiptoed out of the room, and closed the door as quietly as possible to avoid alerting Khun Mui.

I looked around, unsure which way to go. Then, I noticed a shadow peeking from the right side of the hallway, just around the corner. Faen's face appeared, waving me over like a beckoning cat.

"This way!"

After another quick glance around, I rushed over to the person who looked exactly like me. Faen was still soaking wet, crouched in hiding. I grabbed her shirt and frowned in concern.

"You're gonna get sick like this."

"I'm not that fragile."

"Here, change into these clothes first, or you'll get sick."

Faen looked at the Winnie the Pooh T-shirt and frowned.

"You don't have anything more vintage?"

"That's not my style."

"Well, it's not mine either."

"Like you have a choice right now. Just change into it. If you get sick and end up in the hospital, things will only get more complicated."

"At least you still care. But it'd be even better if you could find me a place to sleep."

I had completely forgotten about that. She showed up here with nothing but herself-no extra clothes, no belongings, nothing.

"I'll book you a room."

"How kind... But do you even know what's going on?"

"I snuck out to check. Everything you did was the total opposite of me. Khun Mui is really suspicious now."

Faen fell silent for a moment, licking her lips.

"Miss Mui... She hugged me just now."

"I saw it."

"She has such strong sex appeal..."

Faen muttered shyly. I gave her a surprised look.

"What's with that tone? Why are you acting all flustered?"

"Because I am flustered! I've never been hugged like that before. She must really like you."

"Like me? Hah."

I scoffed, but the memory of me closing my eyes, waiting for her kiss, made me so embarrassed that I had to cover my face with my hands.

"Let's stop talking about Khun Mui."

"Did something happen?"

"Nothing happened."

"But something might happen tonight. You two are sharing a room, right? Same bed?"

"There's nothing like that happening! I'll go book your room first, and then we'll figure out what to do next. You crossed over from your world into mine with no ID, no phone, no clothes-how are you even going to live here?"

"Guess I'll just stick to you like a leech."

Just thinking about it gave me a headache.

"Wait here. I'll book a room and bring you the key."

"Okay."

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I headed to the lobby and requested a standard room. Luckily, it wasn't a holiday, so there were still rooms available. After getting the key card, I rushed back to where Faen was waiting and handed it to her, along with the room number.

"You'll stay here tonight. If anything happens, I'll call you using the hotel phone. Don't go wandering around, or people might think they're seeing a ghost."

"I'm so beautiful. If I were a ghost, you'd be too."

"I don't care. Just don't do anything weird. What you did tonight was already shocking enough for my coworkers."

With that, I left and returned to my room-only to find Khun Mui standing by the bed, arms crossed, waiting for me.

"Where did you go?"

"Just went out for some fresh air. I was bored."

"After everything that happened, you were bored? Didn't I tell you to just stay in bed?"

"You took so long in the shower."

"Were you waiting for me to finish?"

"Uh... not exactly. I just went for a little walk."

"And what if you fell into the water again? That guy is still after you. When someone's out for revenge, they're always ready to strike. Do you not care about your own safety?"

Her stern voice made me shrink a little. Seeing me lower my head in silence, she sighed and gently lifted my chin so I would look at her.

"I'm not scolding you. I just want you to take better care of yourself."

"Okay."

"Now, let's sleep."

Khun Mui nudged me onto the bed, then walked around to the other side and slipped under the blanket. She turned off the light, and now we were surrounded by darkness-but my eyes were wide open.

Her body warmth and the faint scent of the hotel's soap filled my senses. My heart pounded uncontrollably, just like before.

"Are you nervous? I can hear your heartbeat loud and clear."

"Are you a dog or something?"

"What?"

"Your hearing is way too good." I teased.

She was silent for a moment-then burst into laughter.

"Maybe that's it. Your heartbeat is so loud in my head... Go to sleep. We have to wake up early tomorrow for the buffet."

"Okay."

"...."

"...."

"Why aren't you sleeping yet?"

"My eyes has closed. How can I sleep if you're asking me like this?"

"Your heartbeat beating nonstop. What are you thinking about?"

Why is she so interested in my heartbeat? I was about to tell her it was nothing, but before I could, she hugged me from behind. Her soft chest pressed lightly against my back-I wasn't sure if she was wearing a bra or not.

"If you're still scared about what happened today, don't be. I'll protect you. I won't let anything happen to you again."

Again? But nothing ever happened before. Why did she say it like something had? I didn't respond. Instead, I shifted a little closer, seeking warmth.

"Why do you like me?"

"Because you throw a knee strike beautifully."

She always had a reason. And it made me think of that man-the one who confessed his love to her.

"Does love need a reason?"

"You answered so differently from that guy. He said he loved you for no reason."

"You wanted a reason, so I gave you one."

"Yes..."

I closed my eyes, my thoughts spiraling endlessly. Maybe she noticed, because she gently turned me toward her, pressed my head against her chest, and hugged me tighter.

"'Thank you' just means 'thank you.' Don't overthink it. Just sleep."

Her heartbeat was just as loud as mine. I pressed my forehead against her chest and wrapped my arms around her in surrender. It was a nice feeling, and I probably wouldn't get many chances to be this close to her again. It was time to...

I had to admit-I felt the same way about her.

"I think... that I starting to like-"

"Just sleep."

Before I could finish, she pulled me into a tight hug and slowly drifted off. After gathering all my courage just to say that, I could only shut my mouth and fall asleep beside her.

It's okay... there's still plenty of time to tell her that I feel the same way.

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# Chapter 15: Will you...

Today is still another day out, but it's the last one before going back. I'm still freaking out about my twin-what are we going to do next? So instead of joining the company's team-building activities, I just keep pacing anxiously in my hotel room.

"How long are you gonna keep walking back and forth like that?"

"Probably a long time,"

I reply to the person who looks exactly like me, baring my teeth in frustration.

"Now there are two of me in this world. How am I supposed to live like this?"

"Just live as it is."

"How can things stay the same? Think ahead a little. You're here now, so what's next? You don't have a house, you don't have an ID. You're basically an illegal immigrant, like one of those '*little ghosts*' sneaking into another country."

"What's a little ghost?"

"Never mind,"

I sigh. Different worlds, different cultures-I get it.

"Talking to you through the mirror already felt crazy, but now we're actually face-to-face."

"Well, now you can see for yourself whether you're actually crazy or not. I appeared in real life, so you can relax now, right?"

Even our personalities are completely different. I overthink everything, while my twin only cares about having fun.

"I'm really stressed out right now. How are you going to live here? Can you even find a way back to your world? And if you can't, then what?"

"Oh, you think too much. I came through the water, so I'll just go back the same way."

"When I fell into the water, why didn't I end up in your world?"

I snap. My twin rubs her chin, thinking it over, and actually nods in agreement.

"Huh, good point. But whatever, we can just switch lives for now."

"Switch lives? What do you mean?"

"Well, for example, you don't feel like going to the company activities, right? I'll go in your place today."

My twin stands up, ready to walk out the door, but I grab the back of her shirt, yanking her back.

"What now?"

"I never said I was lazy. And besides, this is my life. Even if I don't want to go to that stupid team-building event, that's still my decision to make."

"Why are you overthinking this? You're going out to socialize, but what's the point? It's not like you have any friends."

"I do."

"Oh yeah?"

"Just... not many."

"All I ever see around you is that Ms. Stiff or whatever her name is."

"When will you ever get it right? It's Khun Mui."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. Anyway, stop stressing. Switching lives like this is fun! If you can't go back, just live in the present and make the best of it." My twin smirks.

"Right now, you're staying locked up in this room, while I go out and build connections with your coworkers. We're splitting the responsibilities-you work, I socialize. We complement each other."

"Why should I let you be another version of me in this world?"

"Because you don't have a choice. Alright, I'm heading out. You just stay here and rest."

"No way. I don't know who you're going to knee in the stomach next."

I protest, firm and serious.

"If someone acts up, they deserve a knee to the gut. That's the right thing to do. If it were you, you'd probably just collapse on the floor and beg for sympathy from Mr. Stiff."

"It's *Mui*."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever."

"Ugh, at least say it right."

"Oh wow, I was just teasing, but you've changed. What's up? Do you like Ms. Mui or something?"

I open my mouth but can't find the words.

"Ohhh?"

"Oh."

"Wow! You admitted it! Have you told her yet?"

"I... was planning to."

"No problem, I'll do it for you! If you can't say it, I'll say it for you."

"Absolutely not."

"It'll be way easier if I do it."

My twin steps toward the door, grabbing the doorknob.

"I don't have any feelings for your boss, so I can just go straight for it. Once she agrees to date you, don't forget to thank me for this favor."

"Wait, you-!"

I didn't even finish my sentence before the door shut. I wanted to chase after her, but it was broad daylight. If anyone saw the two of us together, it would raise too many questions.

In the end, all I could do was lie in bed, imagining all the possible disasters that could unfold. The more I thought about it, the more restless I became.

No... this is *my* life. She can't just do whatever she wants without me knowing!

Finally, I grabbed a hotel towel, threw it over my head like a ghost, and snuck out of the room toward the hotel's activity area. All the employees were having fun participating in the company event.

From where I stood, I could see my twin laughing and playing with the others like she was born to be there-bright and cheerful, like a literal ray of sunshine.

Meanwhile, Khun Mui, who was overseeing the event, stood off to the side with her arms crossed, smiling as she watched everyone. She didn't even suspect that the person in the middle of it all wasn't me.

Somehow, Faen had already charmed everyone at work. People surrounded her, chatting and joking like they'd known her forever-something I had never experienced.

Looking at that scene, I couldn't help but reflect on myself. What had I been doing all this time? I never knew how to connect with others. Aside from my twin, I had no real friends.

While I was lost in thought, I suddenly noticed Faen touching her forehead and swaying like a tree in the wind. My brows furrowed in suspicion as I tried to figure out what she was up to. And then, it happened.

She collapsed straight into Khun Mui's arms.

Did she seriously *pretend* to faint?!

Chaos erupted. The fun atmosphere instantly shifted as everyone rushed to check on her. One of the IT guys quickly scooped her up and carried her to a shaded area for first aid. People crowded around, fanning her with genuine concern-especially Khun Mui, who stayed close by.

A few moments later, she slowly "regained consciousness" and excused herself to rest. Khun Mui helped her up and guided her back to *our* hotel room. Then, the door shut behind them.

And just like that, I couldn't see a thing.

How was I supposed to assess the situation now? I had no idea what was happening in there!

I hid in a small corner of the hotel, watching the door for what felt like forever. After a while, Khun Mui finally stepped out and walked off in a hurry. The moment she disappeared, I dashed into the room and went straight to my twin.

"What the hell are you doing?!"

She was lying in bed, completely relaxed, wrapped snugly in the blankets. Slowly, she opened her eyes and grinned.

"Fainting for attention, duh."

"Why would you do that?"

"Well, I was weak and needed someone to take care of me, right?"

She yawned and stretched before sitting up.

"Oh, before I '*passed out*,' I said something. Now it's your turn to continue the conversation."

Before I could ask what she meant, she slipped behind the hotel curtains and hid.

I stared at Faen in disbelief.

What exactly had she done?

"Are we playing hide and seek now?"

"I just don't know where else to hide properly. And you-just stay in bed. Ms. Mui will be back soon."

"What did you say to her?"

"I told her I was your *girl-* Oh, she's here!"

Before I could ask more, I quickly dove under the covers, mimicking the exact way my twin had been lying earlier. I forced my eyes to look halflidded, pretending I had just woken up from a fever.

How did I end up becoming the heroine of some dramatic TV show?

Suddenly fainting, suddenly demanding attention...

"I brought you some herbal tonic. Sit up and drink a little."

"Herbal tonic?"

My face twisted in disgust. That was the one traditional medicine I hated the most. It looked like mud, smelled like medicated balm, and tasted like absolute hell. I had tried it once in elementary school and swore never again.

"No, I don't want it."

Khun Mui frowned slightly, as if sensing something was off, but didn't comment. Instead, she insisted,

"Drink it. You're not well. If you don't get better soon, I'll take you to the hospital."

"It's not that serious. I just need a little rest. And besides... I really don't like herbal tonic. It's bitter, it's gross, it's awful-"

Before I could finish, the rim of the cup was pressed against my lips, forcing me to drink. The intensely bitter liquid coated my tongue and burned all the way down my throat.

My eyes welled up as I struggled not to gag. When I finally finished, I glared at her, my boss, for making me suffer through that.

"Why would you do that? I told you I hate it! It's so bitter!"

"It'll be sweet soon,"

She replied calmly.

"How is something that bitter supposed to turn sweet?"

"I'll show you."

"What do you mea-?"

She leaned down and kissed me. Then, she pulled away slightly, as if observing my reaction. My fingers clutched the blanket tightly, caught between shock, embarrassment, and something else I didn't dare name.

"Does it taste sweeter now?"

She asked, smiling.

I bit my lip, avoiding her gaze. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my twin peeking from behind the curtain, covering her mouth like she was about to scream from excitement.

I didn't know if it tasted sweeter.

"Maybe you should taste again,"

She said before pressing her lips to mine once more, this time deepening the kiss.

I had never experienced anything like this before. The moment her tongue brushed against mine, a strange warmth spread through my entire body, all the way down to my toes. My mind went blank as I melted into it, letting go of everything. And honestly? I really didn't mind.

In fact... I liked it.

Just as I was getting lost in the moment, she pulled away again.

"Is the bitterness gone now?"

"...."

"What do you think?"

I glanced at my twin, who was still hiding behind the curtain. The embarrassment of doing something like this in front of someone else made me want to shrink into myself.

But at the same time, I didn't want to back down either. Since things had already come this far, I needed to be brave. My twin had already opened the path for me-now it was my turn to walk it.

"One more time, then."

I wrapped my arms around her neck and pulled her in, pressing a clumsy kiss to her lips. I wasn't experienced, but I lifted my knee slightly for balance, trying to make it feel more natural.

Khun Mui seemed surprised at first but quickly responded, slipping an arm around my waist and pulling me into a hug.

Then, instead of another kiss, she rested her face against my left chest.

"Will you...."

"What's wrong?"

I wasn't sure what she meant. Her voice was muffled against me as she answered softly.

"What you asked when you fainted."

"...."

"Will you be my girlfriend?"

The beautiful boss stayed there for a moment before pulling back just enough to look directly at my heart.

**"Be with me forever."**

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# Chapter 16: I Had A Girlfriend

I couldn't help but be surprised at myself. I never thought I'd fall in love with a woman, but this wasn't about trends or the atmosphere around me. It came from deep within me-the moment I nearly died, the moment I thought of her.

When I was drowning, so many thoughts ran through my mind. If I survived, what did I truly want? Now, life had given me a second chance, and I wasn't going to waste it.

The same went for Khun Mui. She had a girlfriend now. And that girlfriend is me.

Our relationship was open and everyone in the company knew about it, because of the incident with that male employee and the way Khun Mui declared that she wasn't into men. Now, I had become a kind of golden child. My coworkers treated me well-maybe out of respect for my relationship with Khun Mui, or maybe just to save face or something like that.

It was finally time to head back from the outing. Everyone was packing their things, hauling luggage, and making their way to the buses bound for the airport.

Meanwhile, I stood there hesitating, worried about my twin. She couldn't board a plane for obvious reasons-our identical faces, her lack of ID. The only option was for her to take a long, solitary bus ride back to Bangkok.

"Khun Mui,"

I called out as I dragged my suitcase toward the bus.

"I'll be taking the bus back."

"Why?"

She looked at me in confusion, clearly not on board with the idea.

"Taking the bus from Phuket to Bangkok takes a long time. The flight is only forty-five minutes."

"Well... I just want to enjoy the scenery on the way."

A It's very unconvincing excuse. Who in their right mind would willingly endure a long, exhausting trip when they could just hop on a plane and be home in no time?

"Not allowed."

"But-"

"No but,"

She cut me off firmly. I could tell she was genuinely worried about me-a woman traveling such a long distance alone. And honestly, I understood her concern. But I was worried about my twin, too.

"...."

"You arrived by plane, so you're going back the same way,"

"....."

"And I'm taking you home myself. I won't let you go through any trouble. End of discussion."

With that, she turned and headed straight for the bus.

I trailed after her reluctantly but suddenly stopped short.

I had to pretend I'd forgotten something.

"*Oops*! I forgot something in the room. Can you wait for a moment?"

"What did you forget?"

"A wristwatch. My mom gave it to me when I graduated."

I didn't have anything like that, but I really needed to go back and talk to Faen about this trip. Mui nodded along easily but reminded me again,

"Hurry up and come back, or you'll miss your flight."

"Okay!"

I gave her the biggest smile. She looked at me, then reached out and pinched my cheek.

"*Ouch*! That hurts!"

"Don't smile like that at anyone."

"Why not?"

"It's too cute."

"You're silly."

I playfully scolded her, then quickly ran back into the hotel to find Faen.

She was probably still in the room since it wasn't check-out time yet. When I knocked on the door, I saw someone who looked exactly like me-messy hair, sleepy face, like she had just woken up.

"Why are you waking me up so early? I'm not going running. That's enough."

"I'm not here to make you run. I'm leaving for Bangkok."

"What's Bangkok?"

"It's my home."

"Oh... In my world, it's not called Bangkok. Anyway, if you're leaving, what about me?"

"That's why I came here to talk."

I slipped into the room and pulled out some cash from my wallet, which should be enough for the bus fare.

"Go take a shower, check out of the hotel, and head to the bus station."

"Where's the bus station?"

"I have no idea."

"What? You don't know anything! Now what?"

"You have a mouth-ask someone here! I have to leave now, but I was worried, so I ran here to tell you first."

"Wow, you're just leaving me like that?"

"I'll pick you up when you're close."

I handed her my phone.

"Call me when you're near. I'll take a taxi to get you."

"What happens after you pick me up? Do I have to stay in a hotel again?"

When she said that, I suddenly realized that I hadn't thought about where she would stay. I pressed my lips together and scratched my head. Once again, I had no clue.

"I don't know! I can't think that far ahead. Just get to Bangkok first, and I'll call you. We'll figure it out then."

"My butt's gonna be sore again from sitting too long. I barely got to enjoy the beach. Can't I just take a plane?"

"You need an ID card for that. Do you even have one?"

"...."

"And would it even work here? Think about it!"

Faen nodded along but looked annoyed.

"Life here is such a hassle... but kind of fun too, sneaking around like this. See you in Bangkok. Don't forget to pick me up-I don't know the way to your house. Even if our homes are in the same spot, they probably have different street names."

"I know that already. I have to go now, or I'll miss my flight. See you soon!"

"Okay."

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At least that was one thing settled. Faen wasn't making things too difficult. After saying goodbye, I rushed back to catch my ride to the airport. And Mui was right-it only took forty-five minutes to reach Bangkok safely.

Everyone webt their separate ways, exhausted. The fun from the trip had faded, replaced by the realization that tomorrow was a workday.

Mui put an arm around my shoulders and walked beside me, insisting on dropping me off.

"You don't have to, Khun Mui. I can go home by myself. I've already gotten enough special treatment-if you keep this up, the other employees might start getting jealous."

"It's past that stage now. Everyone already knows we're dating."

"Well, yeah, but..."

"It's normal for a couple. Picking you up, dropping you off-it's not a big deal."

She was firm about it and led me to the car she had left at the airport. But the whole day, my mind wasn't on her. I was too busy worrying about Faen and wondering where she was now.

"Something on your mind?"

"No, not at all."

"You seem quiet. Do you want to talk about it?"

"Not really. Just feeling a little down about going back to work tomorrow after having such a great trip."

"I thought you'd be happy to go back to work since you'd get to see me," She teased, pretending to be disappointed.

I smiled a little before gathering the courage to gently touch the back of her hand.

"I am happy. But I don't want any special treatment."

"It can't be helped. You're dating the owner of the company."

I laughed at her teasing until we arrived home. At first, I thought Mui would head straight back, but instead, my parents invited her to stay for dinner.

That left me restless, constantly glancing at the clock on the wall, worried about whether the bus from Phuket was getting close.

"I need to make a quick call,"

I said, standing up from the table, but Mui noticed right away.

"Where's your phone? You didn't bring it with you."

Why does she have to be so observant now?

"I'll use the landline."

"You still have a landline these days?!"

She looked as shocked as if she'd just found out cassette tapes still existed.

"Why don't you just use your mobile to call?"

"I ran out of minutes."

I quickly walked away to the landline, dialed my own number, and called Faen. (It felt weird, like I was calling a second girlfriend or something.) She picked up, sounding exhausted, as if she had just woken up.

"Are you almost here?"

[Should be close. Around 10 p.m.]

"Still got some time, then."

[What are you doing now?]

"Khun Mui is having dinner at my house."

[Wait, didn't you say you'd pick me up? What's the plan now? The cash you gave me is all spent on the hotel and the bus ticket.]

"There's still plenty of time. When you arrive, just take a taxi and tell the driver you're headed near Asoke. If they can't find it, just hand them the phone so I can talk to them."

[You never stick to your words. You said you'd come get me, but now you don't want to come.]

"What can I do? You're arriving at 10 p.m. If I go out that late, my mom's going to ask where I'm going."

[This is what I get for crossing into this world. Fine, I'll call when I'm close. The number on the screen is yours, right?]

"Yeah, but don't call me-I'll call you instead."

[And what if I am almost here, but Mui still won't leave? Will I ever get home?)

Ugh! This is driving me crazy. That way isn't good, and this way isn't working either. I had no other choice but to handle the situation right nowby getting Mui to leave first. She was still eating when I started pushing her to go, leaving her confused.

"Can't I at least finish my meal?"

"It's getting really late. Traffic is bad. You should go home and rest."

"I was planning to stay here for a bit until the traffic clears up..."

"But I'm really sleepy now. To be honest,"

I bared my teeth slightly and forced myself to say it, even though I was terrified she'd get upset,

"I'm too tired to be a good host anymore. I just want to rest."

"Phuean!"

My mom scolded me the moment I said that. Mui looked at me in shock before letting out a small laugh. Instead of being offended, she seemed amused.

"You're really blunt."

"Heh... sorry."

"It's okay. I'll go."

"Great! Let's go now."

I grabbed her bag and led her to the door. Mui said goodbye to my parents, even though she still had half a plate of food left, then followed me out. At that moment, I was so anxious I could barely stand still-if I could jump up and down, I probably would.

"Here's your bag,"

I said, handing it to her.

Then I opened her car door like a hotel valet, ready to send her off. Mui glanced at me suspiciously.

"Be honest-what's going on?"

"Nothing."

"You're a terrible liar. Pushing me out like this... there must be something's up. You've been acting weird all day."

She said before scratching her chin and stalling for time to get in the car.

"No, you haven't been yourself since you fell into the water. Are you feeling sick?"

"Maybe. Oh-headache. I feel like I'm going to faint."

I pressed my fingers to my temples.

"You should hurry home. I'm going to go rest. Text me when you get home, okay?"

"Well, at least you still care. I thought you just going to chase me away."

She didn't believe me, but she also didn't push the conversation further.

Finally, she got in the car and drove off. I watched until her taillights disappeared before rushing back inside to call Faen again.

"Where are you now?"

"How would I know? I can't even read the language here!"

"What? You can't even read?"

"I came from another world! Of course, some things are different!"

"But you can speak Thai."

"I can ballroom dance too!"

What the hell does that have to do with anything? Sometimes, this lookalike of mine is just plain annoying. I bared my teeth in frustration and told her to hand the phone to the taxi driver so I could give directions.

The taxi driver estimated it would take about twenty minutes. Once he understood where the destination was, I ended the call.

I paced anxiously outside my house, waiting for the taxi to arrive. The timing was off by about five minutes, give or take, but it didn't take long before the taxi pulled up. I paid the fare since Faen didn't have a single baht on her.

"You crossed worlds just to be a burden? My salary is only fifteen thousand a month, you know!"

I grumbled, baring my teeth in frustration at my dwindling money. But she didn't care at all. Instead, she had the audacity to remind me that she had saved my life.

"Oh, quit whining. If it weren't for me, you would've drowned already. Anyway, is this your house?" She looked around curiously.

"It's really different from mine."

"How could it be different? It's the same location."

"Yours is a housing estate. Mine is a single-family house, but in a similar area. There's a pond too."

"That's called a lake."

"You grew up in a nice family, huh?"

She mumbled to herself as if lost in thought, then started walking toward the house. I quickly grabbed her arm.

"Where are you going?"

"Inside, obviously."

"Are you crazy? If two people who look exactly the same walk in together, my parents will have a heart attack!"

"Your parents?"

Her eyes lit up with curiosity, making me tilt my head at her.

"Why do you look like that?"

"I want to see your parents."

"They probably look just like your parents! No way! You can't go in now. You have to wait until they go to bed, then sneak in. I'll go in first since I've already been out for too long."

"What about me?"

She pointed at herself, looking all dejected.

"Just wait for the right time. I'll come down and get you. Stay around here, don't go anywhere."

"...."

"Do you understand?"

"Yes."

I rushed into the house first to face my parents. I pretended to be super sleepy and grumbled a bit about how rude I had been to my boss and kicking her out in the middle of dinner.

My parents scolded me loudly, but I just played deaf, said I was too tired, and escaped upstairs to my room.

My actual plan was to take a shower, wait for my parents to go to bed, and then sneak Faen into my room.

After freshening up and preparing everything, I was just about to head downstairs when I froze in place. A chill ran down my spine.

She is already inside.

And not just inside-she is standing face-to-face with my parents, having a conversation.

*Crap.*

"You weren't wearing that shirt earlier. And I saw you go upstairs-how are you back in the house again?"

My mom asked suspiciously. But instead of answering, Faen just hugged her tightly.

My mom stood there, completely confused.

"Hey, hey! What's wrong? Why are you hugging me all of a sudden? Did you do something wrong?"

"....."

"Phuean... why are you crying?"

"Mom..."

"....."

"I finally got to see my mom..."

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# Chapter 17: Prerogative

I stood quietly by the stairs, making sure no one noticed my arrival. Seeing Faen hugging Mom so tightly, I hesitated to reveal myself. Part of me feared that Dad and Mom would be shocked to see two of me.

More importantly, when I saw how sorrowful she looked, clinging to Mom as if she had never felt that kind of warmth before, I decided to slip back into my room without a sound, leaving the three of them to talk.

About ten minutes later, Faen came upstairs. Her eyes were red and swollen, as if she had been crying.

"Did you know I was coming in?"

She looked at me sitting on the bed, watching her silently, as if I had been waiting. I nodded.

"I was about to go down to meet you, but I saw you with my parents, so I decided not to say anything."

"Sorry... The mosquitoes were biting, and I couldn't wait outside any longer, even though you told me to."

"It's fine. Go wash up-you must be tired from traveling."

I got up, took a fresh towel and my own pajamas from the closet, and handed them to her.

"You don't need to wear underwear to bed, right?"

"I never do anyway."

"Alright, go take a shower, then come sleep."

Faen stared at me for a moment, surprised that I was acting normal-not upset or scolding her for coming inside unannounced.

"I thought you'd yell at me for barging in."

"What's the point of yelling? You're already here. Just don't do anything risky next time. If I had suddenly run down the stairs without thinking, and Mom and Dad saw two of us, that would've been a disaster."

"That's true..."

"Finish your shower and get some rest. We've got a lot to think about."

I led her to the bathroom. She glanced at the mirror, then looked around before pursing her lips.

"This bathroom looks just like the one at my house... but way tidier."

"How's yours?"

"Well... I don't even know how to describe it."

"We've known each other for a while now."

"That's good."

"But I don't know anything about you... except that we look the same."

Faen looked at me through the mirror and raised an eyebrow.

"We'll get to know each other little by little. At the very least, you now have me as your closest friend in this world."

"Closest friend..."

I murmured. Thinking about it, she really was the person closest to me right now.

"I guess so."

"From now on, let's share everything."

Sigh...

. .

I had a feeling her presence here was going to cause me a lot of trouble, but I didn't say anything. What's done was done. Now, I just had to keep this hidden for as long as possible before anyone found out-and find a way to send her back where she belonged.

In the meantime, we'd have to live together. Sending her somewhere else would only make me worry. A hotel? I didn't have the money for that. In the end, hiding her here was the only option.

After Faen finished her shower, she climbed into bed with me, pressing close. We both stared up at the ceiling, though our minds were in different places. While I was worrying about what to do next, she seemed to be enjoying this new world she had just stepped into.

"The environment you live in is nice,"

She suddenly said, still gazing at the ceiling.

"How so?"

"You have a dad, a mom, a house, and your own room."

"You say that like you don't have those things."

"I don't."

"...What do you mean?"

"I don't have parents. I live with relatives. I think I mentioned it before... and I don't have my own room either."

"Then where do you sleep?"

"In the bathroom."

"What?"

"That's why you could always talk to me there. Because that's where I sleep."

"No way. Who would sleep in a bathroom? Don't other people need to use it?"

"They all have their own bathrooms. But since I don't have a proper room, I just eat and sleep in there."

"That sounds... really sad."

"Well, life *is* sad."

"But you seem cheerful."

"Why be sad when life is already sad? It's better to be happy with what you have."

"You're really optimistic."

That was the opposite of me. Even though I had more than she did, I still felt inferior. My salary wasn't great, my education was average, and my family was just middle class. And yet, I saw it as something unfortunate. Hearing about her life made me feel guilty.

"Be content with what you have. You're lucky."

"How did you manage to grow up like this? Where are your parents?" "They abandoned me when I was little and left me with my grandmother. After she passed away, I moved in with my relatives."

"That sounds like *Harry Potter*."

"What's that?"

"A famous book in this world. I'll find a copy for you. Actually, I have one..."

I got up and searched for it, but I could only find the second volume.

"Here."

Faen opened it, then frowned and pursed her lips.

"I can't read this."

"...What?"

"The written language in your world is different from mine."

"But we speak the same language."

"Well, at least we can talk. Otherwise, we wouldn't understand each other. Parallel worlds aren't *completely* identical."

"I'll read it to you sometime. Or you can watch TV instead-it's probably easier if you just want entertainment. Oh! Here."

I handed her my tablet. She seemed to know how to use it right away.

"At least this world has something I recognize."

"There are tons of shows on here. Watch whatever you want while I'm at work. I promise I'll come back as soon as I can to keep you company."

"How sweet."

"Well, you're my best friend now."

I smiled at her and lay back down. Faen glanced at me for a moment before turning and hugging me. I flinched slightly-I had never been this physically close to anyone before. My voice caught in my throat as I asked,

"Why are you hugging me?"

"I just want to hug someone for once. I've always slept alone. Can't I?"

"I mean... you *can*, but it's kinda weird."

"Let's just sleep like this."

It was a strange request, but since she asked so directly, I just went with it. I turned and hugged her back, and we fell asleep together.

Honestly, it wasn't so bad.

. .

As usual, I woke up early to go for a run before work. When Faen saw me getting dressed, she groggily opened her eyes, her hair a complete bird's nest.

"You're going for a run? This early?"

"It's part of my daily routine."

"You live such a boring life."

"You've never been sick, so you wouldn't understand. At least you're lucky to have good health."

"Whatever, do what you want. I'm going back to sleep."

"Lock the door, okay? If my mom barges in and sees you, I won't know how to explain it."

I went out for my usual run, but today, the sky wasn't as clear as usual. Dark clouds loomed, and before long, it started raining. I had planned to run three laps around the neighborhood, but I had to cut it down to just one. By the time I got home, I looked like a drenched puppy.

Mom, who had been preparing food for the monks, quickly moved everything under shelter and grabbed a towel to dry me off, muttering under her breath.

"You're going to catch a cold."

"I'm not that fragile, Mom."

"Your health isn't perfect. Not getting sick is always better."

"But with this rain, will you still be able to give alms?"

"If the monks come by, I'll give alms. If not, then that's that. As for you, go take a shower and change. And take some medicine just in case-you don't want to catch a cold."

"Yeah, yeah."

I ran inside and headed to my room, only to find Faen standing by the window, watching my mom as she packed up the table. Since it was raining, she wouldn't be giving alms today. I was surprised that Faen wasn't still asleep.

"I thought you'd keep sleeping."

"Once I woke up, I couldn't fall back asleep. Your mom is really sweet."

"She just worries too much."

"Does she give alms every day?"

I smiled.

"Yeah. If I get back from my run in time, I get to join her."

"You're really close to her."

She sounded wistful. I looked at her and understood-she had never experienced that kind of relationship before.

"How about this? Tomorrow, you wake up early and go for a run instead of me. That way, you'll have time to talk to my mom."

"Really?" Her eyes lit up.

"But aren't you going to exercise?"

"Skipping a day won't kill me. Try living my life for a day-you might end up so bored you'd rather sleep in than run." "Deal. I'll go for a run tomorrow. You promised!"

I grinned.

"Alright, I'm going to shower and get ready for work. Stay in the room and keep a low profile, okay? If you're watching a movie, use headphones. Got it?"

"I know, I know. But if you lock me in here, what am I supposed to eat and about my water?"

"I'll leave some bread for you. Just hang in there."

"Well, I am in your world, so I have to follow your rules. I'll endure it as long as I can."

"You'll have to endure it even longer than that."

.

.

I got ready for work as usual, but I felt a little off-probably from getting caught in the rain. I had a runny nose and kept sneezing, which made my coworkers think I had COVID.

Then, my beautiful boss stepped out of her office and handed me some medicine in front of everyone. The gesture showed how close we were, and I could feel my colleagues' curious stares.

"Take this medicine," she said.

"Then go rest in my office."

"No, thank you."

I glanced at my coworkers and forced a weak smile.

"It's just a common cold. I can still work as usual."

"It's not usual," Mui said firmly.

"And I don't like seeing you sick. Even if you *can* work, it won't be efficient. Go rest in my office. That's an order."

"...Yes."

"Hurry up and follow me."

Her tone left no room for argument, so I had no choice but to obey. But as soon as she disappeared into her office, whispers floated through the airmocking, laced with resentment.

"Must be nice dating the boss. Just sneeze a little and get out of work for the day."

For someone like me, who always tried to stay low-key, today was the day I couldn't escape. For the first time, my coworkers were openly jealous of the privileges I supposedly had.

"If it's like this, might as well stay home and still get paid."

"Yeah, though I doubt she'd just be *resting* at home."

Hearing their words, I couldn't bring myself to stand up and enter Mui's office. I sat frozen at my desk, heart pounding, forcing back tears. I'd always been careful to get along with everyone, never causing trouble. But now, I was the target of resentment, and I had no idea what else would come my way.

I sat there for over ten minutes, paralyzed, until Mui finally lost patience. She opened the door herself, and the cold look she gave me sent shivers down my spine.

"Is my order not important enough?"

The moment she appeared, the office fell silent. No one dared to say another word. But the weight of their judgment still pressed down on me. If I stayed, I'd keep facing their resentment. If I went, I'd be submitting to Mui's authority, further fueling their whispers.

"Stand up."

In the end, I had no choice but to comply as she took my wrist and led me into her office, locking the door behind us. And the moment we were alone, my tears spilled over. I couldn't hold them back anymore.

"Why are you crying?"

Her voice, once firm, softened the instant she saw my tears.

"I'm... I'm under so much pressure,"

I choked out.

"You treat me differently-more than just a boss and an employee. I don't know what to do anymore."

"You're using formal speech again?"

She sighed, crossing her arms.

"I already told you-when we're alone, use my name. I do the same for you."

"You used your authority to force me in here. Do you know how that makes people see me? They think I have special privileges."

"Well, you do have special privileges."

Mui didn't even hesitate.

"I'm just being honest about how I feel about you."

"But the outcome isn't good at all."

I fidgeted with my fingers, feeling uncomfortable.

"Now even my coworkers probably don't want anything to do with me. How am I supposed to work alone from now on? Every time they look at me, it'll be with judgment. Collaborating with anyone will feel like I have a mark on my back."

"Is it really that big of a deal for a boss and employee to be together?"

"It is that big of a deal."

"Then what should I do? Want me to talk to them?"

"No!"

"So I can't do that either? Why do you care so much about what other people think?" She frowned.

"Can't you be a little stronger? You're not like..."

She trailed off, hesitating.

I met her gaze, curious. Who am I not like?

But instead of answering, she changed her words.

"You don't seem weak at all. You should learn to be okay with being disliked. I gave you that book to read, didn't I?"

"Reading is easy. Doing it is hard."

"Then you need to work on it. Because I'm not going to date you and then break up just because people are watching."

She sighed.

"Forget it. You're sick."

Before I could react, she cupped my face with both hands and pressed her forehead against mine.

"You're warm. Go lie down on the couch."

"But I still have work to do-"

"Later."

"But-"

"Go."

In the end, she dragged me to the couch, made me lie down, and then sat beside me-so close we were practically pressed together. She grabbed some documents to read but didn't move to her desk, as if afraid I'd try to leave.

I watched her for a while before finally asking,

"Why do you like me?"

Without looking up, she answered,

"Because you're beautiful."

I sighed.

"You always have an answer for everything."

"Every question has an answer. Now sleep. The longer you rest, the better. I'll take you home after work."

"But-"

"Sleep."

"....."

"If you don't sleep, I'll kiss you."

"....."

I kept my eyes open, thinking she was just bluffing. But the moment she saw me defying her, she actually leaned down and kissed me. My eyes squeezed shut immediately, a silent surrender to prove I was really asleep.

She pulled away and went back to reading her documents, while I lay there, burning with embarrassment. I couldn't even tell if the heat in my body was from the fever or sheer mortification.

*Fine. I'll sleep. Not like I have a choice anymore...*

*. .*

Just as she promised, Mui drove me home after work. The office atmosphere was tense when I walked out of her room with her. I could feel the weight of everyone's stares. Mui, on the other hand, scanned the room with an icy glare, fully aware of the negativity directed at me.

Not a single employee met her eyes. Even though it was the end of the workday, nobody moved from their desks, as if waiting for the boss to leave first.

I was too exhausted to argue or explain anything anymore. The moment I got into the car, I passed out, only waking up when we arrived at my house.

"Phuean... you're home. Can you walk?"

"Yeah, it's just a fever."

"If you're too sick to work tomorrow, take the day off. Take as many days as you need."

"One day is enough. Don't give me too many privileges." "I can't help it. I like you, so of course you'll have privileges."

I sighed.

"You're always like this."

I opened the car door and stepped out, about to say goodbye when I noticed her frowning.

"What?"

"You're being very rude."

"Huh?"

"You didn't invite me inside."

"Oh... um... do you want to come in? You can have some cold water before you go."

I blinked at her, startled, and that finally made her smile.

"I'm joking. I just wanted to see a reaction other than exhaustion from you. Your face when you look upset is cute...Hehe."

She laughing happily.

"Go rest. If you can't make it tomorrow, just take the day off. I'll call to check on you."

"Yes."

She drove away, and I sluggishly made my way inside.

.

Dad was already waiting, having been informed by Mui that she was dropping me off. His face was full of concern. Mom wouldn't be far behind. My parents always overreacted whenever I got sick, probably because I had weak health as a child. But honestly, this was just a cold.

Yet, from the way they looked at me, you'd think I had cancer.

"You need to go to the hospital. If it gets worse, it might be too late to treat."

"I just need sleep. A dose of paracetamol and a nap, and I'll be fine."

"See? This is what happens when you insist on exercising. Running in the rain until you're soaked-no wonder you caught a fever! No more of this next time."

"Okay, Mom... Can I go lie down first? You can lecture me later."

"I'll bring you some medicine upstairs."

"Wait-no!"

I suddenly remembered that someone was still in my room.

"I already have medicine on my nightstand. I just want to rest. No disturbances."

"Even from your own mother?"

"I just want to sleep,"

I whined dramatically. Mom sighed in exasperation but relented, letting me go upstairs.

As soon as I entered my room, I saw Faen lounging on my bed, completely absorbed in a drama on her iPad. I dragged myself to the bed and collapsed without a word.

"Wow, no greeting?"

"I'm dying... What are you watching?"

"A drama. There are so many good ones out there. Especially this one... but I can't read the title."

"*Rang Ngao*."

"Huh. Fitting name."

"Why this one?"

"The main character has a twin. Thought I'd watch something relatable."

She glanced at me, narrowing her eyes.

"Why do you look like a dried fish? Are you sick?"

"Yeah... ran in the rain this morning. Now I have a fever."

"You are weak, huh? So fragile."

"One hundred percent."

"You sure you can work tomorrow?"

"If I can't, I'll have to take a day off."

She turned back to her iPad, then suddenly seemed to remember something.

"No need. Just go to work as usual."

"What? I'm sick. How am I supposed to go?"

"You can go."

"Can't you understand what I'm saying?"

"It's true that you can't go..."

"...."

"But I can go."

.

# Chapter 18: Twins

So this is the advantage of having a twin. If one gets sick or lazy, the other can take their place.

Right now, I'm watching Faen try on my work outfit awkwardly. She may look exactly like me, but our personalities and many other things are totally different.

"Even though we look exactly alike, our personalities are so different. Just wearing clothes that don’t suit you already makes it obvious we’re not the same person,"

Faen said, agreeing with me.

"But it’s not a big deal. As long as we look the same, no one will suspect anything."

"We’re already suspicious of each other. How can you be sure no one else will notice? Are you sure you want to go to work instead of me? I feel really uneasy about this,"

I said, nervously biting my nails.

"You don’t have to go. My boss is nice. If I tell him I’m sick, she’ll understand."

"She understands because you're her girlfriend. If it were anyone else, do you think you’d get a day off that easily?"

"....."

"But this isn’t '*anyone else*.' You don’t have to overthink it. Just stay home, relax, and watch your favorite Munin-Mutcha drama."

"No way. That’s boring."

"You can’t just keep me locked up in this room. Now that I have the chance

to explore the world, let me go! Don’t worry, I’ll just sit there, act confident, and not talk to anyone."

"Do you even know how to do the job?"

"Nope. But I’ll just pretend to type on the keyboard and make it look like I do. Most people do that anyway."

"Most people where?"

"In dramas."

"Oh, God."

I scratched my head, realizing I had no way to stop her. No matter what I said, Faen was determined to go. In the end, my lookalike spun around one more time and muttered some kind of self-motivation mantra:

*"I'm beautiful. I'm smart. I can do this."*

"I don’t know... I still feel really worried."

"Just stay put and rest. Oh, and don’t let your parents see you… *Sigh*. Give me money for the ride too."

Faen held out her hand, already knowing that no matter what world we live in, money is still a necessity. I reached into my bag for some cash.

I sighed and handed her about 300 baht, enough for lunch too.

"Awesome! Today, I'll work for you flawlessly!"

"Just make sure no one catches you."

"At my level? No chance."

"Since you're going anyway, bring me some bread from the fridge or anything to snack on. I'll be stuck in here all day."

"You’ll finally understand what it feels like to be trapped. Hehe."

Faen walked out, and I was officially locked in my room, unable to go anywhere. It reminded me of those Western movies where siblings have to take turns going outside and living normal lives without being discovered— otherwise, they’d be eliminated.

Of course, our situation wasn’t that extreme. It’s not like we'd be in danger if someone found out, but I had no idea what would happen if we got caught.

I lay down, feeling weak and sick, and closed my eyes. But even though my body was exhausted, my mind wouldn't stop racing. Worry took over, and soon, I found myself pacing the room.

*What if someone figures it out?*

*What if she gets assigned a task and can't do it? Will there be trouble?*

*What if she doesn’t fit in? Will my coworkers suspect anything?*

Ugh. I was already sick, and now the stress was making it worse. I didn’t get any rest at all—I just kept walking in circles, overthinking everything. Then I froze when I heard footsteps approaching the door.

Someone was about to unlock it.

*Mom.*

Panic hit me, and I jumped into the closet, peeking through the gap. Mom walked in and started cleaning the room as usual. She stayed for about ten minutes before finally leaving.

I let out a huge sigh of relief and slowly stepped out.

This is my own house, and I'm acting like a thief!

For safety, I locked myself in the bathroom and grabbed my phone to call Faen. She had just gotten a new phone from me—I bought it just for her.

The moment she answered, her voice was so cheerful that I could almost picture her twirling around in a field of flowers, her skirt fluttering like she was in a fabric softener commercial.

.

"How’s it going? Did anyone notice?"

[At my level? No way. Stop worrying so much! Work here is actually fun— everyone’s really nice!]

"They’re all wearing masks. No one there really likes me."

[Not true! You're overthinking it. Or maybe I’m just better at socializing? Everyone seems to like me.]

"What are you doing right now?"

[Having lunch with your boss… your girlfriend. Hehe.]

.

My eyes widened in shock. This girl fits in way too easily, and now she’s already gotten close to Khun Mui?!

"How are you even sneaking a phone call?"

[I’m just covering my mouth while I talk. Can’t you tell I’m whispering? I didn’t want to make it obvious by pretending to get a phone call and walking away. That would seem too suspicious… Anyway, gotta go. The food just arrived.]

"Wait—"

.

But she hung up, leaving me speechless.

Could everything really be going this smoothly? No problems at all? No one even noticed my *weird* behavior today? I had to admit, Faen was incredible at adapting—like a chameleon changing colors. No matter the situation, she could handle it.

*Unlike me.*

I had little experience with the outside world, always overthinking what to say, worrying about offending someone.

So… I should relax, right?

With that thought, I collapsed onto my bed and shut my eyes. My sickness, combined with my constant worrying, drained me completely. Before I knew it, I had fallen asleep.

When I woke up, it was already 5 PM.

Wait… 5 PM?

But Faen still wasn’t home. The office wasn’t that far away. Time passed until nearly 7 PM before I finally heard her return, cheerfully greeting my parents loud enough for me to hear upstairs.

I pressed my ear against the door, impatiently waiting for her to come up. But instead, she kept chatting downstairs forever!

.

"I’M HOME!"

She finally arrived, arms full of shopping bags. I stared at them in confusion —especially at the big shoulder bag slung over her.

"What’s all that?"

"A guitar! Just bought it. Hehe."

Faen giggled, clearly pleased with herself, while I frowned even harder.

"But you only had 300 baht on you!"

"My sacred words and the privilege of being a rich's girlfriend for a day got me this! The world is so fun! Why do you always look so exhausted after work?"

"Because there's a lot of work."

"Yeah, a *lot*."

"Then how are you still so cheerful?"

"Because I didn't do any of it. I don’t know how."

She answered so bluntly that I was left speechless, watching as she placed a bunch of snacks on my bed. Then, she eagerly unzipped her new acoustic guitar case. It was jet black, with the word *Cash* written on the fretboard.

"Tell me everything from the start. What happened today? And how did you bring all this stuff back?"

Faen strummed the guitar lightly, making the atmosphere feel oddly soothing. She hummed a tune with her eyes closed, completely relaxed, before finally speaking—almost like she was narrating a musical.

She had been clueless at work from the start because she forgot to ask which floor she was supposed to go to. Luckily, she ran into Khun Mui first. Then, when she sat in front of the computer, she was completely lost—just numbers everywhere. Income, expenses, debits, credits… It was overwhelming. So in the end, she just closed everything and played *Solitaire* instead. She won ten games in a row.

"Do I *look* like I care about *Solitaire*? Can you just get to the point?" "Relax! Just enjoy the storytelling experience. I even have background music."

After getting bored from doing nothing, she started yawning at her desk. Then, she noticed a coworker had brought a guitar to the office. Instantly, she went over to befriend them and even helped tune the guitar since the owner was still a beginner.

Before long, she was playing during lunch, and somehow, it turned into a mini office concert. People gathered around, singing and having fun. "*I* play the guitar now?! You're making my life more complicated!" "Oh, stop overthinking. You have a ton of friends at the office now!"

Faen puffed out her chest proudly and wiggled her eyebrows.

"Thanks to me, no one will give you the cold shoulder anymore. You're now friendly, polite, smart, and—of course—gorgeous!"

"Okay, fine. You played the guitar at work. But how did you end up bringing one home?"

"Oh, I bought this one."

"You *only* had 300 baht! How did you buy a new guitar?"

"Your girlfriend bought it for me."

"...What?"

"That Mui-something person saw me playing the guitar—wait, no, I mean, *you* were playing the guitar."

Faen corrected herself so I could understand better.

"She looked *really* proud of you. Then, at lunchtime, she took me out to eat at a mall and even bought me this guitar—it must've cost a fortune!"

"Oh my god. What kind of woman does she think I am?"

"Smart and good-looking."

"This makes it look like I just swindled money out of her!"

"You're overthinking again."

Faen was still giddy over her new guitar. Just as she was about to strum a chord, I quickly grabbed the neck and shook my head.

"Why not?" she pouted.

"If you start playing and Mom and Dad hear it, what do you think will happen?"

"Nothing? They already saw the guitar."

"But I don’t know how to play. If they hear actual music, they'll know something’s off. It should sound stiff, like a beginner struggling, not like someone who's been playing their whole life."

"Fair point. Fine, I won’t play."

She shrugged and set the guitar aside, then looked at me seriously.

"By the way, that Mui-something of yours is really pretty."

"Just beautiful?"

"Okay, very beautiful."

I smiled proudly—we finally agreed on something. Khun Mui wasn’t just beautiful; she was stunning, intelligent, and a natural leader. Calling her *just* beautiful wasn’t enough.

"The way she looked at me was full of admiration. Honestly, I had a bit of an *In My Arms* moment."

"She's *mine*."

"I'm not trying to steal her; I'm just admiring. Besides, she's also a generous spender. Why doesn’t my world have someone like her?"

"Maybe it does, but you just haven’t found them yet. The world is huge."

"So you’re saying meeting Khun Mui was *destiny*?"

"Something like that. If fate didn’t bring us together, how else would we have met?"

"That was beautifully said... *Fate brought us together*..."

"That's a song title."

"Let me write that down. I’ll look it up later and maybe even sing it in *my* world."

I laughed at how serious she looked. Faen probably didn’t even realize how passionate she got when it came to music—it was the only time she ever acted this *focused*.

"And? Was there anything else today besides slacking off, getting a guitar, and making a bunch of new friends? How do you manage to accomplish so much in a single day?"

I looked at the effortlessly sociable girl in front of me with envy. I had been working there for so long and still hadn’t bonded with anyone.

"Actually, yeah, there *is* something else."

"What?"

"Tulips." "From Khun Mui?" She just smiled. "And you’re only telling me now?"

"Is it that important?"

"Of course it is! I get one every day!"

"Ohhh, that explains it."

"So where is it? The flower?"

"I already put it somewhere. It was taking up space in my bag."

"You—!"

"If I knew it mattered to you, I would’ve kept it. But since you get one *every day*, you’ll get another one tomorrow, won’t you? Hehe... Anyway, are you feeling better? Think you can go to work tomorrow?"

"Whether I can or not, I have to go. I was sick today, but I barely got any rest. I was so restless, worrying about what kind of trouble you might stir up. And you did—you did a lot today."

I pressed my fingers to my temples, still feeling feverish.

"Even if I have to crawl, I’ll go."

"If you’re really not well, just say so. I’ll go in your place again. It’s fun."

"Absolutely *not*! Just stay home!"

"But hey, I can't just stay locked up in this house forever. In my world, I go places all the time, but now that I’m in this world, I have to be locked in a room? That’s not fair. How about this..."

"What?"

"I go to work two days a week. You go three."

No.

"If you don’t agree, I’ll make sure your mom sees me."

"Are you *blackmailing* me?!"

"Aey, I'm bored."

"And I have to stress out every day because I never know what you'll do next? You can't even do the job properly—you're just wasting everyone's time."

"Oh, come on, it's not like anything bad happened. You have a girlfriend who's the boss of the company. Whether you finish your work or not, it's fine. Khun Mui absolutely adores you. Before leaving today, she even gave me a hug."

She said it so casually, but I froze, shocked and annoyed.

"A hug?"

"Yep. I kinda got carried away for a second, but... it was nothing. That’s all there was to it. Then she sent me home before heading out. Oh? Why do you look like that? Wait, are you jealous?"

I immediately threw myself onto the bed, turning my back to her. How could today have been this chaotic? And now she even went and hugged my girlfriend? I swear, I’m gonna kick her one day.

We didn't speak again after that.

. .

Now it was my turn to go to work. I still wasn’t feeling great, but I dragged myself in because there was no way I was letting that menace take my place again. Who knew what kind of mess she'd create this time?

But the moment I stepped into the office, I could tell something was off.

Normally, my coworkers barely acknowledged me. But today?

Everyone was all smiles, waving, and greeting me like we'd been best friends for *light-years*.

"Hey, our talented artist is here!"

"What song are you gonna play for us today?"

People started crowding around, throwing questions at me. I gave them a small, polite smile, unable to process what was happening. And then—they asked what song I was gonna play.

I answered as honestly as I could.

"I can’t play. My nail broke."

"Awww, man!"

The guy who owned the guitar looked disappointed.

"You promised you'd teach me how to play barre chords today!"

*Barre chords?*

What even is that? Not only did she go around befriending people, but she also made promises I couldn’t keep!

I quickly escaped, making a beeline for my desk. As soon as I turned on my computer, my heart sank. There was a mountain of unfinished work from yesterday—emails, financial reports, invoices. My whole screen was a mess.

I scratched my head in frustration, nearly pulling my hair out. That’s when a hand gently grabbed my wrist.

"Frustrated already?"

The moment our boss arrived, the entire office went dead silent. I forced a weak, awkward smile, unsure how to respond.

"There’s... quite a bit of work today,"

I admitted.

"Well, yeah. Yesterday, you were too busy playing Solitaire."

"Boss, you actually saw that?"

"I put your desk here so I could look at you. And all I saw was you playing computer games."

I wanted to cry. What kind of person did she think I was? Someone who slacked off and just played games all day?

"I was just too stressed yesterday, so I let myself relax a little. But today, I’m getting back to work—don’t worry! I’ll even skip lunch."

"No," she said firmly.

"You have to eat."

She discreetly placed a tulip on my desk, making sure no one else saw, then smiled at me.

"No matter how much work you have, you must eat. And I want to have lunch with you every day." Then she frowned slightly.

"Why do you feel warm?"

Right. I was still sick. I decided to just be honest.

"Just a slight fever. It’s nothing serious."

"Take some medicine, okay? Don’t make me worry. You were fine yesterday…"

She turned to leave but suddenly hesitated, stepping back toward me. And then—she asked a question that nearly made me fall out of my chair.

"Phuean."

"Huh?"

"Do you… have a twin?"

I froze.

"...No?"

"Hmm... Alright, then."

With just that, she walked back into her office.

My heart pounded so hard it felt like it might jump out of my chest.

Did she already *suspect* something?!

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# Chapter 19: Troublemaker

Why did she think I had a twin?

What did she do yesterday that made people suspicious? No, it’s actually because she did everything I wouldn’t do. So why am I even surprised that Khun Mui is questioning me?

Suddenly, I started singing, dancing, and tricking her into buying me a guitar. Ugh, does she think I’m a gold digger now? Me? I’d be happy just hammering some nails. But that girl—she got a guitar after just one day of work!

.

“You little troublemaker.”

As soon as I got home, I rushed upstairs to my room, barely greeting Mom and Dad. Faen was holding the guitar, strumming it without sound, and looking at me with a pout.

“What? You call me that the moment you walk in? Just like in the other world.”

“They call you that in your world too? No surprise there. You’re a real troublemaker. Do you know what Khun Mui asked me today? …She asked if I had a twin.”

“I didn’t even get the chance to wonder—guess you just revealed it.”

Faen kept a straight face but then pouted dramatically, making me shrink back in confusion.

“W-what? I haven’t even said anything yet. Why are you pouting like you’re about to cry?”

“I’m hungry.”

“Then why didn’t you eat?”

“How could I? I couldn’t even leave this room! Everyone thinks you went to work. All I had was the water you left behind and some tiny crumbs of bread. I’m a person, not *Hamtaro*, nibbling on scraps. I’m starving!”

I glanced at the empty water bottle, feeling a little guilty. My anger disappeared instantly, replaced by sympathy. How could I forget something so important?

If she was locked in this room, of course, she had nothing to eat. She couldn’t even order delivery because she couldn’t go out to get it.

“I’ll find you something to eat.”

“You’re the best!”

Faen tossed the guitar onto the bed and hugged me playfully.

“Once I’m full, you can yell at me all you want, bestie.”

I went downstairs and had dinner with Mom and Dad, then snuck into the kitchen to grab two eggs from the fridge. I soaked them in water and microwaved them. When I brought them upstairs, Faen pouted again, probably expecting something more appetizing.

“Why is living here harder than living over there? I can’t even flush the toilet without worrying that someone downstairs will hear it.”

“Well, then go back.”

"How do I go back?"

"The same way you came."

"I came from a swimming pool in Phuket. Do I have to fly to Phuket?"

"Any pool should work… How about a bathtub? Just hold your breath underwater for thirty seconds."

"I’m a human, not a koi fish. No way."

"You’re so picky. So, are we just going to keep switching places like this forever?"

"Looks like it. Tomorrow, we switch again. I’ll go to work instead of you."

"No way! Isn’t this chaotic enough already? Khun Mui already suspects we’re twins. If we switch again tomorrow, we’ll definitely get caught. She may not look like it, but she’s super sharp."

"She doesn’t seem that smart to me. She looked at the guitar with puppy eyes, and she got it just like that. I love a good sugar mommy."

"That’s not why she bought it!"

Faen waved her hands frantically, trying to prove she wasn’t thinking that way. I sighed and scratched my head.

"We need a plan. If we keep switching and starving like this, we’re bound to get caught. Plus, my mom always comes in to clean this room."

"...."

I rolled my eyes, thinking.

"Alright, here’s the deal. On our next day off, we’ll go out together, fly to Phuket, go back to the same hotel, and you jump into the pool."

"That easy? I don’t even have an ID Card. I had to take a bus back when I got here. Just getting there and back would take two days." "Oh, right. Okay, then not Phuket. Any pool should do."

I rolled my eyes again, trying to imagine another solution.

"How about a water park? Big pools there. Just jump in."

"Wow, you really want me gone."

Faen huffed.

"Fine, I’ll go."

"You came from there, so that’s where you have to go back. Why are you upset?"

"Because I haven’t had enough fun here yet! I won’t whine about being hungry, but I want to stay a little longer. I promise I won’t get caught."

"No. This is messing up my daily life. Just living normally is hard enough for me, and you being here is total chaos."

"A normal life is boring! I’m the spice your life needs. I mean, how many people get to meet themselves from another world?"

"I never wanted this to happen."

"Well, it already did. So, let me stay for another week."

"But..."

"Tomorrow, I’m going to work again. It’s fun! Plus, I want to meet Yianpanapa, the one who pushed you into the pool."

"I haven’t even said you could go yet. You have to stay here."

"Ugh, fine."

"No groaning! No means no. Tomorrow, I’ll leave food and water in the room for you. Hide the dishes properly so my mom doesn’t see them. And don’t wash them in the bathtub or sink—the pipes will get clogged. Got it?" "*2041*."

"What does that even mean?"

"It means ‘got it’!"

"Whatever."

Just like I said last night, I prepared food by sneaking things from the fridge —fruits and snacks included—and brought them upstairs so Faen wouldn’t starve while being locked in.

Before leaving, I reminded her over and over again, hoping it would sink into that tiny brain of hers.

"Don’t make any noise. Don’t make anyone suspicious. Got it?"

"I knooow."

"Good."

. .

Then, I headed to work as usual. But for some reason, I had a bad feeling from the moment I stepped out of the house. I didn’t even check if I stepped out with my left or right foot first. Oh well, it was just a feeling—probably nothing.

Khun Mui acted the same as always, placing fresh flowers on my desk every morning like it was a routine. I was so used to it by now that it felt normal. If there was ever a day without flowers, I’d probably assume she was mad at something.

.

***Rrring!***

The phone on my desk rang. There was only one person who would call me here. I picked up and tried to sound serious, pretending to focus on work— even though I already knew who it was.

"Miss me?"

"Meet me at the fire escape today."

"For what?"

"To kiss."

I opened my mouth but couldn’t find the words. She was so blunt that I had to glance toward the glass-walled office. She met my eyes with an intense gaze, making me shudder weirdly before I cleared my throat and swallowed hard.

*"She means kiss..."*

Just thinking about it made my face tense up. I forced myself to stay neutral so my coworkers wouldn’t notice anything. To keep up the act, I stood up and headed to the restroom.

I took out my toothbrush and toothpaste from my drawer—something I always kept there because I brushed my teeth after every meal. But I never thought I’d need them for this.

What kind of crazy person just says something like that out loud? And what am I supposed to do now?! This is insane.

**"Boo!"**

That voice—I’d known it my whole life. It was also the voice I hated whenever I recorded myself speaking. I choked on my toothpaste, accidentally swallowing some. My eyes widened as I looked in the mirror.

Behind me, reflected in the glass, was Faen—wearing my t-shirt and jeans.

Shocked, I pointed at the mirror.

"Are we talking through the glass even though we’re in the same world?"

"Are you stupid? I’m right behind you."

I spun around, staring at her. How did she even get here? That bad feeling I had this morning—this must have been it. Why did I ever trust that troublemaker to stay put?

"How did you get here?!"

"Took the bus. I found some coins in your drawer and, well, borrowed them."

"Didn’t I tell you—"

"You said no one should see me, and your mom didn't hear me. You never said I couldn’t go out."

Faen raised an eyebrow mischievously.

I glanced around in a panic, worried someone might see her. Quickly, I shoved her into a bathroom stall and locked the door, whispering harshly. "You’re making my life difficult! What the hell are you doing here?"

"I was bored. I asked to come work, and you said no. By the way, why are you brushing your teeth right now?"

"That’s none of your business."

"Your breath stinks, huh?"

"No, it doesn’t! I—"

I hesitated for a second before deciding not to explain.

"I just like staying clean. And you should keep your promise and go back home. Right now."

"Do you know how hard it was to climb down from the roof? I went through all that just to come ask for 300 baht. I wanna go to the mall, walk around in air-conditioning. Since I’m here, might as well see more of this world. Any recommendations? Other than malls, what important places should I check out?"

"This isn’t the time to—"

"Phuean, are you in there?"

Khun Mui’s voice made me snap my mouth shut. Meanwhile, Faen—who always seemed to be having way too much fun—decided to answer for me. My eyes went wide in horror.

"Yes! I’m here!"

"....."

"Just kidding! What’s up, boss?"

"I’ll wait for you at the fire escape."

"Nah, no thanks."

*...What?!*

"I’ll just wait and go with you."

*Oh my god....I’m so screwed.*

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# Chapter 20: Jealousy Can Kill

Mui’s words made Faen and me freeze in the bathroom, exchanging nervous glances. We had no idea what to do. Then, Mui walked up to the door and knocked again to remind me.

"Still not done? I miss you."

"Wait a moment!"

I replied in a panic. But Faen, enjoying teasing me, quickly added,

"Pooping."

I bared my teeth at the troublemaker, pretending to cry, while she stuck out her tongue, looking smug and thoroughly entertained by this nervewracking situation.

"Am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all."

"But you're pooping."

"You little—!"

I mouthed the words without making a sound. Faen held back her laughter so hard her face turned red. I grabbed her hair and raised my hand as if to smack her, though I had no intention of actually doing it.

"Khun Mui, can you wait outside? I am too shy to come out right now." "But I really want to see your face."

Why the hell would you want to see someone’s face while they’re trying to poop?! I wanted to scream but couldn’t. Faen looked at me and mouthed with growing amusement,

"I'll go out instead."

"What the hell for?"

"She really wants to see your face."

"She wants to see my face, so why the hell are you butting in?!"

We kept our conversation silent, relying entirely on lip-reading. Faen didn’t care about anything anymore—probably bored after not having any fun for two whole days.

In the end, the troublemaker opened the door, leaving me no time to react. I immediately hid behind it, letting her take the lead.

"Since you miss me, here’s my face, babe."

*Babe?! Oh, I swear, if I get out of here alive, I’m going to kill her!*

"Did you just call me babe?"

"You don't like it?"

"Well... it feels nice, but you seem different."

Mui was still standing by the door, not going anywhere.

"Why are your clothes different?"

"Actually... I secretly brought a change of clothes because I was planning to skip work. But then you caught me first."

Faen scratched her cheek awkwardly, then suddenly leaned in closer.

"Let's ditch work together."

She quickly grabbed my boss's arm like they were best friends.

"That wasn't part of my plan, but if you want to skip work, I don't mind. That's what you get for dating the owner of the company."

"You're the best, boss! But if we're skipping work, where should we go?"

"I was thinking of heading to the emergency stairs."

"Why the emergency stairs?"

"Did you forget?"

"You're really good at pretending to forget. We don't have to go all the way to the stairs. We can do it right here."

I peeked through the small gap in the door and saw Mui gently cupping Faen's face before pressing a kiss to her lips. The one who looked just like me—Faen—went wide-eyed in shock.

Her hands hovered awkwardly in the air, too hesitant to push Mui away. Instead, she glanced at me in the bathroom, and our eyes met.

I froze completely. I never thought I’d have to witness something like this. A sharp pang of jealousy hit me straight in the chest, but I couldn’t do anything—I couldn’t reveal myself, I couldn’t make a sound.

All I could do was stand there like a statue, clenching my fists in frustration.

Mui finally pulled away and tilted her head, looking at Faen, who now looked like a fish out of water, face flushed red. Then Mui laughed.

"Who keeps their eyes open while kissing?"

"What was that?!"

"We agreed to meet to kiss, remember?"

"You schedule kisses?!"

Faen still sounded flustered, like a broken record.

"I did not see that coming."

"You're acting weird again. But you're still cute. Let me hug you."

Mui wrapped her arms around Faen, pulling her in so tightly that it felt like she was trying to merge them into one person. Faen hesitated, arms still floating in the air, before slowly lowering them and awkwardly hugging back.

"You smell different."

"Do I smell bad?"

Faen flinched and quickly jumped out of Mui’s embrace, clamping her arms down tight.

"I took a shower! I even put on perfume!"

"It’s not that kind of smell."

Mui chuckled.

"You really are acting strange today. It’s like you’re a different person."

"H-How could I be someone else?"

"Exactly. You don’t have a twin or anything. You’re such a mystery, little one."

She playfully pinched Faen's nose before planting another big kiss on her cheek.

"So refreshing."

"Alright, let’s skip work. Where do you want to go?"

"I can’t even think right now."

Faen's face was still burning red. The confident, mischievous girl had turned into a shy, flustered mess—completely unlike herself.

"Then I’ll decide."

"Where to?"

"Let’s go to my place."

Mui grabbed Faen's wrist and led her out of the bathroom. Only when I was sure they had really left did I slowly emerge from my hiding spot. My legs felt weak.

The jealousy and rage burning inside me were worse than anything I had ever felt before.

I had always known that I had feelings for her. But I never imagined they ran this deep—until I saw Mui kissing someone else.

*That place was mine.*

*That kiss was mine.*

*That embrace was mine.*

*She was mine.*

*But I couldn’t do anything about it!*

*. .*

While they ran off together, I could only run home, change my clothes, and bury myself under the blankets, refusing to speak to anyone. My parents, noticing something was wrong, kept knocking on my door, asking if I was okay.

I didn’t explain. I only repeated the same thing:

"I’m tired. Please don’t bother me."

I had never been this cold to my parents before, but right now, I just wanted to be alone. I needed to sort out my thoughts. I locked myself in my room all evening, refusing to come out.

Then, around 9 PM, my other self returned—climbing up to the secondfloor window and knocking.

"Hey, open up."

I lay under my blanket, pretending to be asleep, but my eyes slowly opened. My heart had been restless all day. The moment I saw her, I wanted to talk to her more than anything—but I also wanted to slap her just as much.

I was usually calm and never held grudges against anyone—except her. Right now, she was the only one I couldn’t forgive. I threw off the blanket, sat up on the bed, and glared toward the window, ready to confront her.

"Mosquitoes are biting me. If you see me standing here, at least open the window."

"If you could climb up, you should be able to get in on your own too."

"There you go, picking a fight again. Fine, I’ll just go to the front door. If your parents start wondering why I, who was home all day, suddenly appeared outside, I bet there’ll be a lot of questions. You okay with that?"

Her threat worked. In the end, I had no choice but to get out of bed and open the window for her. She, who looked exactly like me, climbed in, dusting herself off from the dirt on the roof with a deep sigh.

"You seem pretty moody."

"What did you two do?"

The first thing I asked—coldly. She had just returned, and her answer was straightforward.

"I went to Mui’s place."

"And what did you do there?"

"Nothing... really."

She avoided my gaze. Her words were hesitant, making me even more suspicious. I wanted to scream.

"Don’t lie to me. You went to her room. You kissed her in front of me. If you went to her place, something must have happened!"

"Don't jump to conclusions."

"How would you feel if someone who looked exactly like you pretended to be you, went into your girlfriend’s private space, and you had no idea what they did together?!"

I snapped, my voice likely loud enough to be heard downstairs. She quickly pressed a finger to her lips, motioning for me to lower my voice.

"You're too loud. What if your parents hear you?"

"I don’t care anymore! I’ve had enough! You came into this world and turned my life upside down. My peaceful routine is gone because of you! What if I went and did the same thing in your world?!"

"It wouldn’t make a difference. No one in my world cares what I do anyway."

"But this isn’t your world!"

My words shut her up completely. She slumped her shoulders, finally realizing that she had really messed up.

"Lie down."

"Are you serious?"

I grabbed her by the collar and dragged her to the bathroom. Turning on the faucet, I let the tub fill up until I was sure her whole body could be submerged. Then, without hesitation, I pushed her in—fully clothed.

She sat there, blinking up at me, water soaking through her clothes.

"Do it. Drown yourself. If you really came from another world, maybe you'll magically get sent back."

She sighed, running a wet hand through her hair.

"That’s not how it works, you know."

"I don’t care how it works! I just know I can’t stand having another me in this world! We’re not even twins!"

Her face was unreadable as she looked up at me.

"Do you really hate me that much?"

I clenched my fists.

"I just know I don’t like you right now. And that’s enough."

A heavy silence hung between us. The only sound was the faint splashing of water as she shifted slightly in the tub. Then, she exhaled deeply, looking away.

"Alright. I get it."

I didn’t respond. My heart was pounding too fast, too loud. I wanted her gone. I wanted things back to normal.

But at the same time, a tiny, nagging voice in my head whispered—what if you regret this?

"I can't let you stay here anymore. I... I feel suffocated. My daily life is all messed up. Today, you kissed her, went to her room... What will you two do behind my back next? No… I have to stop this from happening again. Lie down."

Faen's face fell. She pouted and mumbled,

"You never listen to me. I have something I want to tell you too."

"No need to say anything. Just lie down."

She hesitated for a moment but eventually did as I said.

"What do I have to do next?"

"Put your whole face in the water. Your body will disappear and return to your world, just like when you came here through the water."

"Are you sure this will work?"

"It has to work. I won’t let things get more complicated."

"Just because of Mui, you’re doing this to me?"

"You’re the one who started it."

My jealousy blinded me to everything else. I pushed her down, making her lie on her back in the bathtub, then held her body underwater and started counting.

Humans can’t last more than thirty seconds underwater. Even professional divers can only hold their breath for about a minute and a half at most.

But she’s a girl from another world—maybe she has a special ability to breathe in water or through her skin. I didn’t know. But she had to go back.

*One…*

*Eleven…*

*Twelve…*

*Fifteen…*

*More…*

She started struggling, unable to breathe, choking as bubbles rose to the surface like boiling water. But I held her down, pressing against her chest. Her arms flailed, splashing water everywhere, soaking me completely.

By the twenty-fifth second, she weakened and finally stopped moving under the water.

I stared at her body—she was still there. She hadn’t disappeared.

Panic hit me like a wave. My mind cleared in an instant. What was I doing?

"Faen!"

I grabbed her by the collar and shook her. But she was limp, unresponsive. No matter how much I called her, she didn’t answer. No matter how much I slapped her, she wouldn’t wake up.

In the end, I had no choice but to drain all the water and pull her out as fast as I could.

I pulled her out of the bathtub and started CPR—giving her mouth-tomouth and pressing on her chest. When nothing worked, I used my last resort—I clenched my fist and punched her chest hard.

*"Ugh!"*

A large amount of water burst from her mouth as she coughed violently, gasping for air. She looked exhausted. But the moment she saw me, her eyes filled with fear. She scrambled backward until her back hit the wall, trembling.

I had never seen her like this before.

“Please… don’t hurt me.”

“W-wait! I… I didn’t mean to—”

**"You tried to kill me!"**

.

# Chapter 21: Overnight Stay

Right now, we're sitting in different corners of the room. Faen on the right side of the bed near the lamp, while I'm on the left side, where there's also a lamp.

"I already said I'm sorry. I didn’t mean to. I just thought that if I did that, you might go back to your world, just like how I ended up here."

"And did it work? I stopped breathing!"

"But I brought you back to life."

"What if I didn’t wake up? What would you have done? Chop up my body, stuff it in a bag, and dump it in the forest?"

"Ugh, I didn’t even think about that! I already said I'm sorry. Do you want me to kneel and apologize?"

"Your jealousy makes you crazy."

The endless scolding left me sitting there in silence. I really almost killed Faen just because I was jealous.

"I'm sorry."

"Actually… I should apologize too. I was playing around too much. I didn’t think something like this would happen either."

"Do you have anything to explain about going to Mui’s place?"

"Well..."

As soon as we reached this topic, silence filled the room. My heart was pounding because of it. Maybe it was better when we were arguing. It felt like she had something she couldn’t say.

"Honestly, there is something… but also nothing."

"Just tell me what the '*something*' is. If there’s 'nothing,' then don’t bother."

"Mui took me to her place. That condo… She lives alone. It’s pretty big."

"......"

"We drank some water, talked while watching a movie, and then…"

"....."

**"We hug each other."**

At that moment, I clenched my fists tighter.

"It was just a hug, nothing more. Suddenly, Mui pulled away. She didn’t say anything, like she was a different person. That’s why I said there was nothing."

"Out of nowhere, Khun Mui just stopped?"

This caught my attention again.

"Did you do something wrong? If you messed up, that means *I* messed up too."

"I didn’t do anything. She just hugged me and pulled away. We finished the movie, and she took me home. While we were in the car, she just said, *Take care of yourself*, and then drove off. That’s it."

"It's strange. She took you all the way to her place but didn’t do anything?"

"Isn't that a good thing? Or… do you want Mui to make love to me?" "That’s not what I mean... But Khun Mui is usually direct and makes quick decisions. If she took you home with her, why did she stop at just a hug? She even kissed you in the bathroom."

Faen quickly covered her mouth, her face turning bright red. She was clearly embarrassed, while I was still fuming with jealousy. I could still feel my face go numb, my body freeze, my legs locked in place as I stood there, watching them kiss. Damn it. I still can't shake that image from my mind. "Hey."

I looked at her as she bit her lip, lost in thought.

"...What?"

"When Khun Mui kissed you… how did you feel?"

"Nothing. There was nothing to feel. Are you worried that I might be attracted to Mui?"

"So… were you sensitive?"

"Are you crazy? I like men!"

Faen blurted out, stumbling over her words.

"But… I won’t lie. I did feel a bit… dazed. It was my first time kissing a girl, so it was kind of shocking."

"Hmm."

"Are you still mad at me?"

"What right do I have to be mad? I almost killed you in the bathroom."

"Then let's call it even. Let’s stop fighting. I promise I won’t cause any more trouble. But I do have one request… Let me go out and experience life in your world. Being stuck in this room is driving me crazy. Hiding from your mom in the closet or the bathroom makes me feel like I don’t belong here."

"Well, you don’t belong here." "Fine, I’ll admit it—I’m an outsider,"

She grumbled. I sighed and nodded.

"Alright. From now on, we’ll take turns going to work. But try to act normal, okay? Don’t have to show off your true self too much." "But I don’t even know how you normally act at work!"

"Alright, let’s do some intensive training. Come up on the bed."

I got up from the corner of the room and slipped under the blanket. Faen though hesitant, followed along obediently.

"You’re not hiding a knife under the pillow or anything, right?"

"Don’t be ridiculous."

"Okay… then tell me, what do you usually do at work? How should I act?"

"I will. But before that, there’s something bothering me."

"What is it?"

"You said you had something to say when you went to Mui’s place. What was it?"

"Did I say that?"

She looked completely unfazed.

"I don’t think so. You must have misheard."

"But you acted like there was something you wanted to say."

"Let’s just wait until I’m sure."

"Sure about what?"

"Just wait, okay? For now, let’s focus on training. What kind of person are you at work?"

She was clearly dodging the question, and since we had just made up, I didn’t want to push her too much. So, I spent the whole night explaining what I was like at the company—how I acted, how I got along with coworkers, who I was friendly with, and who I avoided.

We talked for hours until we eventually dozed off, but it seemed like she absorbed quite a lot.

By the end of our conversation, we had a plan: for two days a week, or whenever I felt sick, she would go to work in my place. She also promised not to get involved with Mui, so I wouldn’t have to go through another jealous meltdown like today.

Her appearance had to change too—no more dressing however she wanted. The company had a uniform, but even if it wasn’t too strict, her usual fashion choices and hairstyle made her stand out way too much.

I also sent her shopping for underwear and other necessities since we had no idea how long she’d be staying.

. .

"Stay here for now. Once I save up some money, I’ll find you a place to live."

"It’s fine. I could even sleep in the bathroom if I had to."

"What kind of person sleeps in a bathroom?"

"Someone like me."

Once we had everything sorted out, we each went about our own business. I went to work, with my dad dropping me off, while Faen found her own way out of the house—how, I didn’t really want to know.

When I arrived at the company, Khun Mui, who came in later, walked straight to my desk and stared at me very closely. So close it felt like she was trying to shoot bullets through me with her eyes.

“What is it, Boss?”

Then, she smiled.

“Pick one.”

She tilted her head slightly, hands behind her back, and smirked.

“Roses or tulips?”

“Tulips.”

“Good choice.”

She placed the flower on my desk and motioned with her chin for me to follow her into the office, like it was some kind of secret signal. Honestly, she could’ve just told me to go in. At this point, the whole company probably already knew she treated me differently from the other employees.

I followed her inside. As soon as the glass doors closed, they turned opaque for privacy.

“Is there something wrong—oh!"

I was suddenly pulled into a tight hug, my face pressed against her shoulder. She inhaled deeply, taking in the scent of my freshly washed hair before moving down to my neck. It tickled, but I didn’t dare laugh.

“The smell of your baby powder shampoo is really turning me on.”

"It's such a shame to say that."

I pulled away, my face burning red. She just smiled at me.

Today, Khun Mui was wearing a white button-up shirt and sleek slacks, looking sharp and effortless. I found myself unconsciously observing her every move, her every gesture.

The way she walked—each step deliberate and confident—was captivating.

The way she looked at me—it was like she could freeze me in place, turning me into stone, only to melt me down in an instant with the heat of her gaze.

“Are you still holding back around me? After everything we did yesterday?”

“…We just watched a movie, didn’t we?”

“Then what exactly do you think ‘everything we did’ means?”

I narrowed my eyes, because Faen's version of events made it sound like nothing had happened.

“Well, for example, I gave you a full tour of my home. That means you’ve already seen half of my life.”

“…It’s just a house.”

"It's not just a house. It's a reflection of the person who lives there, of who they really are. You're the first person I've ever invited to my place... How sad. We spent time together yesterday, but you're acting like it meant nothing, like you don't even remember."

Khun Mui sighed, her voice tinged with disappointment. She sounded hurt, but I was too busy panicking, afraid she'd catch on to something. I quickly tried to change the subject before she started asking too many questions— especially about what exactly happened yesterday that was supposedly so much.

"Then... should I go again?"

Khun Mui's eyes narrowed.

"What?"

"This evening, can I come over to your place again?"

I asked, flashing my best innocent smile.

"I just want to refresh my memory, you know? Since you said we did so much, I should make sure I remember it all."

"You pretend not to remember."

*I really didn't.*

"Keep sulking, and I might change my mind," I teased.

"Good. Then this time, we'll make sure to do plenty of things together," She said with a sly smile.

"Wait, do we have to do something? I thought we'd just hang out, watch Netflix, and go home."

"There should be some activities. Just sitting there, staring at the screen in silence like yesterday—it was a little awkward, don’t you think?"

"What kind of activities are you thinking about, Khun Mui?"

"Do you really want me to answer that?"

"Is there any question you can't answer, Khun Mui. We already kissed."

My voice came out a little sharp—because I was remembering that somebody had already kissed her. And that somebody wasn’t me. Damn it, thinking about it make me so mad.

"Then I will ask...."

"Ask what—"

"Stay over tonight."

"...."

"I want to do so much more with you than just kissing."

She said it while looking straight into my eyes, her gaze filled with expectation and an unshakable determination that made it very clear—when she wanted something, she got it. The only question was whether the other person would accept her offer or not.

I was speechless, caught between fear and curiosity. But then I thought—if Faen had already been there and nothing happened, then why couldn’t I go too?

I also want to know… If I go, besides kissing, what else will she do?

"Alright, I will staying over."

I already said it. Will she think I’m too easy? Worries and confusion were all mixed up inside me. My parents always taught me to follow the rules, come home on time, and never act on my own.

This is probably the first time I’ve decided to sleep over at someone else’s house without asking for permission. But I’m grown up now. I can make my own decisions.

I also want to know… Besides kissing, what else might happen? It seems like my curiosity, along with the hormones inside me, is making me even more eager to find out.

When Khun Mui heard my answer, she paused for a moment before giving me a sweet smile. Then she gently pulled my nose playfully.

"You're so cute. Even though you're confused, you're still curious."

"Did I really make it that obvious? I mean… it’s just staying at your place. What’s the big deal?"

"Nothing. It just feels…"

She paused briefly before changing the subject.

"Alright then, let's have a sleepover tonight. It’ll be fun!"

What kind of fun does she mean? I pressed my lips together, feeling both nervous and guilty at the same time. But I tried to stay calm and responded normally.

"Okay then, I’ll go back to work now."

"Let’s go home together after work."

"Alright."

"You’re adorable."

That was all she said before I walked away. But instead of heading straight back to my desk, I sneaked off to the bathroom and quickly call Faen at home. She answered right away, sounding excited—probably because she was bored and had no one to chat with.

"Thanks for calling! I was about to go crazy from boredom."

She grumbled in a playful tone.

Even though I was still a little annoyed with her, I had something I needed her help with today.

"I need a favor."

"Anything! If you want me to climb out of my house and run to you right now, I’ll do it. I'm so bored, bored, bored!"

"Well… You do need to climb out. But… climb back into my house through the front door."

"Huh? That means your parents will see me."

"I’m not going home tonight."

I finally told her.

"I’m going to sleep over at Khun Mui’s place."

*Silence.*

I guessed she was stunned. Maybe even emotional. She probably never expected me to do something like this.

"Rebel."

"I'm grown up now."

"Do you even know what it means to sleep over at your girlfriend’s place?"

"I do. And I want to see if anything actually happens."

"Is this because you saw that Mui or whatever kissed me? You’re not just doing this out of spite, are you?"

"Why would I do that? She's my girlfriend. Staying over at your partner’s place—everyone does it. You’re so old-fashioned."

I threw her words back at her, the same way she always criticized me for having a narrow-minded way of thinking. Well, this time, I was going to open my own world.

"Do your parents know?"

"They don’t need to. There’s another version of me in this world now."

"Be a good daughter for them today. Grab the clothes I wore to work, dress up as me, go home, have dinner with them, and then go to bed like normal. That way, they won’t suspect anything."

"You’ve gotten way more rebellious."

"Probably learned it from you."

"Alright, alright,"

She said, sounding amused, but I could sense something underneath her tone—it wasn’t exactly excitement.

"Since I’m in your world now, I’ll help however I can. It’s actually nice. I get to have a family moment for once. Go ahead and do whatever you want today."

"Thanks. I owe you one."

"No worries. Just make sure you tell me everything when you get back."

"You too. Don’t let my parents find out."

"Please, I’m a pro."

I hung up, staring at my phone with a mix of excitement and guilt. I'd never done anything like this before. But whatever. I’d already made up my mind. And besides, Faen was covering for me.

So I wouldn’t disappointed my parents… or if they found out, I’d just tell them the truth—that I was staying at my boss’s place, and she's a woman. They might find it odd, but they probably wouldn’t think too much of it.

*No more worrying. I made my decision.*

Tonight, I’m sleeping over at her place. I need to see for myself—what happens next?

Faen is stepping into my role for a day, pretending to be me at home. But this time, I will go myself and staying the night.

I’m going to find out once, what two women can actually do together.

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# Chapter 22 :

After work, I left with Khun Mui. As we sat in the car, I couldn't hide my guilt—it was all over my face.

Khun Mui glanced at me with a kind smile.

"What's wrong? Afraid your parents will worry? Just call them and tell them you're staying with me."

"No, it’s not that."

How did she know? I hadn’t even said a word. Was my face really that easy to read? I thought only Faen could do that. Looks like Khun Mui was just as sharp.

"So, what did you tell your family about staying over?"

"Well…"

I hadn't actually told them anything, but I had to make something up.

"I told them I had work to finish with you. They didn’t say anything."

"That easy, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Good. Let’s ‘*finish things*’ properly then."

Her words had a hidden meaning. I shot her a quick glance but quickly looked away when she met my eyes. What exactly did she mean by that?

And what should I be preparing for?

Come to think of it, this was pretty reckless of me. It felt like I was going through a rebellious phase… just a little later in life than most people.

Not long after, we arrived at her condo, and I almost let out a gasp. I never expected her place to be this luxurious. I knew she was rich, but I didn't think owning a fitness business could make someone this wealthy.

Seeing my shocked expression, Khun Mui raised an eyebrow.

"Still not over the surprise? You made that same face last time you came over."

"Can’t a person be shocked twice?"

"I guess so. You’re funny." She chuckled and pressed the elevator button.

"Let's go sleep with me."

"Huh?!"

"I mean, let’s go to my room."

She intended for me to hear it the wrong way—she was teasing me.

The elevator took us up to the 17th floor, which was pretty high. There were only about four rooms on this floor, meaning each unit must have been huge.

And when I stepped inside her condo…

It was breathtaking. Elegant. Stylish.

I had no idea what kind of interior design this was, but it was way beyond the life of a middle-class girl like me.

"Khun Mui, you've really made it in life. Your life is so enviable."

"It's just the outside. Inside, it's empty."

She walked over to the kitchen counter, poured some water into a glass, and brought it over to me. Meanwhile, I was still awkwardly standing there, not knowing where to place myself in this luxurious space.

"This is your second time here, and you're still this tense?"

She handed me the glass and gently pushed me toward the large, white sofa —soft and plush, the kind that could swallow you whole.

"Relax. If you're nervous, I’ll start feeling nervous too."

"Are you nervous now?"

"Not really. I just want to act nervous with you so you won’t feel lonely."

"You talk nonsense too, huh?"

I took a sip of water—well, more like finished the whole glass. I wasn’t thirsty, but I needed something to do with my hands. Setting the empty glass on the coffee table, I looked around again.

"Living alone in such a big place… don’t you feel lonely?"

"Yeah, maybe. It’s too big. But if you were here with me, it would feel just right."

"Flirty."

I rolled my eyes, but before I could react further, she shifted closer, resting her arm along the back of the sofa—almost like she was embracing me.

"Only with you."

"You're so aggressive like this, how am I supposed to believe I’m the only one?"

"I don’t do this with just anyone."

"Why me?"

"Another why." She chuckled.

"You always need a reason for everything. I’m running out of explanations… But let’s just say, because you're beautiful, adorable, small, and your voice is all whiny—like a little kitten."

"So many reasons today."

"And because I really, really like you."

.

***Thump-thump…***

***Thump-thump…***

.

She didn’t waste time getting to the point.

I locked eyes with her, trying to turn away like I always did when avoiding difficult situations. But she caught my chin, gently but firmly, and made me look at her.

"What’s wrong? Can’t meet my eyes?"

"Your gaze is intense enough to kill someone."

"Are you dead yet?"

"I don’t know anymore. I'm just going to the bathroom."

"I won't let you go."

She grabbed my arm just as I was about to stand, pulling me back down before swiftly straddling me. My body automatically sank into the couch, eyes wide with shock.

"You can’t run away now."

"I wasn’t running! I was just going to the bathroom!"

"You're always like this. The moment things reach for a climax, you find an excuse to escape… Except for last time."

"Last time?"

***Thump-thump…***

My heartbeat wasn’t the same as before. Now, instead of nervous excitement, irritation started creeping in. Suspicion, too. What exactly had Faen done with Khun Mui last time she was here?

"Last time, you held my gaze—unwavering. And then we…"

"We what?"

Thump-thump…

My heart pounded even louder.

"We did this."

She suddenly wrapped her arms around me, pushing me down against the sofa. Her face nestled into the crook of my neck as she whispered in a muffled voice by my ear.

"Why are you lying on top of me?"

"I want to feel you."

"....."

"I want to hear your heartbeat against mine."

One of her hands traced from my ear down to my neck. It wasn’t ticklish— it was electrifying. A sensation I had never felt before. And somehow, I knew more was coming.

"You—"

"Shh."

She hushed me as she lifted herself slightly, her lips brushing my cheek—so close to my lips that it felt deliberate, as if testing how I would respond to her.

"Can I?"

The word "Can I" was a request for permission. Permission to kiss me.

I nodded shyly.

And then she did.

I tried to respond, though clumsily. She didn’t seem to mind, gently guiding me along. Her tongue slipped past my lips, and for a brief moment, I jolted in surprise. But my body, as if following some unspoken rule, instinctively followed her lead.

Her hands wandered exploring over my body. I admit that I was scared. But I wanted this, too.

When she started unbuttoning my shirt, I instinctively grabbed the collar, holding it tightly shut. This was the part of me I guarded the most. The part I was most insecure about.

But Khun Mui simply shook her head.

"Let me see."

"No… It’s not… It’s not pleasing to see."

"You're beautiful."

"..."

"No matter what you have or who you are, you're always beautiful to me."

Her voice softened, almost pleading. It was that tenderness that made my resistance crumble, allowing her to unbutton my shirt with ease.

At the center of my chest, a faded scar stretched across from my heart surgery. Khun Mui pressed a gentle kiss to it before resting her ear against my left side, as if trying to listen closely.

"Your heartbeat is beautiful. So clear. So steady."

"Khun Mui…"

She stayed there for so long that I wasn’t sure what to do. I let her be, waiting for whatever was supposed to come next.

But then…

She fell asleep.

…Huh?

. .

**Chao planoy.... really...**😴😴

# Chapter 23: Done?

"Are you asleep, or just pretending to be asleep?"

I looked confused, unsure what to do. I tried nudging her to wake her up, but she didn’t move at all. She was lying on top of me on the soft couch like that. Honestly, it felt kind of nice—like she trusted me enough to sleep so soundly.

But… this wasn’t how I expected things to go!

"Khun Mui."

I shook her again. She shifted a little, still in her comfy sleeping position, but her ear remained pressed against my chest.

"Hmm?"

"Are you really going to sleep here?"

"Yeah."

"But I’m getting sore."

I wasn’t actually sore. I was just a little annoyed that after all this buildup, this was all that happened. I had mentally prepared myself for more than just this, but she was acting like nothing was going to happen at all.

Okay, I’m not being pervy, but… is this all couples do?

"Hehe."

A soft giggle escaped her, and her body shook slightly from laughing. That’s when I realized—she was awake the whole time but pretending to be asleep! My frustration made my voice come out a little harsher than I intended.

"What are you laughing at?"

"You’re mad."

"I’m not mad."

"Your heartbeat says otherwise. It’s faster now."

She lifted her head, resting her chin on my chest while looking up at me from below.

"Are you really that upset that I fell asleep?"

"It’s not like that. I’m just… sore."

I never say things directly. And she, knowing full well that I was lying, smirked and narrowed her eyes at me.

"Hmm... then go take a shower so we can go to bed. You’ve never been inside my bedroom before, have you?"

"How would I have?"

"Then let’s go to bed."

She sat up, stretched lazily, and said,

"Sorry, I must’ve been a little tired from work today. Lying on you was so comfortable."

"Did you do the same thing last time?"

"Don’t you remember?"

*Again…*

I froze for a moment. How could I remember something that I wasn’t even there for? So she really did sleep on that body too? But Faen skipped over that part when she told me nothing happened.

"I don’t remember. Nothing worth remembering."

"Since I’ve known you, the only time you ever told the truth was when you asked to stay over at my place."

"Are you saying I’m a liar?"

"You just don’t say what you really feel... but that’s fine. If you were honest, you wouldn’t be you."

She stood up and held out her hand for me to take.

"Come on, let’s go shower."

"Okay… wait, what?"

I couldn’t keep up. Khun Muí raised an eyebrow slightly and gave me a bright smile.

"What’s wrong? You were the one who suggested a shower."

"Are you inviting me to shower?"

"...."

"Seriously, how were you raised?"

I squinted at her suspiciously.

"Do you invite everyone who comes over to shower?"

"Not everyone. Just you."

"No way. I’m not that comfortable with you yet. Besides, I’ve showered alone my whole life. Sharing a shower with someone else—"

"I’m not ‘*someone else*.’"

She suddenly reached out and pinched my lips before pulling away quickly.

"We’re dating."

"....."

"Do you really think coming over here just means sleeping?"

Of course, I had all sorts of ideas in mind, but… inviting me to shower together? That was a bit… I didn’t even know how to process it.

"Can't we just sleep?"

"We can. As long as you don’t get annoyed."

"Why would I be annoyed?"

"Hmm, I don’t know."

She smiled and raised an eyebrow.

"Anyway, let’s shower together. I just want someone to scrub my back… and honestly, I don’t want to take things slow anymore. It took long enough for us to start dating, and now I’ve brought you to my house. Do you really think I’ll let you leave without touching you at all?"

"Why are you so straightforward?"

"When I want something, I just say it. That’s the difference between us… I say what I feel."

"...."

She tilted her head and grinned.

"So? Want to scrub my back?"

"I’m not getting naked."

"I will."

.

And she did exactly what she told. As soon as we stepped into the bathroom, she took off everything without a hint of shyness. My heartbeat went wild as I took in her figure—one that was almost identical to mine.

I was still fully dressed in my work clothes, just standing there, watching her in silent admiration.

Her skin wasn’t pale like porcelain, but it was still fair. Her toned body showed that she worked out, control her diet, and took care of herself. Then she turned to look at me, locking eyes with that infamous gaze—the killer stare.

People always said her eyes could pierce through souls, and right now, my heart was about to jump out of my chest. It was a gaze full of temptation, as if calling me to do something.

"...What?"

"Huh?"

"You’re looking at me like you want to eat me."

"What? I was just... admiring your body."

"You can eat me, you know."

"...."

"If you know how to do it."

She invite me without hesitation before stepping into the almost full bathtub. My heart finally slowed down a little—at least now, the water covered most of her body.

She grabbed a bottle of body wash, lathered some onto her upper body, and then motioned for me to come closer.

“Phuean, scrub my back.”

That’s all I have to do. I walked over and sat on the edge of the tub and used a loofah to scrub her back. The beautiful girl closed her eyes in relaxation, looking so comfortable that I couldn’t resist massaging her stiff shoulder to help her relax even more.

“The pressure is just right.”

Her smooth skin made my insides feel strange. It was full of tingling sensation in my chest, a squirming feeling in my lower abdomen, and I felt like I wanted to release something, but I couldn’t explain what it was.

I started to lose my mind, my hands started to change directions from her back to her front, and I stroked her chest, causing the person sitting in the tub to involuntary groan.

“You… your words really don’t match your heart.”

As soon as she said that, she used her arms, which she had some strength to wrap around me, and pulled me down. We sat in the tub together until the water splashed all over the floor.

I, who had just come to my senses from the wetness of my clothes, made a slightly shocked face and started yelling.

“What are you doing, Khun Mui? My clothes are all wet… Uh…

She grabbed my neck and pulled me to kiss her, quickly inserting her tongue without me having time to react. I was a little shocked, but I gave in as easily as I could ever be. My body demanded something, and I started to caress her, knowing that I could do it.

“Khun Mui,”

I pulled away from her and felt dizzy for a moment.

“I have never done anything like this.”

“It’s okay, you’ve found a good teacher.”

“What should I do?”

“What do you want to do?”

I looked at her chest and reached out to touch it. My fingers started to cover the tip of her nipples, which were fighting, and then I lowered my head to suck on it without stopping. The beautiful face pressed my head down and kissed my temple, while praising it.

“Very good…just like that.”

I took possession. I licked it as if it was delicious. My hands cupped her breasts and squeezed them. The beautiful face looked up and moaned in a low voice, and it made me even more excited.

“I won't be able to hold it in anymore.”

She grabbed one of my hands and pulled me into the water. I touched the wet center of her torso with interest . Then I tried to do as I wished by using my instinct to insert my finger into her torso, moving little by little from slow to faster.

Khun Mui moved her body by raising her legs and placing them on one side of the tub for better access. I kissed her neck, bit her, and did as I pleased without caring anymore.

*She's mine.*

*I own her.*

*Every part of her body is in my hands.*

Her moans matched with her own rapid breathing, even inside me I'm crying out for something she can feel. Khun Mui took the opportunity that I didn't know, slowly unbuttoned my shirt until I was only wearing my underwear, and threw it out in a mess, before unhooking my bra at the front until my upper body was bare.

"Hey you..."

I made a move to object, but Khun Mui pulled me in to let me finish. I stopped caring about my upper body and continued. The twitching from inside her body made me know that she had reached the point of being satisfied.

From protesting about the missing clothes, now I was the one who rushed in, hugging her as if to comfort her and make her stop shaking. She hugged me back and bit my shoulder lightly.

"You're so good,"

She said softly next to my earlobe and buried her face in my shoulder like a weak person.

"I'm done."

Her word "*done*" made me smile proudly. My first time went well. My instincts worked perfectly, but I couldn't help but admire the person in front of me who was too charming.

"I think I got a good teacher."

"You got a perfect score in the first lesson."

She pulled away from me and used both hands to cupped my cheeks, resting her forehead against mine.

"Let me stay like this for a while, I feel weak."

"As long as you want."

I pressed my lips to kiss her lightly. She laughed and smiled fully.

"Now you kiss me first. You've improved a lot."

"We've gone further than improving.".

. .

After we finished taking a shower together, Khun Mui let me shower alone because I still had my lower half that I didn't dare to reveal much because I was still shy. Right now, Mui and I had done many things that I wanted to try, and it made me smile shyly, but it felt like it was still stuck, I couldn't explain it.

My body was burning hot, my heart was beating fast, the feeling between my legs told me that I wanted and demanded something. It was a feeling of pleasure, but it was also quite restless.

I tried to forget about this feeling. Then I took a shower, changed into the clothes that Khun Mui had prepared for me, and went to bed.

However, right now, Khun Mui, who had just finished, was lying down with her back to me, exhausted. I don't know why, but I felt irritated when I saw that scene.

At the very least, after doing that, she should have turned to hug me or chatted a little, right? We just had an intimate moment together.

"Are you asleep?"

"Hmm... I got attacked by someone."

I smiled to myself before slipping under the blanket and turning my back to her. It wasn’t that I was upset or anything—I just felt that if I turned to hug her, I would feel even more restless.

The scent of her soap and mine blended in the air, filling the space around us. My heart was still pounding, and I couldn't stop thinking about what had just happened in the room. Why am I so obsessed with this? Is it because it’s the first time I’ve been this close to someone?

"Your heart is beating so fast."

The person who said she was exhausted and about to sleep turned over, hugged me from behind, and pressed a kiss to the nape of my neck. Goosebumps ran over my skin, but at the same time, I felt a warm shiver of excitement.

"Maybe I'm just exciting… I just went through something like that."

"Did you like it?"

Her hand slid under the edge of my shirt, and in shock, I grabbed her hand.

"Khun Mui..."

"Just relax for once with me, like in the bathroom… We've come this far already."

"....."

"I want to help you relax."

I hesitated for a moment before loosening my grip and letting her do as she pleased. After all, I had already prepared myself for something like this. With that thought, I closed my eyes, pressed my lips together, and let her explore a part of me that no one had ever touched before.

Her hand moved to my chest, grazing over it lightly, making goosebumps rise on my skin. Her lips continued kissing the nape of my neck, then trailed to my cheek before she gently turned me onto my back.

"I think you won’t be able to sleep tonight."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because it’s frustrating when one person is satisfied, but the other has to hold everything in and not let go."

"I wasn’t thinking that at all."

"Think about it. And this… is your next lesson."

She kissed the side of my neck, trailing downward under the blanket. Realizing what she was about to do, I clenched my legs together and tensed up.

"Don't resist."

"No but...."

The way she looked at me made me turn my face away. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say her gaze could kill. I surrendered completely, unable to resist her in the slightest. Part of me was scared—part of me wanted to see where this would lead.

*Will it hurt?*

*Will it feel good?*

But what I imagined was all wrong. Khun Mui didn't do the same thing I did. Instead, she used her tongue and licked it gently, slowly, like a cat. And it made me jump to the point of pushed her head back.

"Khun Mui, it..."

She didn't say anything, and I didn't want her to leave, no matter how embarrassed I was. From thinking about pushing her head away, I ended up pressing it down instead and moaning.

The beautiful face knew the rhythm well, knowing what to do. Her hand slithered under my shirt and grabbed my chest, kneading it.

I moaned incoherently. The more she saw me crazy, the more she licked her tongue and tasting the flavour with relish. Not long after, I reached my climax. My body twitched uncontrollably before I cried out for sympathy.

"That's enough, I can't take it anymore."

"...."

"Please..."

I was exhausted. Now my whole body was tense. Khun Mui slowly crawled up to me and smiled.

"How is it? Do you understand I feel yet? This is just the beginning of the lesson.”

“I understand.”

“..…” “Done.”

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# Chapter 24: Stolen

Everything is over now. My first experience-one I'll never forget... making love.

Right now, the beautiful-faced girl is asleep, but I'm still wide awake, staring into the dim orange light. My heart is still pounding out of rhythm. It's a mix of excitement, pleasure, and desire-hard to describe exactly how it feels. But I just realized how much pleasure something so natural can bring.

As I kept replaying everything from start to finish over and over in my head, the person beside me, whom I thought was asleep, suddenly turned over, hugged me, and planted a soft kiss on the back of my neck. She mumbled something in a sleepy voice, but I could still make out what she said.

"Why aren't you sleeping yet?"

"How did you know?"

"Your heartbeat is so loud it's practically jumping into my ears. What's wrong? Still excited?"

She turned me to face her, gazing at me with that signature look she always boasts about-the kind that could kill. And honestly, it really could. But it was a seductive kind of death. No one could resist her.

"I was excited too."

"Have you done this before, Khun Mui?"

"Yeah."

I felt a little annoyed. I shouldn't have asked. It would only make me upset for no reason. She probably noticed my reaction, so she pulled me into her arms, pressing my ear against her chest so I could hear her heartbeat clearly.

"I've had a girlfriend before, you know that."

"That's true."

"Are you happy?"

The blunt question caught me off guard, making me too shy to answer with words. I just nodded. She kissed my forehead and hugged me even tighter, like she wanted to absorb me into her body. If she could swallow me whole, she probably would.

"That's good. And this was just something light."

"Wait... that was light?"

My eyes widened in shock.

"Is there more to it than that?"

"I never done anything like what you did to me in the bathroom."

Thinking back, I had acted purely on instinct when I explored her body. I understood now-she hadn't done anything like that to me yet. It was just skin-deep touches, and yet... she still brought me to the highest peak of pleasure.

*Emotions that make the body lose its identity.*

"You seduced me."

She chuckled softly and nodded in agreement.

"I tried using all my charm to lure you in. I admit my mistake."

"It's okay. It was a good kind of seduction. You didn't force me or anything."

"Still, it took quite a while for you to finally give in."

She pulled away slightly, gazing at my face as she gently brushed her thumb against my cheek.

"You really guarded yourself well."

"Well, I've never had a boyfriend before. No one ever tried to hit on me. And with a woman? I never even considered the possibility. Now I'm completely confused about whether I like men or women. But judging by how things are going... I think I like women. And probably always will."

"That much, huh?"

"No guy has ever been as attractive as you."

"Wow, now that we've slept together, you're being so sweet. I should've just pounced on you the first time you came to my house."

"Then I might have hated you."

"So I did the right thing, huh? Took my time, slowly won you over... and now I have you. As my girlfriend. I gave you both, my body and my soul. Absolutely perfect."

"You sound so proud."

"Of course. I crazy about you."

She kissed me again, making me melt for a moment before I quickly pushed her away, shaking my head.

"No seducing! Let's just talk."

She laughed, realizing I had caught on, and finally let me go.

"You want to chat at two in the morning? Alright then, I'll wake up properly and talk with you. What do you want to talk about?"

"The things you've never told me."

I felt a little nervous, but at this point, I needed to get to know her better.

"If you really like me, you have to tell me more about yourself. You know everything about me, but I barely know you-except that you're my boss who's been chasing after me." "Well, you never asked."

"I wasn't this into you before."

"Good answer."

She pulled me into a hug, hooking a leg over mine while poking my waist, making me giggle. We played around for a bit before I instinctively flipped on top of her. Khun Mui, who loved physical closeness, immediately wrapped her legs around my waist and locked her arms around me, holding me in place.

We were so close it felt like we could merge into one, but this level of intimacy was enough for me.

"What do you want to know?"

"Tell me everything about your past... I won't ask about your family because that doesn't matter."

"It doesn't? My family isn't important?"

"Even if you were a beggar, I'd still like you."

"You're being nice again."

She nodded and playfully held my chin, so I playfully bit her nose in return. "You've gotten a lot more playful."

"I learned it from you... Alright, I'm going to ask now."

"Go ahead."

"Before you met me, how many people have you dated?"

"Knew it. I figured this would be the question."

She laughed like she had been expecting it.

"I've had quite a few relationships, but there was one that was really serious. We were together for a long time before we parted ways."

"Why did you break up?"

"Time."

"...."

"We didn't have time for each other."

"Is that the only reason?"

"If our timing had matched, we wouldn't have had to separate."

Her eyes changed as she spoke, and it made me feel a little annoyed. I was the one who asked, but now that I got an answer, I didn't like how it made me feel.

"Why didn't you try to hold on to them?"

"You can't hold on to people. No one can be kept forever... No, let's not talk about this. The present is what matters most." She changed the subject quickly.

"Right now, the person I'm serious about is you."

"Changing the subject?"

"Of course. The mood was nice, and then you brought up my ex. Now you're just making yourself upset. And I haven't even asked you if you're good with your hands or not"

"Because you already know well that I don't have anyone."

"That's a good thing. Because that means I am your first in everything."

She winked and smirked mischievously.

"And that gives you confidence."

"You're right. I feel confident now."

I snuggled up to her, knowing she wouldn't stop me. She let me do as I pleased, not resisting at all-almost as if she already knew what would happen next.

"You're a fast learner."

"Well, you said you'd be my teacher... Is there anything else I haven't learned yet?"

"Yes...there's still more to learn, but this time, I have to take the lead."

"But I'd rather be the one doing it."

"There are many things to try."

She flipped me onto my back, straddling me before pulling her shirt over her head, leaving only her tiny shorts. Seeing her perfect body, I couldn't help but run my hands all over her before instinctively reaching to slide her shorts off.

"Look at you-already knowing what to do next."

"I only know I have to get you naked but I don't know what to do next." "Make me feel good."

She crawled up to my face, and leaning her hands against the headboard before pressing her body down.

"Do what I did to you before-just in a different position."

"...."

"You have to eat me up."

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The night that followed was intense, filled with overwhelming sensations. Time slipped away too quickly as we explored each other. Khun Mui, knowing I liked to take the lead, let me have my way, guiding me without taking over.

Before we knew it, we had both drifted off into deep sleep. The clock showed it was 8 o'clock, which mean I was late.

When morning came, the alarm on my phone had rung multiple times, but neither of us wanted to get up. Eventually, Khun Mui was the first to move, getting out of bed completely bare without a hint of shyness, walking straight to the bathroom.

I, still wrapped in my clothes, propped myself up, watching as she entered without closing the door.

"Do you always shower with the door open?"

She peeked her head out with a playful smirk.

"Only when you're here. I was curious if you like to come and shower with me."

"...."

I smiled before getting up and stepping into the bathroom after her-without hesitation. And, of course, that led to another round. And another. And another.

By the time we finally got ready it was already ten in the morning. We carried on with our day like nothing had happened, but we both knew... *It will definitely going to happen again soon.*

Still, we couldn't let ourselves get too carried away. I had to go home at some point. To be honest, I felt a little guilty for leaving Faen to deal with my parents alone all day yesterday.

Even though Khun Mui invited me to stay over again that evening, I had no choice to refuse.

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"I have to go home now."

"Aw, what a pity. There's still so much more for you to learn."

"I think I've learned quite a lot already. Maybe not a master yet, but I'd say I'm pretty skilled now."

"Someone's full of themselves."

"Well, at least I got you to make cry."

"Maybe I was just faking it-to encourage someone who is doing it for the first time."

I playfully punched her shoulder before leaning in, offering my cheek.

Khun Mui smiled in amusement before leaning down to kiss my cheek. "You've improved-you actually offered your cheek this time."

"I told you, I'm starting to get serious. See you later."

"See you later."

Khun Mui dropped me off at my house and drove away. I stood outside, watching her leave, before pulling out my phone to call Faen and let her know I'm home. But no matter how many times I called, she didn't pick up.

Curious, I quietly sneaked into the house-only to find her sitting there, strumming a guitar, while my parents danced around, laughing and singing along.

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

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

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My heart suddenly pounded in my chest. A strange, unsettling feeling crept up on me-one I never expected to have.

I had never seen my parents like this before.

All my life, they had always looked after me with worried expressions, their faces rarely lit up with pure joy. The only time I ever saw them smile this much was the day I got my heart transplant-the day I was given a second chance at life. But even then, it was just that one moment.

"Come on, give each other a kiss!"

Faen's playful voice rang through the room as she urged my parents to kiss. They hesitated at first, flustered, but eventually did as she asked, laughing as they did.

I stood there, watching, feeling like I was peering into a perfect family scene-a warm, loving home. Something I had never truly felt before.

I called her again.

This time, she saw my name on the screen and picked up. My voice came out low, tinged with something I couldn't quite name.

"I'm back."

"Where are you?"

"Hiding outside the house. I can't go in if you're still here."

"And how am I supposed to leave? Your parents are having too much fun."

"That's enough fun for today. Put the guitar away upstairs, then climb down and change clothes with me. That way, my parents won't get suspicious."

"Hey, but-"

"No but...."

I hung up immediately, frustration bubbling inside me.

Out of nowhere, an awful feeling hit me-something I couldn't quite explain. It was like something important was being stolen from me.

*That smile on my parents' faces...*

*The joy that should have been mine to give them...*

Instead, Faen was the one who brought it out of them.

If things continue like this, I would lose my place. And my parents might forget I even existed.

**My own family that no longer belong to me.**

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# Chapter 25: Eyes from the Window

I sit staring at Faen as she came out of the bathroom and changed into fresh clothes after her shower. A mix of emotions filled me completely ever since I saw my parents dancing together, laughing and teasing each other.

It was a sight I had never seen before. They were happier than I had ever known them to be. And all of it was because of what Faen had done.

"Why are you staring at me like that?"

She turned abruptly after finishing getting dressed, narrowing her eyes at me. I quickly looked away, pretending not to notice.

"Like what?"

"The way you were just now. Staring so much—what, are you going to eat me up or something?"

"Such rude words."

I glanced at her, confused. How could someone so blunt and rough around the edges be so entertaining to others? She fit in with people effortlessly, without even trying.

Do people really like that kind of personality? Straightforward, brutally honest?

"What are you thinking about?"

She came over and sat beside me on the bed, but I shifted away as if I was mad at her—even though I wasn’t sure why myself.

"Something’s definitely wrong. Did I do something again?"

"No."

"'No' always means 'yes.'"

She turned to face me, sitting cross-legged with her arms folded. Then she looked straight into my eyes.

"Look at me."

"Hey, we’re like the same person, aren’t we? If something’s wrong, don’t hide it from me. I’m stuck in this world and still haven’t found a way back to my own. Are you really going to abandon me?"

Her words, laced with guilt-tripping, finally made me turn to meet her gaze.

"Do you really have to be this dramatic?"

"Of course. You’re the only person I can talk to. I can’t go anywhere, can’t talk to anyone. If you start ignoring me or shutting me out again, I’ll go crazy."

"But you seem pretty sociable. You get along with people so easily. My parents even seem to love you more than they love me."

She smirked at me playfully.

"Are you jealous?"

"Jealous of what?"

"Jealous that I was talking and joking with your parents? Hey, I was doing a perfect job as their daughter while you were off spending the night cuddling with your girlfriend. Instead of being grateful, you're angry with me?"

"What are you talking about. That's disgusting."

My face heated up at her words, and I quickly turned away, avoiding her gaze.

"I just went to sleep."

"I wouldn't believe that even if you swore on the entire temple. You're glowing—your skin looks fresh, and you seem more mature all of a sudden."

She leaned closer, giggling.

"You must have had some interesting new experiences, huh?"

"You're crazy."

"There's definitely something like this.Oh my... it's so natural. Spending the night at your girlfriend’s place—of course, there’d be some cuddling, there must be some naughtiness. Come on, tell me, what did Mui do to you?"

"There's nothing to tell. Why are you so obsessed with this?"

"I'm asking about what you did with Mui, obviously."

"I'm gonna scream. You're disgusting!"

"Okay, okay, I won’t ask if you don’t want to tell. Acting like it’s some big secret. But I get it—people don’t usually talk about these things openly. When something’s enjoyable, you just enjoy it together, right?"

She kept acting like she knew everything, while I had no idea how to react, still overwhelmed by the sweet memories of last night.

"But really, you should have a friend you can talk about this stuff with. Someone you can tell everything to—even things about, you know, things in bed."

"I don’t have a friend like that."

"You have me."

She widened her eyes innocently, then cupped her face with both hands, putting on an exaggeratedly cute expression.

"I’m your friend! No one knows you better than I do. I’m you when you’re not here. I fight for you when things get tough. And if you remember, I was the one who gave you CPR and saved you when you almost drowned."

"Wow, way to bring that up to guilt-trip me."

"I just want you to remember—you’re not alone. You have me."

She patted her chest with confidence.

I had been sulking over my parents, but seeing her like this made me realize how silly I was being. She was right. I asked her to stay home and take my place. Of course, being good to my parents was part of that, and she had done it perfectly. So why should I be angry?

"Yeah, you’re right. I have no one else but you."

"See?"

"And… thanks for making my parents so happy. I’ve never seen them laugh like that before."

"Just think of me as another daughter, then! I never had parents of my own, so getting to have some now is actually really fun."

"You don’t have parents?"

"...."

Hearing that made me feel even guiltier and more sympathetic. I rubbed my face and started blaming myself for being so narrow-minded.

"I’m sorry for being so selfish. I was just jealous that you made my parents happier than I ever could."

"Finally, you said it. That’s all I was waiting for."

"You’re not mad at me?"

"Why would I be? As long as you’re honest, that’s enough. Look, I’m not here to take anything away from you. I’m just stuck in this world, so I’m doing my best while I’m here. When I can go back, you’ll just continue living your life like normal."

"Hearing that makes me feel kinda lonely."

"I feel lonely too. My world isn’t as fun as this one."

She stared off into the distance, looking lost in thought. But after a moment of silence, she waved her hands, changing the subject.

"Nope, no more sad talk. Let’s not make this awkward. So, tell me—what did you and Mui do at her house?"

"Well…"

"....."

"Just like that!"

"Ugh!"

Faen screaming loudly, so I quickly cover her mouth with my hand before my parents heard and came running into the room.

"Sorry, sorry! I got carried away! I just got so excited when you said that.

So? How was it? How did it feel when you did it?"

"It was… good."

"You’ve grown into a young lady."

She pinched me playfully, making me yelp and flash a toothy grin.

"I guess so."

"Tell me everything! What did you guys do? I’m ready to listen."

"Do I really have to? It’s kinda personal."

"I’m your friend! Friends tell each other this stuff! Come on, spill it—what did Mui do? Did you even know what you were doing?"

Faen crawled to her side of the bed, folded her hands over her stomach, and closed her eyes with a smile.

"I’m ready to imagine everything."

"You perv. I don’t even know where to start."

"Start with taking off the clothes."

. .

And so, we spent the whole night talking about everything that happened between me and Khun Mui. My friend kept gasping, "Ooh" and "Aha," completely fascinated. She even gave me advice on how to make things even better for my partner next time.

It was the first time I had ever shared something so detailed with anyone. To be honest, I had never had a close friend I could talk to about everything like this. Now that I did, I couldn’t help but get a little carried away, boasting about it.

By the time we finished talking, it was around 3 AM, and we both passed out. It was yet another morning that I didn’t wake up early to go for a run.

But… when I woke up, my friend was no longer sleeping next to me.

It was 5:30 AM. I groggily got up from bed, feeling too lazy to exercise, and wandered around looking for her. When I glanced out my bedroom window, I saw her standing outside with my mom, giving alms to the monks. They were smiling at each other.

I felt a tiny bit annoyed that she adapted so well. Here I was, sleeping in, and she had the nerve to put on my running outfit, pretending to be me, and go make merit with my mom—even though she was usually the lazy one.

She must have always wanted a moment like this. Fine… I’ll let her have it.

. .

I went to work as usual that day, but something was a little different—Khun Mui called me into her office more often than usual. And every time she did, she would close the blinds, lock the door, and pull me into her arms like we weren’t in an office at all.

I let her hold me, let her hands roam over me, let her do whatever she wanted. But just when things started to escalate, I stopped her.

"We can’t. This is work."

"You’re always so in control. I’m the only one who loses my mind around you… Fine. We’ll continue at home."

Our clothes were slightly rumpled, and our hair was a bit messy, so we helped fix each other up while laughing. Before I left, she hugged me and gently touched my forehead.

"I miss you."

"Exaggerating. We were just cuddling a second ago."

"I miss our nights. Let's stay over at my place again tonight."

"If I stay over too often, my parents might start asking questions. Not tonight."

I teased her, even though I really did want to go. But if I agreed too easily, she might think I was too easy to get.

"Let’s take a little break. Makes the heart grow fonder."

"You love torturing me, don’t you? If you won’t stay at my place, can I stay at yours?"

"Wouldn’t that be weird? What would I even tell my parents?"

"Just say the power went out at my place and I need to stay over for one night."

"But..."

"Tonight, I want to teach you a few more lessons."

What a tempting offer. I hesitated for a moment before turning her down, remembering that I wasn’t the only one in my bedroom.

"I can’t."

"You're so mean. Fine, then I’ll just come over for dinner."

"But..."

"No but... That’s final. I’m coming."

"You’re so pushy."

It seemed like I couldn’t refuse her. Well, just having dinner at my place shouldn’t be a big deal, right? So, I agreed and quickly called my friend to let her know that Mui would be coming over. She understood right away and agreed easily.

"It’s fine. I’ll stay out while you entertain your guest. You should have time with your family and your girlfriend without worrying about me."

"Will you be okay on your own?"

"I’m used to it. Don’t worry about me. Enjoy your evening."

. .

With that settled, I brought Mui home, while my friend snuck away— climbing down from the balcony to stay out of sight. My parents welcomed Mui warmly, without any suspicion.

I felt a little guilty about making my friend hide outside, unsure where she would be while I was in the house. My thoughts drifted to her during dinner, making me zone out a little.

Noticing this, Mui lightly touched my leg under the table, making sure my parents didn’t see, and asked curiously,

"Is there anything wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Then why do you look so distracted? What are you thinking about?"

"Just... random things. Nothing important."

I forced a small smile, but she seemed to take it another way.

"Don’t worry. I won’t make your parents suspicious,"

She whispered, then smoothly engaged my parents in conversation. She knew exactly how to talk to elders.

Throughout dinner, my father kept asking her questions, chatting away...

The conversation flowed naturally, covering topics related to business, the economy, and politics. Mui answered smoothly without hesitation, and there were a few jokes here and there, bringing some laughter to the room.

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"Would it be okay, Mom, if Khun Mui stayed over for a night?"

As I took the dishes to wash, Mui remained in the living room, chatting with my dad. My mom looked at me with surprise.

"What? Your boss wants to stay here? That’s a bit strange."

Her choice of words—"a bit strange"—made me unsure how to respond.

Honestly, I didn't have a solid reason either. What kind of boss stays over at an employee's house? Just how close were we supposed to be?

"What's so strange about it? We're close. When we went to Phuket, I even shared a room with Khun Mui. We're pretty close."

"Then why doesn't she stay at her own place?"

"The power's out at her condo,"

I made up an excuse.

"She could stay at a hotel, but she's afraid of ghosts. So, I asked her to come and stay here, and I already agreed. If I suddenly say no, it’d be awkward. It might even affect work—she might think we're being unkind."

"Yeah, that does sound a little unkind."

At least that excuse seemed to work.

"When will the power be back?"

"How would I know? But if you don’t want her to stay, I’ll just tell her it’s not convenient."

"It’s not that it’s inconvenient. I was just asking… It’s good that you’re close to your boss. She has such strong connections. Besides, she already knows the family, so she can stay. But isn't your room too small? Won't she feel cramped?"

"I don't think she’s that picky, Mom."

"Do you have clean clothes for her to wear?"

"I do, don't worry about that."

"Alright then."

In the end, I got permission without much trouble.

. .

After finishing the dishes, I took Mui upstairs. Once we were inside, I told her about all the trouble I had to go through just to convince my mom. But before I could even finish, she hugged me from behind and pressed a kiss to the back of my neck—like she knew she had the right to do it.

"You smell nice like a little baby... just like powdered milk."

"Does it really smell like a baby?" “What kind of person does that to a child?”

I said teasingly to her, and that made her laugh.

“Someone like me. Now that we’re here, let’s do something like that. We can change the atmosphere to your room, and I feel more lively.”

She used my neck from behind. I dodged it out of courtesy and turned around to punch her in the chest playfully.

“Go take a shower. Don’t wake me up.”

“If you don’t wake up with me, who else would you wake up with? Do you hate me?”

“I hate people who don’t shower.”

“You don’t really hate me.”

She used her eyes, knowing that I would lose, before pushing me to the bed and starting to take off my clothes piece by piece easily, even though they were work clothes. She didn’t waste any time doing that. I was just as excited, not wanting to be too demanding.

“Are you this kind of person?”

“It's just you.”

She unbuttoned her shirt to reveal her clean, white underwear. From acting all coy, I was now the one taking off her bra and taking off her shirt, wanting to see clearly.

“Why are you so sexy?”

“Your girlfriend has such good quality, you can’t find anyone like her.”

“Narcissistic.”

“It seems like you’re quite obsessed with me. Today, I have a lot of new lessons to teach you.”

“I am starting to get curious… but can you turn off the lights? I’m not used to it yet.”

“No.”

"....."

“I want to see you naked.”

She said willfully and stripped me down to nothing. Then she started to take off her own clothes as well. Our bare bodies touched each other softly. I groaned loudly, so much so that Mui had to raise her hand to cover my mouth while her lips were touching my nipples.

“Be quite, or your parents will hear.”

I held her hand with both hands and tried to hold back my voice with all my heart. She was doing so many things in my body that I couldn't even focus on myself because it was tingling all over my body.

No matter where she touched, my body would jolt and be ready for her arrival. And this was the first time that something had entered my body. The slight stinging sensation made me frown in pain until she had to move up to kiss my temple and comfort me beside my ear.

"It's okay, it'll get better."

She moved slowly and the stinging sensation turned into a tingling sensation. I used both arms to support her shoulders and just stared at her, caressing her passionately because I couldn't believe that I would get this opportunity from a perfect person like her.

"Feeling better?"

"Mmm...ah."

She sped up and bit my shoulder lightly.

"That's good. You're doing great."

"Ah..."

"You're going to be even better."

She went down to between her legs. Her fingers kept moving and she used her mouth to caress and lick to taste it. It made me start to lose my nerves and wonder what kind of feeling I should have.

This new lesson made my heart skip a beat, but it was a happy feeling. Not long after, I reached my peak, twitched and looked back. But when I opened my eyes, my eyes met with someone else who was looking at me from the window, and it made me freeze.

Faen who was leaning against the window looked away. When she saw that I was making eye contact with her, she quickly turned her face away.

However, it was like she changed her mind and turned back to look at me again. But it was a look that was intended to make me see that it was her.

**What's that look....?**

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# Chapter 26: The Problem of Switching

It's five in the morning...

Right now, Khun Mui is sleeping soundly, while I drift between sleep and wakefulness. I slowly get up, preparing to put on my workout clothes, but before I can, a beautiful-faced person grabs my wrist.

"Where are you going, my dear?"

The word—"my dear"—makes my heart melt. I give her a shy smile. Today's lessons have been many and varied, leaving me exhausted in so many ways. I turn away slightly and answer in a soft voice.

"I'm going for a run."

"Haven't you exercised enough? What we did earlier burned almost 300 calories," she teases.

I pout a little before playfully biting her shoulder.

"Don't try to act sweet now."

"There's no need to go. Just stay and cuddle with me."

"I can't. It's part of my routine. You go back to sleep, Khun Mui. In about an hour, I will be back."

"Then I'll go with you."

"Just sleep. You burned so many calories—aren't you tired?"

"If you're not tired, why should I be?"

"Tired from what? I was just on the receiving end."

Khun Mui tilts her head, looking at me with her bare shoulders exposed, then smiles mischievously.

"The one on the receiving end should be more exhausted, don’t you think?"

"Go to sleep."

"Fine, fine. I don't think I can run anyway… *Sigh*… Your house has a bathtub, right? Can I soak in warm water?"

"Go ahead."

"Let's soak together after your run."

"Are you still want it more?"

"I could go all day."

"I mean…"

I was too tired to argue anymore.

"If I'm not too exhausted, I'll come join you."

As soon as I said that, she pulled me onto the bed, rolling around and playfully wrestling with me. It took me over ten minutes to finally escape her grip because, for a moment, I almost let myself get carried away again.

But the truth was, I was more worried about Faen waiting outside. That’s why I found an excuse to go for a run. I had no idea where she had been hanging around, where she was sleeping, or if she had even managed to rest at all.

After getting dressed, I rushed out of the house and jogged along the familiar paths in my neighborhood. Eventually, I found her sitting by the lake, hugging her knees, gazing at the water as the sky slowly brightened.

I stopped running and hesitated slightly, feeling a bit awkward as I looked at her from behind. I still remembered the way she had looked at me through the window just after I had finished…

I cleared my throat.

She greeted me with a smile—not the teasing expression I had expected, which actually made me feel less embarrassed. I walked over and sat down beside her.

"How long have you been sitting here?"

"About an hour."

"You must be covered in mosquito bites. This place is full of standing water —it's a breeding ground for mosquitoes."

"Where else could I go?"

She turned to me with a sly glance.

"If I stayed inside the room, the moaning was too loud."

"Oh, come on. It's natural. We can talk about this. I already told you— you’re my only best friend."

"Yeah, yeah. Call me a pervert all you want, but you were the one putting on a whole show."

Since when did I become this blunt? Even though I felt embarrassed, it wasn’t as overwhelming as I thought—at least, not when I was with her.

"I'm sorry," I said, feeling guilty.

"For what?"

"For making you stay outside all night."

"What else could I do? It's your bedroom, after all. And I was the one who snuck over. It's not a big deal."

"What were you thinking about? You’ve been staring at the water for so long."

"I was wondering if I walked into the lake, would I be able to make it to the other side?"

She said honestly, then shrugged.

"This world is fun, but I still feel like I don’t belong. I don’t even have a home here. At least back there, I had a bathroom to stay in."

"There has to be a way back. And I won’t let this happen again—I won’t let Mui stay over anymore. It’s too much trouble for you."

"It’s your house. You can do whatever you want. You don’t have to be considerate of me."

She paused for a moment before asking,

"So… how was it? Did you enjoy it?"

"Enjoy what?"

**"Having sex."**

I didn’t know how to react. My face heated up as I lowered my head and bit my lip, nodding slightly.

"I could tell just by the sounds," she teased.

"Are we really going to talk about this?"

"We already are. Besides, this is a topic I’m interested in. If not this, then what else should we talk about? …What does it feel like? Being with someone you love like that?"

"It’s… nice. It feels like we’re sharing happiness with each other."

"I want to experience a moment like that too."

"Then find a girlfriend."

"Easier said than done. It took you this long to find one, and at first, you wouldn’t even admit that you liked girls."

"I never thought I’d like women either."

"Well, everyone likes your Mui. She’s got the looks, a great career, insane sex appeal, and she’s apparently amazing in bed too. You’re so lucky."

"I won’t argue with that. I really am lucky that she’s so into me. She has my whole heart."

"I’m envy you, to be honest."

"...."

"You know, I never imagined that a woman could bring that kind of pleasure—maybe even better than a man. Who else would understand a woman’s body better than another woman?"

"Talking about this with you is making me feel… weirdly hot."

"Are you turned on?"

She smirked.

"Shut up! I’m not talking to you anymore!"

"Should I steal her from you?"

"What...?"

I narrowed my eyes.

"Should I steal your Mui from you?"

"You're talking nonsense," I laughed.

"...."

"Do you even like women?"

"If they're as gorgeous as her, I wouldn't say no. But from the looks of it, that girl loves you for a reason."

My friend tapped a finger against my left chest.

"Your heart."

"Of course! I have a beautiful heart,"

I joked, laughing.

"I believe one day, someone will love you for your heart too."

She just smiled without saying anything and went back to hugging her knees, staring at the water.

"So, being a shadow is this lonely, huh?"

"Hey, why are you so melancholic today?"

"Maybe because I have too much free time. I don’t do anything all day. When you go to work, I have to stay hidden in your room. I can’t show myself, or people will start asking questions. I can’t even go out for a walk unless I use money from your world, which I don’t have."

Hearing that made me feel guilty, even though it wasn’t exactly my fault.

"Alright, how about this? Today, you can be me for a day."

"I thought my turn was on Friday?"

She looked surprised but excited.

"I’m giving you today too. Just think of it as me taking a break at home while you take my place. You can go to work, make friends, explore, and even trick Mui into buying you stuff if you want."

"You're too generous,"

She said, but the glint in her eyes showed she was already making plans.

"I promise I’ll be the most convincing version of you."

"Don’t be too convincing, or Mui might get confused."

"Relax. She's my best friend's girlfriend. I wouldn't interfere. I just want to go outside and talk to people."

"And don’t do anything weird with Khun Mui."

"I’ll reject her with all my might!"

"You can trick her into giving you money, but nothing over a thousand."

"Honestly, a single bill is enough for me. Thanks for letting me be you today."

Seeing how happy she was, I couldn’t help but laugh.

"Alright, then. Run back home, offer food to the monks with my mom, and pretend to be me. Don’t act too weird—our personalities are completely different. You’ll get caught."

"Got it, got it!"

"Call me and report what you did today. If there’s any work, send it to my email—I’ll do it from home."

"I can’t read, but I’ll try my best."

My friend gave me a playful kiss on the cheek.

"You’re the cutest! Today, I’ll be you to the fullest! I’m off!"

She got up enthusiastically and ran back toward my house. I stayed by the lake, watching her excitement with a smile. I had already taken enough happiness for myself—it was only fair to let her live a little until we figured out how to send her back to her world.

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I sat there, letting time pass until Mui and Faen left for work together. Meanwhile, I had to figure out how to sneak back into the house, the same way Faen usually did.

It was way harder than I expected—felt like I had to channel my inner Spider-Man, climbing trees, carefully stepping onto the balcony, and sliding open the window that was never locked. Once inside, I collapsed onto the floor, panting as quietly as possible.

I couldn’t even take a shower, since the sound of running water might give me away. The best I could do was soak a towel and wipe myself down. I locked myself in the bathroom, feeling both restless and worried about what kind of trouble my friend might cause.

I decided to send her a text—only to remember she couldn’t read.

In the end, I had to send a voice message.

"How’s it going? Still playing Solitaire?"

"Nope! I’m opening random documents to make the screen look messy and smashing the keyboard for fun."

"Do you even know how to send an email?"

"Can’t read a single word."

"Then how am I supposed to work?"

"Take the day off! It’s *my* day."

"What’s Khun Mui doing?"

"She’s in a meeting. At first, she wanted me to sit in, but after seeing me yawning like crazy, she told me to wait outside. She even whispered that you must’ve work to hard last night."

"You idiot!"

My face burned. Mui must’ve thought she was talking to me, which was why she dared to say something so embarrassing out loud.

"Don't be shy. I saw everything last night anyway. A little teasing won’t kill you. Oops—Mui’s back. Gotta pretend to work!"

By "*pretend to work*," she probably meant randomly typing nonsense on the keyboard. Then, everything went quiet.

I sat in silence, realizing how lonely it was to be stuck at home doing nothing. No wonder my friend wanted to go out and experience life. I couldn’t blame her. If I were in her position, I’d feel the same way.

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Luckily, I had stocked up on food in my bedroom, so I had something to eat to keep me going. Time passed slowly because there was nothing to do. I just watched a series on my iPad to kill time while constantly glancing at the clock, waiting for the workday to end.

. .

Finally, the moment I had been waiting for arrived—the time when Faen would come home, and we would switch places like always. But even after work, she still hadn’t returned. Khun Mui hadn't dropped her off yet.

Frowning, I immediately called Faen.

"Why aren't you back yet?"

[Uh... well...]

"Well, what? I've been waiting all day! Where did you wander off to this time? Why aren’t you hurrying home?"

I was starting to get irritated. I was tired of hiding in my room, afraid that my mom might show up.

[Mui took me out for dinner, and then...]

"Then what?"

[Then she's taking me to stay over at her house.]

"What?!"

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# Chapter 27: Different Person

“What’s wrong? Why do you look so upset?”

The word upset made me turn to glare at my dad as if I wanted to tear him apart. Khun Mui was driving me crazy. Right now, I couldn’t stop thinking about her because I had no idea what was happening between Faen and my girlfriend.

*My girlfriend…*

I’m a rational person. Mui doesn't know about it and probably thinks that Faen is me. But I was too narrow-minded to accept that. My face and body language gave everything away. Noticing this, my parents sat in silence.

The atmosphere at the dinner table was tense and heavy with stress.

What kind of insane day was this? I had been locked in my room all day, had to climb down from my own balcony. Change into work clothes similar to what I wore this morning, walk into the house pretending I had just come back from work, and sit down for dinner with my parents like nothing was wrong.

“Work was stressful today. Khun Mui was giving me a hard time.”

“No wonder. The moment I mentioned your boss’s name, your face turned into a scowl.”

“Please don’t say that name again. It ruins my mood.”

I stuffed food into my mouth without tasting anything. My mind wasn’t here. I kept imagining where those two were right now. She was probably having dinner… Maybe at some expensive, delicious restaurant. And after that, they’d head upstairs together. And then…

No. Faen wouldn’t give in that easily. She doesn’t even like women. She’d find a reasonable way to avoid Mui. I have to trust her. There’s nothing to worry about.

“I’m full.”

Even though I told myself there was nothing to worry about, I still dropped my spoon and fork onto the plate with a loud clang, making my parents jump.

“I’m going to take a shower.”

“Seeing you this stressed makes me worried,”

Mom said, clearly not wanting me to leave. She was probably afraid that if I was alone, I’d get even more irritated.

“Why don’t we do something to relax?”

“Like what?”

“Play the guitar. When you play, your expression and mood change. Your dad and I like watching you.”

I clenched my teeth. Me? Play the guitar? I glared at my mom in frustration and snapped back at her.

“You really think I’m that good at playing guitar?”

"You're already really good,"

Dad complimented.

"You just got that guitar recently, but you can already play songs. That day, your mom and I were even dancing like crazy because of your weird music."

"You seem to enjoy that version of your daughter a lot."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"I can't play the guitar. If you want a daughter who can play well, go ahead and have another one. I'm leaving."

I stomped upstairs, threw myself onto the bed, and screamed into my pillow like someone who couldn’t take it anymore.

Why had everything changed since Faen came into my life? Everyone seemed to like that version of me more—the one who was weak, useless, couldn’t play guitar, and wasn’t funny.

Meanwhile, the other person seemed happy all the time.

Was she happy now? While being with my girlfriend?

The thought made me grab my phone and call Faen in a panic. But no one answered. Frustrated, I threw my phone onto the bed (I wasn’t brave enough to throw it on the floor—what if it broke?) and lay on my back, staring at the ceiling, feeling completely helpless.

Screw it. I had to trust both of them—my girlfriend and my best friend. They wouldn’t do anything.

I had to believe that.

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**The Next Day**

Today was another day Faen had to go to work. Since she hadn’t come home, she had to go with Mui again. As for me, I had to pretend to go to work—even though I had no idea where to go.

This is my life, after all. But since I was already dressed for work, I might as well just go to the office and switch places with Faen to put an end to all this.

With that decision, I took the bus to the company. But there was a problem —I had given my employee badge to Faen, so I couldn’t get through the entrance. In the end, I had to exchange my ID card for a visitor pass.

Luckily, the security guard recognized me, though he looked confused.

After all, he had already seen me enter the company with Mui this morning.

"But you already used your badge to enter work earlier, didn’t you?"

"I had to run an errand for my boss. I lost my badge, so I need to use my ID instead."

"Oh, I see. Alright, here’s a temporary pass."

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I headed straight to the office and called Faen again. This time, she picked up. I told her to meet me at the emergency stairwell—a place no one really went to except to sneak a smoke. But since it was working hours, it was empty.

Faen rushed over, looking nervous.

"How did you get here? Someone might see you."

"I should be the one freaking out. You've been living as me for two days now."

"Well, you told me to be you for two days. Today is the second day, just like we agreed."

"Yeah, I know."

I bit my lip so hard it almost bled.

"But I've changed my mind. I realized I have unfinished business to take care of. Let's switch back. You take my clothes, go home, or do whatever you want—go for a walk or something."

I shoved a thousand-baht bill into her hand without hesitation, even though it meant cutting into my already tight budget.

"Are you upset about something?"

"....."

"Is it because I stayed over at Mui’s place?"

As soon as she said that, I locked eyes with her. Like I said, I’m not good at hiding my emotions. My jealousy was written all over my face, and I couldn’t stop myself from asking about last night.

"Why didn’t you answer my calls yesterday?"

"I was with Mui. If I picked up and got caught talking to you, it would've been a big problem."

"You could’ve at least called me back."

"When? She never took her eyes off me."

"Took her eyes off you?"

I took a deep breath, trying to calm myself.

"I doubt she was just looking."

The fact that usually talkative Faen had suddenly gone quiet only made me more anxious.

"What exactly happened?"

"We had dinner… then she took me back to her place,"

"...."

"Promise me you won't get mad. I just played along like I was supposed to."

"Played along how?"

"We… took a shower together."

I clenched my fists so tight they shook. I wanted to punch her so hard she’d fall flat on her back—but all I could do was hold it in.

"So you saw everything?"

"....."

"And then what?"

"I was a bit awkward at first, but I had to act natural."

"Act natural? How exactly?"

"Well… I showered with her."

My whole body tensed. The word showered didn’t mean standing there fully clothed. It meant being naked. If they went that far, then what else happened? I lowered my voice, struggling to keep my jealousy from making me lose control.

"And then?"

"We… helped each other wash up."

I clenched my teeth.

"Helped each other?"

"Come on, don’t make that face. I couldn’t avoid it. I was pretending to be you—if I refused, she might’ve gotten suspicious. I would’ve been in trouble too."

"What else did you do?"

"We… got a little close."

"...."

"Mui hugged me, so I had to hug back. And that was it."

"That’s it? Nothing else happened?"

"Well, suddenly, Mui just stopped. Then we went to bed. We talked about random things, but nothing important."

As she spoke, her face turned slightly red.

"I won’t lie—I was nervous the whole time. I was scared things would go too far. Scared you’d find out. And if she had done something to me, like she does to you… I don’t know if I…"

"If you what?"

"If I would’ve gone along with it."

I narrowed my eyes.

"You’re not developing feelings for her, are you?"

"I was a little flustered, okay? But I still like guys. It’s just… your body was distracting. I couldn’t look away. I was even a little jealous—she really loves you."

I felt both relieved and irritated, but I didn’t want to scold her too much. She was being honest—if she had anything to hide, she wouldn’t have told me all this. I nodded, finally understanding.

"From now on, don’t stay over at Mui’s place anymore."

"What if she insists?"

"Find an excuse. Or just… act natural. I’ll allow hugs—nothing more."

"That’s all I’d allow anyway. Come on, don’t sound so serious. I’m not the type to steal my friend’s girlfriend. You can relax. From now on, I’ll be more careful. If I have to go to work for you again, I’ll just act like Mui instead."

Who could resist her? I hadn’t seen anyone who could. Even the office workers were so infatuated with Mui that they once accidentally pushed someone into a pond.

Faen had seen her naked—of course, she must have felt something. But at least she had some self-control and didn’t let things go too far. And Mui… she hadn’t taken things any further either. Or maybe…

Maybe she had, but Faen didn’t dare to tell me.

"You don’t need to go tomorrow. Stay home. I’ll go to work myself."

"Didn’t you say I’d go for two days?"

"One day and you were already naked together. If you go again, who knows what’ll happen? One day this week is enough. Next week, you go on Friday as usual. Tomorrow, I go."

"Ugh, boring. Stuck at home again. Are you staying over at Mui’s place tonight?"

"Not sure. Why?"

"So I know whether I have to play the role of your parents’ daughter again." "If I stay over, I’ll let you know."

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Ever since I found out about Mui and Faen, I had been in a foul mood. It lasted from morning all the way until I got to work. Mui noticed right away. She called me into her office, full of concern, and—of course—couldn’t resist pulling me into a hug.

"What’s wrong? You don’t look so good today. Did I do something to upset you?"

"Did you?"

I snapped, unable to hide my irritation.

"Do you remember what you did last night?"

I was testing her. Mui smiled and rolled her eyes up, as if trying to recall.

"Last night? Oh… same as usual. Nothing too intense, though—I was on my period."

Hearing that, a weight lifted off my chest. I let out an ahh and pretended like I had been there myself.

"No wonder. We just showered and went to bed." Mui tilted her head.

"Are you upset because I didn’t do anything?"

"That’s not it."

She smiled.

"Then… from now on, if the chance comes up, I’ll make sure to do something. That way, you’ll always feel good."

"No way!"

I quickly refused. If there were times when it wasn’t actually me, and Mui really did something, what would I do?

"Just do whatever feels natural to you, Khun Mui. Love doesn’t always have to be about that every single time. I am just wondering why you didn’t do anything last night. I was starting to question if I had done something wrong."

Mui’s lips curled into a smirk.

"I see… Well, you didn’t do anything wrong."

Then, without warning, she planted a firm kiss on my cheek, making a satisfied sound.

"Ahh… that baby-powder scent is back."

"Huh?"

"Yesterday, you didn’t smell like this. This is the scent of my little one—the one I’m obsessed with."

I accidentally let a small smile slip out but quickly forced my expression back to neutral.

"May you this obsessed forever?"

Mui chuckled.

"Have I ever not been obsessed with you?"

She leaned in, voice dropping slightly.

"Yesterday was an accident. But still, I did so many things to you last night."

"So many things…?"

I echoed, feeling a sudden chill.

"What do you mean?"

Mui tilted her head.

"Don’t you remember? You were the one being touched."

.

***Thump-thump.***

***Thump-thump.***

.

My heart pounded hard against my ribs. Faen hadn’t said anything about this! She had just told me they showered and then went to bed separately. But now Mui was saying… so many things had happened?

"It must not have been important,"

I tried to play it off.

"Otherwise, I’d remember."

Mui’s lips curled even more. She leaned close, whispering into my ear.

"Just because I was on my period doesn’t mean I couldn’t do anything to you."

A shiver ran down my spine.

"What… what does that mean?"

"You should know,"

She murmured, her breath warm against my skin.

"You were with me all night. Try thinking back.

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# Chapter 28: Because of That Slap

Khun Mui dropped me off at home like usual, but today, I barely spoke. Einstein once said, *"Imagination is more important than knowledge*." Right now, my imagination had traveled as far as Uranus, and there was no way it was coming back.

My cold demeanor didn’t go unnoticed—Khun Mui even reached out to touch my shoulder, but I quickly moved away.

“What’s wrong with you today? You were fine yesterday.”

“I’m like this every day.”

“Then why are you avoiding my touch today?”

“Maybe I’m disgusted.”

“Huh? What did I do to make you feel that way?”

“You cheated.”

“Cheated? With who? I only do it with you.”

At this point, I was just being irrational. No matter what I said, it sounded like I was in a bad mood. There was so much I wanted to explain, but I couldn’t. So instead, I just kept acting distant.

“Sorry, it’s that time of the month.”

“Hormones, huh? Same here. We’re synced up.”

“Yeah.”

“You really are in a bad mood. But you’re still cute. Should we try doing it even though we’re both on our period?”

“Not in the mood. Let’s save it for when I feel better. Anyway, we’re here. Thanks for the ride.”

“You’re acting really weird today. But fine, I’ll let it slide. You’re probably not feeling great. See you tomorrow.”

“We’ll see. Not sure if I’m free.”

“But tomorrow’s Saturday.”

“I have things to do too. I’ll let you know.”

I got out of the car and slammed the door louder than usual. Khun Mui looked at me with an unreadable expression before driving off. Now, I standing in front of my house, I observed what was happening inside...

Faen is sitting on the couch, watching TV with my parents, laughing along like she belonged there. She's still in her work clothes, pretending she had gone to work as usual. But in reality, she had come home before me. They looked like one big happy family. And me? I felt like an outsider.

The more I thought about it, the angrier I got. I pulled out my phone and called her, telling her to meet me at the lake in the middle of the neighborhood. We needed to talk.

. .

She snuck out of the house, still wearing the same kind of work outfit as me. At this point, she looked so much like me that it was hard to tell who was real and who was the imposter—except for the fact that she still wasn’t great at walking in high heels.

"What’s up? Why did we have to meet outside?"

"Because I don’t want to climb into my own house. I should be walking through the front door. You, on the other hand, should either climb back out or go back to where you belong."

My voice was sharp with anger. She noticed my attitude and immediately went on the defensive, furrowing her brows.

"Are you fighting with Mui again?"

"You didn’t tell me everything."

"Tell you what? I already told you everything."

"Yesterday, you and Khun Mui didn’t just hug or kiss. You did more than that."

"That’s ridiculous. How could I have done anything more? I already told you, I was careful. I wouldn’t steal my friend’s girlfriend."

"I’m not your friend!"

I snapped, my voice loud and clear.

"We just met. We’re not close. So don’t act like we are."

"What’s with the attitude? Are you on your period or something?"

She shifted her weight onto one leg and crossed her arms, looking ready for a fight.

"If you’re this pissed, just slap me already."

"If I slapped you, I’d lose."

"Then why start a fight you know you can’t win?"

"Because I heard something interesting from Khun Mui today. Something you didn’t tell me. And I can’t figure out why you left it out."

"What did Mui say?"

"She told me to rethink things. But I can’t rethink something I never did. So what exactly did you two do? Or did you… use your mouths?"

My mind was racing with all the possibilities of what two women could do together besides using their fingers. No matter how much I tried not to think about it, I couldn’t stop.

"Of course, we used our mouths! How else do you kiss? You think we’d do voodoo magic and kiss with our nipples instead?"

"Don’t play word games with me."

My eyes flicked downward without meaning to. She caught on immediately, tensing up before snapping at me—her voice sharp and defensive.

“That’s ridiculous! Why would Mui say something like that? Nothing happened!”

“If nothing happened, then why would Khun Mui bring it up?”

“So everything that comes out of Mui’s mouth is the absolute truth to you, huh?”

Faen looked at me with hard, defiant eyes.

“Just so you know, Mui has plenty of secrets. I just don’t feel like talking about them.”

“Then talk. Just say it.”

“I’d love to, but I’m not in the mood anymore. I barely got here, and you’re already yelling at me, treating me unfairly. If I say nothing happened, then nothing happened.”

“And why would Khun Mui lie to me?”

“How should I know? I’m not her.”

“You can’t explain anything. All you do is lie. Ever since you showed up, my life has been nothing but confusion. I don’t even know how to act anymore. Why don’t you just jump into the lake and go back to your own world? I just want some peace.”

“Oh, so you don’t remember almost drowning me in the bathtub? If I could’ve gone back to my world, don’t you think I would’ve?”

“You don’t want to go back. This world has everything you didn’t—parents who love you, friends who admire your musical talent, people who genuinely like you. And now, you even have a girlfriend—my girlfriend.”

“Think whatever you want.”

She clasped her hands behind her back and leaned in so close that our faces nearly touched.

“I do like this world, but I never planned on stealing anything from you. But since you’re convinced I will…”

“What are you—”

“You thought Mui used her mouth on me, didn’t you? Well then, let’s go with that.”

She tilted her head slightly, eyes gleaming with something unreadable.

“Yesterday, Mui pushed me onto the couch, slid her hand under my skirt, pulled my panties down to my ankles, spread my legs apart, and when she knelt down—”

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***SLAP!***

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My palm struck her face hard. She turned her head with the impact but didn’t seem fazed. Instead, she just laughed, the sound ringing through the air. My hands trembled as my mind unwillingly filled in the gaps of her story.

“You wanted to know, didn’t you? I’m not great at storytelling, but from now on, if you ever want details, I’ll make sure to give them to you.”

“You don’t need to go to the company anymore.”

“That’s not gonna happen.”

“…”

"I’m into Mui now."

"You have no right to do anything. This is my job, my life, my home, my world."

"Well, I think I’m starting to fit into this world just fine. Let’s see who survives better here—you or me."

"Stop being sarcastic."

"You don’t trust me, so I’ll do exactly what you expect. You want to believe your own version of the truth? Fine, I’ll give you what you want. And you can’t stop me from living my life here, because I like it now."

Her mocking words made me shut my eyes for a moment, trying to contain my frustration.

"So you’re planning to live as me, even though I won’t allow it? Do you really think people in this world will accept you?"

"From what I’ve seen, they already have. Even your own parents.

"... "

"You’re the one who doesn’t fit in with anyone."

She said it so casually, then turned to walk away. I grabbed her arm before she could leave.

"Where are you going?"

"Home."

"That’s my home."

"It will be mine soon."

"How could you do this? This is my life!"

"At first, I wasn’t planning to. But since you’re so paranoid, I might as well make it real. From now on, nothing will stop me. I’ll live as you, copy everything you do. If you can’t stand it, then show yourself and let the people here decide."

"...."

"Let them choose whether they want me or you."

. .

We were already in the middle of a full-blown argument, but she didn’t care. She just walked into the house like she belonged there—like I should’ve been the one sneaking in.

If I walked in right after her, my parents would probably go into shock. And honestly? I wasn’t ready to explain anything yet.

So instead, I climbed into my own house and sat there, trying to figure out what to do next.

Loud laughter echoed from downstairs, the sound of my parents enjoying her company. She was good at entertaining people. And judging by how much my parents were laughing, it seemed like they loved her version of

me—

*A version of me I could never be.*

If even my own parents were like this, then what about the people at the office? And Khun Mui?

**Am I really about to lose everything?**

No. I have to fix this. I have to make things go back to how they were.

Before long, she came upstairs and found me sitting on the bed, staring at her. Her eyes were still full of resentment—no doubt still angry about the slap.

"You’re getting good at sneaking into the house, huh? Better keep practicing, because from now on, I’ll only be walking through the front door."

"We need to talk."

I swallowed my pride, forcing down all the words I really wanted to say. Instead, I pulled out whatever dignity I had left and said something that went completely against my feelings.

"I’m sorry."

"For what? You seem to have quite a few things to apologize for."

"For hitting you."

"...."

"I lost control."

"You almost drowned me once."

"...."

"And now you slapped me. What’s next? How am I supposed to know what you’ll do next?"

"It was just... a moment of weakness. I was scared that you..."

"...would take your life away?"

"...."

"At first, I didn’t plan to. But now? I do."

She dragged a chair over, sat down, and crossed her legs like she had all the time in the world.

"I just realized how much of an advantage I have. Why should I have to hide when I can live openly? Your parents love me. Your coworkers get along with me. And Mui..."

She trailed off, smirking.

"I think things might go pretty well with Mui too."

"Can you stop being sarcastic? I already apologized."

"Then why didn’t you think before you acted?"

"I was too stressed. I was scared of everything."

"So you took it out on me?"

I had no answer.

"Fine. Then this time, I’ll get my revenge."

I let out a slow breath.

"If you want to hit me, go ahead."

She laughed.

"Oh, I won’t hit you. That’s too small of a punishment. Instead, I’ll be you —but better."

She rested her chin in her palm, giving me a slow, knowing smile.

"I just realized something after getting slapped—being you isn’t so bad after all. I was ready to die, but now? I don’t really want to go back to my world anymore."

"But this world can't have both of us."

"Then... why don’t you disappear?"

"What the hell are you talking about? Why should I disappear?"

"So there’ll only be me left."

"Stop joking around. You're making me nervous."

"You’ve hurt me so many times. Now it’s my turn."

She leaned back in her chair, stretching as if she’d just come up with a brilliant idea.

"Starting tomorrow, I'll live as you. I'll go to work on Tuesdays and Fridays. You can have the rest of the week."

"You don’t even know how to do my job."

"Who said I was planning to work? I have a girlfriend who owns the company. Why would I need to work?"

"This isn’t funny, Faen."

"I’m not trying to be funny."

She stood up, leaning in so close that our noses nearly touched. Her eyes sparkled with amusement, as if she’d only just realized how much power she had.

"I’ll be a version of you so perfect that you'll feel completely worthless."

She straightened up, looking down at me with a smirk.

"And most importantly..."

Faen pulled away and stood up straight.

"Specially about Mui.."

"....."

"I’ll be the perfect girlfriend to her in your place."

My hands clenched into fists.

"You better not push it too far."

"Are you scared?"

"...."

"You should be. You’re useless.If there's anything, I'll come and tell you."

"...."

"I’ll tell you everything you're afraid of."

.

Faen being a joker....wkwkwk

# Chapter 29: I Want It Back

I feel like my life has turned into chaos. It seems like I’ve triggered Faen's anger so much that she’s started to rebel and refuses to cooperate like before.

Take today, for example. I was supposed to go to work, but when I woke up in the morning, I saw Faen already dressed for work, doing her makeup in front of the mirror, completely ready to leave.

"What are you doing?"

I watched her suspiciously. She smiled at me through the mirror—a smile that wasn’t exactly reassuring—then raised an eyebrow.

"You can see, can’t you? I’m going to work."

"But today isn’t your day."

"Who cares? Our agreement was broken the moment you slapped me."

"I already apologized!"

"A broken glass is still cracked, no matter how you put it back together."

She turned to face me, looking like someone who had made up her mind.

"From now on, I’ll be you."

"But this is my life! You can’t just steal it!"

"Then take it back if you want it. But let’s be real… You don’t fit in at work, and you’ve never made your family happy. If I were you, I’d be gone already."

"...."

"I’ll take your life, then."

She said no more, just picked up my shoulder bag like it was hers, slung it over her shoulder, and said,

"I’m off to work."

I rushed to block her at the door, refusing to let her do this, but she just gave me a light push and smirked.

"We can leave together if you want. That way, our family can see that there are two of us. Let’s see who they’ll like more—you or me."

Her confidence made my arms fall limply to my sides. She walked out of the room and greeted my parents loudly and cheerfully. My mom and dad seemed pleased to see me (*or rather, who they thought was me)* looking lively, no longer miserable or sickly.

*How did things end up like this?*

My life is being taken slowly by another person who cross over. And from the looks of it, I’m about to be in serious trouble.

**But this is my life....**

So what if she’s here? After all, I am the real one.

That thought gave me the courage to go confront reality. But the moment I stepped out, I saw my mom hugging Faen and laughing, while my dad was chatting nonstop—something he’d never done before. Then, to my shock, he even made a special offer.

"Going to work every day must be exhausting. How about I buy you a car?" "Really?"

Faen's voice was filled with excitement.

"You’re really that generous, Dad?"

"Of course! You always get a ride home with your boss—it must be inconvenient. I’ll take you car shopping this weekend. Think of it as a gift for my bright and cheerful daughter."

She hugged my dad in gratitude but didn’t forget to glance up at me, standing on the stairs.

Our eyes met. No words were spoken, but the message was clear:

*"Can you do what I just did?"*

I clenched my fists, unable to do anything. Then, feeling completely drained, I backed into my room and collapsed onto my bed.

My family had never been this happy. Ever since she stepped in, all I could hear was laughter and joy. I had never been able to give that to my parents.

*Maybe… I was never meant to exist.*

*. .*

Now, I had become her. I was still in this world, but I was living as her— hiding away in this room, unable to do anything except sit and question my own existence.

I considered calling Khun Mui, but that would be weird. After all, I was at work right now. And if someone did call her, who else could it be but a telemarketer?

*"I’m Phuean. I’m your girlfriend."*

But she’d probably just hang up, not believing a word.

Why does it hurt so much? My own life doesn’t belong to me anymore. It’s being stolen, piece by piece, until I disappear completely—replaced by her.

As I was drowning in these thoughts, the sound of the front door unlocking made me jolt. I quickly hid, not wanting my mom to discover that there were two of me.

Crouching inside my closet, I peeked through the gap and watched as she cleaned my room, humming happily. She looked so much brighter these days—no more worried expressions, no more sadness over me.

And that realization… made my chest ache.

She had taken all the love around me. Even Khun Mui might become hers soon.

I lay in bed for six long, empty hours, lost in my loneliness.

Then, finally, she came home.

She arrived in Khun Mui’s car, but she only got dropped off. Khun Mui drove away, leaving only her—the girl who looked exactly like me. She walked up to my room, smiling like she was the happiest person alive.

"Hey? Had a nice rest? Feeling okay?" "How could I be okay when you stole my life?" I glared at her like an enemy.

"Why don’t you just go back to your own world?"

"I don’t know how to go back, and honestly, I don’t have a reason to. It’s fun here. I’m happy."

"Fake happiness. That happiness belongs to me."

"And when you were yourself, did you ever feel even half as happy as I do now?"

She leaned in closer, her voice filled with mockery.

"You were nothing but a burden. You couldn’t even make your own family happy. If I were you… I’d rather be dead."

I clenched my fists.

"That’s too much! You stole someone else’s life, and now you have the audacity to tell me to just disappear? Do you even feel any shame?" She let out a small chuckle.

"At first, yeah. I thought of you as a friend. But it seems like you never really saw me that way. It’s like a mirror, you know? You reflect what you get."

Then, she casually tossed her bag onto the bed and sat down, swinging her legs like she was completely at ease. Her nonchalant attitude made me want to strangle her right then and there.

"Oh, and about Mui..."

"What....?"

I stiffened immediately. My expression must have been obvious because she smirked and scratched her cheek.

"Since you’re so suspicious about me and Mui, I thought I’d tell you everything that happened while you were gone."

"What do you mean by that?"

I stood still, waiting for her to speak. She let out a small laugh, looking far too amused.

"Should I tell you? It’s a bit… intense."

"Intense? What are you talking about?"

"You know, rated R."

I felt my stomach drop.

"What did you do?"

*"Boom."*

"I asked you—what did you do?!"

"Shh, don’t be so loud."

She pressed a finger to her lips.

"If your mom hears and comes upstairs, she might walk in on both of us. Then she’d have to choose which daughter she wants to keep."

I swallowed hard.

"You look so confident that Mom will choose you."

She tilted her head, looking straight into my eyes.

"And you don’t seem confident that your Mom will choose you."

We stared at each other, unblinking.

My biggest flaw was my lack of confidence. And judging by how happy my mom had been today, it was clear—she liked this version of me more than the real me.

"Let’s get back to the story about Mui,"

She said, swinging her legs playfully.

"I told you I’d tell you everything, so listen closely. This is exactly what you were so paranoid about, what you feared would happen."

She looked a little shy, her cheeks turning pink. "Today, Mui and I got a little… intimate at work."

I froze, my whole body going stiff.

"Are you showing off?… Khun Mui wouldn’t do that. She only does that with me!"

"Well, I am you, remember? Might as well tell you everything."

She began describing it in detail—how she had been bored after playing Solitaire and decided to visit Khun Mui’s office. How they had talked and laughed together, just like I always did with her. How Khun Mui, as always, frosted the glass windows for privacy the moment I—she—stepped inside.

She took her time, savoring every word as she painted the scene. How Khun Mui had been extra affectionate lately, ever since our relationship had deepened.

Faen slowly and carefully explained everything, not missing anything, and it made me feel angry and tears welled up.

Khun Mui went straight in to kiss her, nuzzling her. Khun Mui's palms brushed all over Faen's body and then she held her down against the sofa while unbuttoning her shirt to get a clear view of her body. She cupped her breasts and took off Faen's underwear until it was all revealed.

Before using her mouth to taste her nipples until Faen groaned loudly. Khun Mui other hand went to her skirt and pulled her panties off until they were piled up at her ankles before using her fingers to knead until Faen reached her climax but had to use her hand to cover her mouth.

“It’s not quite penetration yet. It’s at work anyway. But I have to admit that she was quite good and experienced in this,”

Faen said in a relaxed manner.

“I never thought that having sex with a woman would be this good. But, well, who knows our bodies better with women? She knows what I like and when. Too bad… she didn’t use her mouth on me.”

"Enough! I don't want to listen!"

I shouted.

She just smirked.

"Why? You wanted to hear this, didn’t you? This is what you were imagining, what you were so scared of. So now that it’s really happened, how does it feel?"

"And how did you feel?"

I asked through gritted teeth.

She leaned back with a smug grin.

"It's fucking satisfying."

And finally I couldn't take it anymore, I rush to her, and strangled her tightly. She didn’t even fight back—just smiled as her face turned red from lack of air.

I could kill her right now.

She stole my life, stole my family. And now… she's stealing the person I loved.

"If Mui really loved you,"

She rasped, barely able to breathe,

"She would’ve known it wasn’t you. But guess what? I looked just like you, and she still wanted me."

She let out a choked laugh.

"If you think about it… maybe Mui doesn’t care who she’s with, as long as they have your face."

I felt like I was going to be sick.

"You’re lying. You made this up."

"My panty is still wet... Mui, she is really something else. I plan to do it tomorrow again. I want to hear her moans."

"....."

"I want to see her face twist in pleasure when she reach her climax."

"I won’t let it be like this. I’ll take everything back."

"You're not smart. This world isn’t suitable for you. Someone like you isn’t even worthy of living. I pity the person who gave their heart to you, being stuck with someone so narrow-minded, insecure, and paranoid."

"How could you do this to me?"

"Because your life is perfect."

"....."

"And I want it."

. .

Now Faen is asleep, lying on the bed as usual, completely unbothered by all the harsh words we exchanged earlier. Meanwhile, I can’t sleep.

I can’t even bring myself to lie beside her like nothing happened. In the end, I ended up in the bathtub, using a pillow to support my neck.

My mind is a mess. Everything is confusing, unsettling, and terrifying. The look in her eyes when she said she wanted to become me—it wasn’t a joke. If I let this continue, my existence will slowly disappear.

Slowly I’ll be consumed until I become worthless, meaningless. Everyone will forget me. And she—my "friend"—will become me.

Right now, my parents, Khun Mui, and even my coworkers already see her as me. Everyone is happy with this new, cheerful, outgoing version of me— someone who can easily connect with others and make them laugh.

Unlike me. I’ve never been like that. I don’t fit in anywhere. I’m weak, physically fragile, and constantly questioning my own worth.

*Why was I even born?*

Why wasn’t she born as me in the first place? She was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, that’s all.

I turn on the faucet, filling the bathtub until the water reaches the edge. Then, I sink down, submerging my head completely. I close my eyes, wondering if maybe—just maybe—if I never wake up, things will be better.

But then, Khun Mui’s face flashes in my mind.

Just as I’m about to run out of breath, I break the surface, gasping for air. And suddenly, I feel it—I can’t lose.

This is my life.

Suddenly someone came out of nowhere and decided they wanted my perfect life. They wanted my friends, my partner, my family.

I won’t let her take it.

Now I am soaking wet, I get out from the bathtub and look at my drenched reflection in the mirror. My eyes are bloodshot, but there’s a fire in them now.

She won’t take this from me. I won’t let her.

*I won't become invisible, and you... Faen. You need to go back to where you belong, no matter what it takes."*

*.*

*.*

*.*

**The Next Day**

Faen continued acting as if nothing was wrong—putting on makeup, doing her hair, and getting ready for work like any other day. Gone were the times when we took turns staying home and swapping places. Now, she was fully enjoying living my life, and by the looks of it, she had no intention of giving it back.

"You really have no plans to return my life, do you?"

"If you want it, figure out a way to take it back."

"I could just walk downstairs and tell Mom and Dad that you’re not me. That would end everything."

Faen pouted slightly, as if it wasn’t a big deal.

"Aren’t you afraid they might choose me instead?"

"No matter what, I’m still their daughter."

"A daughter who never gave them peace of mind. Unlike me, who makes them laugh all day… Honestly, you should just stay out of the way. Why cause trouble for everyone? Let me take your place and bring happiness instead."

With that, she slung her bag over her shoulder and smirked.

"Stay home and rest. As for your life…"

"....."

"I’ll be the one living it."

I clenched my fists as I watched Faen walk out the door. She was so confident it was terrifying. The person who once called herself my friend had now become my enemy—without a shred of guilt. But I won’t let this slide.

Everything will end today.

I stood by the bedroom window, watching as Dad drove Faen to work. My mind raced, planning my next move. There can’t be two of me anymore.

Whatever happens to her doesn’t matter. Whether she finds her way home or not—it’s not my concern. After all, she never cared about how I felt in the first place. I have to change. I have to become stronger.

Today, I’ll face everything head-on.

And the first thing I need to do is—

***Creak.***

The sound of the door opening startled me. It was Mom, coming in to clean the room like she always did.

I didn’t bother hiding.

The moment she saw me, she let out a sharp gasp—nearly screaming— thinking a stranger had broken into the house.

"It’s me."

"Huh? But I just saw you leave yo work with Dad."

"There’s something important everyone needs to know. I’ll explain everything this evening."

.

. .

That was all I said. Mom looked completely dumbfounded, like she’d seen a ghost. I didn’t explain anything further—I wanted everyone to hear it at the same time.

Hours passed. It was now lunchtime.

By now, I knew exactly where Khun Mui would be—having lunch with Faen. I took this chance to call her, my voice steady and determined. No more hesitation.

"Khun Mui, it’s me."

The other end of the line went silent. Unlike Mom, she didn’t sound shocked at all. She was simply waiting for me to speak.

"Come to my house this evening. There’s something I need to tell you."

[Yes.]

Still, she didn’t sound surprised. That reaction caught me off guard. Today is D-Day.

No matter what happens—good or bad—I don’t care.

This is my world. My life.

And I’m taking it back.

.

# Chapter 30: All In

Right now, my parents and I were waiting for Faen to come home. Dad was still confused. He had just dropped me off at work this morning, but now I was sitting in the house again. I hadn't explained anything yet—I was waiting for someone else to show up.

Khun Mui, whom I had asked to come over, hadn’t taken Faen out for dinner or stayed out overnight. She came straight home at 6:15 PM, with Faen walking in ahead of her, smiling brightly, completely unaware of what was about to happen.

"I'm home—"

Faen's voice trailed off when she saw everyone sitting there, waiting for her.

Both Dad and Mom were shocked to see someone who looked exactly like their daughter—like a twin. They had no idea what was going on. The only one who seemed unfazed was Khun Mui. She casually kept her hands in her pockets, glancing back and forth between me and Faen with interest. There was even a slight smile on her lips.

"What the hell? Why are there two Phueans?"

Dad was the first to speak, clearly stunned.

"We don’t have twins."

"Why are you—"

Faen’s face turned pale.

I stood up from the couch and walked straight toward her, ready to fight with all my might.

"It's time for me to take my life back."

The bright smile on Faen’s face faded instantly. I turned to my parents and introduced Faen to everyone.

"Dad, Mom, Khun Mui—this is my... other me. Her name is Faen."

"What the hell are you doing?"

"I'm not doing anything crazy. I just won’t let you live my life anymore."

"Interesting,"

Khun Mui said, strolling over to the couch without a care, settling in to watch.

"Go on, tell me—how did this happen? Why are there two of you?"

"The truth is, there’s only one Phuean in this world,"

I said, struggling to explain, unsure if anyone would believe me.

"But somehow, my reflection in the mirror... crossed over into our world."

"Crossed over? From where?"

My Mom clutched her chest like she was about to faint.

"From the water."

"Are you a mermaid?"

Dad's imagination ran wild.

Sensing the danger, Faen quickly changed tactics, slipping back into her role—into my role.

"Don't talk nonsense! You're the one who crossed over. I'm the real one!"

"Are you still going to lie?"

I snapped at her. I didn’t usually use harsh words like this, but today, I just couldn’t hold back.

"You came as a friend, then slowly started taking over my life, slowly, trying to make me disappear."

"Who would believe that? Are you saying I came from another world, crossed over through water, and pretended to be you? That sounds like a fantasy novel."

"Yeah, a full-on fantasy. And I never thought the one person I trusted most in this world—the one who knew me best—would do this to me."

"Dad, Mom, don’t listen to this nonsense. Only a crazy person would believe what she’s saying."

"It’s actually quite believable,"

Khun Mui said, raising an eyebrow at Faen.

"It may sound impossible, but it makes sense."

"You too?"

Faen turned to Khun Mui in disbelief.

"You’ve been with me all along. We talk every day. How can you believe that *she’s* the real one and *I’m* the fake?"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself for calling yourself by my name?"

I bared my teeth at her.

"I was born weak, not someone who could charm people like you do. I can’t even play an instrument."

As I pointed out more differences, my parents exchanged glances and nodded.

"That’s true. Phuean never played music before, but lately, she’s been playing the guitar."

"That’s because I learned from the internet,"

She tried to excuse herself, but her voice was losing confidence. Then, suddenly, she shoved me, making me stumble.

Khun Mui, who had been sitting nearby, stood up quickly and caught me before I could fall.

"Are you okay?"

"I’m fine."

"Khun Mui, she’s the fake one! Why are you even paying attention to her?"

Faen protested.

"To be honest... I can tell who’s real and who’s fake,"

Khun Mui said, leaning down toward my neck in front of my parents and smiling.

"Milk powder scent."

"You’re telling me you can tell just from a smell?"

"Not really. Your actions don’t match what Faen was like. I suspected something was off from the beginning, but I wasn’t sure. That’s why I hired a private investigator to watch you. And guess what? There really are two of you."

She was so smart. She had already been suspicious but waited for confirmation.

Meanwhile, my parents sat there, mouths opening and closing, completely at a loss for words. Faen, realizing she had no more excuses, quickly turned to Mom, wrapping her arms around her and shaking her head with teary eyes.

"Mom, don’t believe her! I’m the real Phuean!" "Mom, you raised me. You should know who’s real,"

I told her, trying to reach her.

Mom hesitated, then slowly stepped away from Faen, who was still clinging to her. She wrapped her arms around herself protectively, unsure of what to believe.

"Mom..."

Faen's voice trembled, on the verge of tears. She turned to Dad.

"Dad, you believe this too?"

"I... I don’t know," Dad admitted.

"But lately, you have been acting strange."

"...."

"You suddenly became cheerful, cracking jokes all the time. There’s a certain roughness to you that we’ve never seen before. You entertain the family effortlessly, unlike the Phuean we knew—who was quiet, reserved, and never comfortable in social situations. Our daughter barely spoke to us unless necessary because she was always exhausted from her heart condition. Even moving around was difficult for her."

"What? Just because I became more lively, that makes me a fake?"

Faen protested, her confidence starting to waver.

"What prove do you have that I’m fake? We look exactly the same! The only difference is my personality."

She was still fighting, her gaze shifting between Mom and Dad, almost accusingly.

"So just because I became more outgoing, made friends, and learned to play music, you think I’m not real?"

Mom and Dad avoided her gaze, struggling to form an answer. We were too alike—so much so that even our own parents couldn’t tell us apart, except for our personalities and external habits.

But then, Khun Mui, who had been silent for a while, finally let go of me and stepped toward Faen without hesitation.

"You’re the fake."

"And how would you know?"

"Because the real Phuean..."

Khun Mui glanced at me before turning back to Faen.

"Has something you don’t. And you... have something that no one in this world does."

Faen stiffened.

"What do you mean?"

Khun Mui simply pointed her finger at Faen’s right chest.

"The real Phuean's heart is on the left. But you..."

"...."

"Your heart is on the right."

This was the breaking point. Even I had never realized or noticed before.

Faen clutched her chest, her face frozen in shock. Her voice shook as she tried to argue.

"That’s ridiculous! Everyone’s heart is on the right!"

"In this world, everyone’s heart is on the left."

Dad said firmly and at that moment, he knew, without a doubt, who was real—and who wasn’t.

"Why did you do this?" he asked.

"Why did you disguise yourself as our daughter?"

Faen looked around the room, silently pleading for someone—anyone—to take her side. But even my mother, who had once shown her kindness, now gazed at her with cold, distant eyes.

Slowly, she lowered her hand from her right chest, a sign of surrender.

"Well, damn. I have been caught."

She said before returning to herself. Then, as if shedding a mask she had worn for too long, she swept her hair back with a confident smirk. Her entire demeanor shifted.

"I have to say, I’m surprised you finally fought back."

"It’s my life. I won’t let anyone steal it."

Faen turned to my parents, raising an eyebrow.

"Is this really the daughter you want? Someone who barely speaks, can’t make anyone laugh, doesn’t play music, and never dotes on her parents? A girl who spends all day locked in her room, only stepping outside for a morning run? Are you all happy with this kind of person?"

"It’s not about happiness,"

Khun Mui spoke up, slipping her hands into her pockets.

"It’s about who’s real. If she wasn’t worth anything, why did you bother taking her place?"

The words struck deep, but Faen only chuckled.

"And you too. Do you actually like this woman who has no taste?"

Then she paused, her smirk growing.

"Oh wait… no. you don't like her."

"...."

"At least I know why."

Khun Mui locked eyes at her, a silent understanding passing between them. Faen tilted her head.

"Why? Are you gonna kill me now? Don’t act like you’re the only one who knows things. You investigated me—I investigated you too."

"That doesn’t matter anymore,"

My father cut in, his voice sharp with anger. He was furious at being deceived, but more than that, he pitied me.

"Get out of our house. Go back to wherever you came from. We won’t hold grudges—just leave. I can’t bear seeing two versions of my daughter. Especially a fake one."

Faen scoffed, shaking her head.

"Where do you want me to go back to? I can’t go back!"

"Go wherever you want. But not here."

Khun Mui stepped toward her, standing just inches away. Her voice was low, firm.

"Get lost."

Her serious attitude made Faen take a step back, caught off guard by the intensity in Khun Mui’s eyes. But even as fear flickered across her face, she refused to back down completely.

She let out a breath, rolling her shoulders as if shaking off an old identity.

"Fine. I’ll leave. Enjoy your real daughter. Your quiet, unremarkable girl with nothing to offer."

She forced a smile, though her voice wavered.

"Thanks for the good times we had together, but that's it. Now everything will go back to being dull and miserable life"

"It might be true, but she’s my real daughter. I’ve loved her since the day she was born. Nothing will change that. Just because you made us laugh doesn’t mean we’d stop loving our own child."

My mother said softly.

A flicker of emotion crossed Faen’s face. For a brief moment, it seemed like she might cry. But instead, she clenched her jaw, turned sharply on her heel, and walked straight to the door.

"Just enjoy your boring life, then."

That was all she said before vanishing out the door.

For a moment, a strange worry crept up in me, and I instinctively took a step forward, wanting to chase after her. But before I could, Khun Mui grabbed my arm, stopping me.

"Let her go," she said firmly.

"Otherwise, she’ll think she still matters."

"But…"

Khun Mui shook her head, and I could only stand still, frozen in place.

As I watched Faen disappear into the night, my mother suddenly pulled me into a tight embrace. My father joined in, wrapping both of us in his arms. Their faces were full of longing, sympathy, and guilt. I stood there, stunned, my lips trembling as tears welled up in my eyes.

"I'm so sorry," my mother sobbed.

"We raised you with our own hands, yet we couldn’t even recognize you. You must’ve suffered so much."

My father sighed deeply, holding us both even tighter.

"It doesn’t matter if you can make us laugh or not," he said.

"It doesn’t matter if you play music or not. We’ve loved you since the day you were born, and nothing will ever change that. Don’t let that woman’s words get to you. We love you, Phuean."

The three of us clung to each other, crying together.

Khun Mui stood nearby, watching with a small smile. When I finally remembered she was still there, I felt a bit embarrassed and quickly pulled away from my parents. Turning to her, I mustered my courage and thanked her sincerely.

"And … Thank you for believing I’m the real one."

"Your heartbeat doesn’t lie,"

Khun Mui replied.

"And most importantly… it’s on the left side."

I didn’t hesitate—I threw my arms around her, right in front of my parents, not caring what they might think. Khun Mui tensed slightly, glancing at them, but after a brief hesitation, she hugged me back and patted my back gently.

"It’s over now," she murmured.

"You finally got your life back. Now…"

She pulled away, her expression turning serious.

"You have a mountain of unfinished work at the company. Go clean up the mess."

"…Mood ruined."

"Your imposter only played games all day and ignored her responsibilities. So the real one has to clean up after her."

"Not even a little special treatment for the CEO’s girlfriend?"

I teased just loud enough for my parents to hear.

They both stiffened but didn’t say a word.

Mui, seeing right through my antics, simply smiled and brushed a strand of my hair behind my ear. Then, with a mischievous glint in her eye, she squished my cheeks like a mochi.

"Work is work. Personal matters are personal matters."

"Honestly, there’s a lot we still need to settle between us. But let’s leave that for later."

I hugged her once more.

"Thank you for everything. Really. Thank you for remembering me."

Khun Mui whispered near my ear, her voice steady and sure.

"I could never forget you. No matter how much you changes."

"...."

"But your heartbeat still sounds the same."

I smiled slightly, a hint of mischief in my eyes as I looked at her.

"Want to hear it more clearly?"

Khun Mui raised an eyebrow.

"How?"

"Do you want stay over tonight?"

I whispered, keeping my voice low—it wasn’t something I wanted to say too loudly.

Khun Mui hesitated for a moment, looking unsure. But this was an invitation I had never made before, and she knew it.

"What can I do? My heart is calling for you."

"..."

"If my girlfriend asks, I guess I can’t say no."

.

❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤

**translate by: sunyan**

# Chapter 31: The Last Gift

Bringing Khun Mui to stay over and openly telling my parents what she meant to me made explaining everything much easier. I hadn't expected my parents to be this accepting.

Maybe they were still in shock about someone looking exactly like me, so this just felt like a minor issue in comparison.

As soon as the beautiful woman stepped into the room, she locked the door behind her, hugged me from behind, and pressed her nose against the nape of my neck, taking in a deep breath.

"You smell like baby powder. I missed you so much."

I felt a little flustered and moved away, turning to meet her gaze.

"And what did you smell before this?"

"Hmm? What do you mean?"

"With Faen. What scent did you get from her?"

"Perfume."

"I wear perfume too."

"But when it's on you, it just blends so perfectly."

She playfully tapped my lips, then gently held my face with both hands, tilting it toward her for a kiss. But I kept turning away. The memories of what Faen told me about what Khun Mui had done to her were still fresh in my mind. I couldn't shake off the uneasiness, so I kept dodging, making Khun Mui notice something was off.

"Are you thinking about something? You can tell me," she said softly.

"How am I supposed to talk when you're too busy kissing me?"

"I'm the only one kissing here. You just keep avoiding me."

She was observant. I pressed my lips together and walked over to sit on the bed, feeling unsure of what to say.

"I don't even know where to start."

"Just say whatever's on your mind. Whatever you're thinking, just let it out. I'm not complicated—just get straight to the point."

"Did you do things like this with *'your girlfriend*'?"

"I did when I had one."

"Don't play with words right now. I'm talking about the one who looks like me,"

I said, biting my lip, uncertain if I should continue or not.

"You’re back to being the same hesitant Phuean again—the one who never says what you really want to say and just carries everything alone,"

She said, standing with her hands in her pockets, leaning casually against the nearby wall.

She looked effortlessly elegant, making my heart race a little. But I didn't want my thoughts to wander too much—someone with sharp ears might overhear. I needed to stay calm and focus because I really wanted to know the truth.

"Faen told me that...you did something with her."

"And you believed her?"

"She described everything in detail—how you took her home and what happened there. Even you said it yourself back then... that you used your mouth on her."

Imagination is more powerful than knowledge. Every little thing Faen described painted a vivid picture in my head. And honestly, it made me uncomfortable to even think about doing something like that with her.

"I didn’t do anything."

"Really? Then why did you say that back then?"

"I just wanted to see how you’d react. I was already 80% sure, but I still wanted to test you."

"That’s not something you should be testing people with."

"I just wanted to know what kind of game you two were playing... Trust me, I really didn’t do anything."

"...."

"I'm not a liar. If I say I didn’t do it, then I didn’t. I knew from the start that you and Faen were two completely different people."

"How could you tell?" I asked, surprised.

"We look exactly alike."

"You may look the same on the outside, but your words, your personality— nothing about you are the same. Even the rhythm of Faen's heartbeat... it wasn’t like yours."

Khun Mui walked over and sat next to me on the bed.

"It wasn’t like mine?"

"...."

"People don’t have different heart rhythms. All hearts beat the same,"

I argued.

"She didn’t react to me at all—not even a little. And when I hugged her, I could tell that her heart wasn’t in the right place. That’s why I asked if you had a twin. Sometimes twins have physiological differences—one could have their heart on the left, the other on the right. It’s unusual, but not impossible."

"But you still took her places—you still went on dates with her, took her out for dinner, brought her to your room," I snapped, frustrated and sulking.

"Even though you knew she wasn’t me."

"I was just trying to figure out what she really wanted, and I was curious about what kind of game you two were playing. So I just played along. But if you’re asking whether we did anything..."

She deliberately dragged out the last part, pretending to think.

"...maybe just a little."

"What did you do?"

"Asked her to watch Netflix and then took her home."

"So... everything Faen told me wasn’t true?"

"And what part of it was? You saw it yourself today—how hard she tries to be you. She deceives, she lies, she’s trying to take over your life."

I looked at Khun Mui, feeling deeply moved. She had known all along but never questioned me. She wanted me to tell her myself. And despite what Faen claimed, Khun Mui had never actually touched her. I let out a relieved sigh, finally able to smile a little.

"Do you believe what I said?"

"...."

"If Faen... isn’t from this world?"

"It doesn’t sound very believable. It’s too incredible."

"But those words came from you. The circumstances around it all make it seem possible—especially the fact that her heart is on the right side. People on this planet don’t have that."

"...."

"Faen told the truth,"

I said firmly.

"She’s from another world. And I’ll tell you everything—how we met, how this all happened. Whether you believe it or not, that’s up to you."

"Go ahead, I’m listening."

She really was listening. So I began telling her everything—how I met Faen through the mirror, how we started talking. At first, I thought I was losing my mind. Then, somehow, she became my closest friend, even though we were in different worlds. We met in Phuket.

She jumped into the water to save me when she saw me being pushed in by my own shadow. And from there, she crossed over into my world.

I told Mui everything, holding nothing back. It all sounded like a fantasy, like I was telling a fairytale. But she just sat there, not reacting in disbelief or doubt—just quietly taking it all in, as if she believed every word.

I couldn’t help but ask,

"Do you believe me?"

"I do."

"You believe me that easily? Now I’m starting to doubt if you really mean

it."

"This is just another part of who you are—you always worry about what others think. Even if Faen came from Mars, was an alien, or a ghostly twin like in *Bupphesanniwat*, I’d still believe you. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because it came from you."

She leaned in and kissed me slowly, gently, while my eyes were still open. I pulled back and squinted at her suspiciously.

"What?" she asked.

"Did you listen to all that just so you could do this?"

"...."

"Khun Mui, did you come over just so you could do this?"

"I came over because I wanted to be with you like this," she admitted.

"....."

"But believe me, I meant everything I said."

Her voice was steady, and her eyes held nothing but sincerity. There was no deception, no hesitation. And with that, we fell into each other's arms once more, moving slowly, guided by longing and desire.

She pressed me down onto the bed, kissing both of my cheeks before trailing her lips down my neck, then lower—stopping over my left chest.

"Your heartbeat is the same as ever. This is the real you."

"Why are you so obsessed with my heartbeat?" I murmured.

"Because I love the sound of your heart."

It was a strange confession, but I didn’t question it. I let her do as she pleased. Slowly our clothes fell away, and our bodies entwined.

She led, and I let her. This was my way of repaying her for believing in me, for trusting me.

Our love that night was slow and intoxicating. She started gently but soon grew bolder. Her lips, her hands—every part of her—knew exactly what to do.

I bit down on my lip, trying to suppress a sound, but the pleasure was overwhelming. I grabbed a pillow and pressed it over my face, stifling my moans.

When my body finally shuddered at its peak, Mui seemed to know instantly. She moved up, resting her head over my chest, listening closely.

"This sound… it's so familiar. Your heartbeat tells me just how happy you are."

"If you really like it, you should buy a doctor's stethoscope,"

I teased between breaths.

"Not a bad idea,"

She chuckled, before letting her tongue graze over my sensitive skin again, making me shiver. Her fingers returned to my most vulnerable spot, teasing me mercilessly.

"I can't… I can't take any more,"

I whimpered, body trembling.

"We've only just begun."

"Are you trying to kill me?"

I gasped, half-laughing, half-pleading.

"Why am I the only one getting all the attention?"

"My job is to make you happy,"

She murmured against my skin.

"And I’ll keep doing that… always."

I had no idea how long we spent tangled up together. But at some point, exhaustion took over, and I drifted off to sleep in her arms.

. .

Around past 2 AM, I woke to the vibration of my phone. Eyes still heavy with sleep, I fumbled for it on the nightstand and answered without checking the caller ID.

But the moment I heard her voice, I bolted upright.

"Faen."

I knew that voice anywhere. She was outside. I could hear the sound of traffic in the background.

I frowned.

"Where are you?"

[Somewhere with water, of course. You're so smart.]

Her voice was calm, almost amused.

[Now that you've told the truth, I guess you're finally happy. Completely fulfilled, huh?]

"I had to do it."

My tone turned sharp.

"It's my life."

[I get it. It’s your life. And I gave it back to you, didn’t I?]

She let out a breath—half a sigh, half a laugh.

[But me? I don’t know what to do now. I have nowhere to go. No ID card, no place to sleep. So in the end… I ended up here. On a bridge.]

"A bridge?"

The word made Khun Mui sit up beside me, frowning but staying silent.

"Which bridge?"

[I don’t know. I can’t read the name. But there are a lot of lights.]

A bad feeling crawled up my spine.

"What are you planning to do?"

[Saying goodbye to you, of course. I’m going back to my world now. Don’t know if it’ll work, though.]

My brain processed her words, and suddenly, I was wide awake.

"Don’t even think about jumping!"

[What choice do I have?]

She murmured.

[I came from the water, so I have to go back through the water, right?]

"Stay right there. Don’t do anything. I’m coming to get you."

[Do you even know where I am? I don’t even know what this bridge is called.]

"I’ll find you. Just wait for me."

She chuckled softly.

[I won’t wait. This world is nice, but it’s not mine. Still… I had so much fun. Being you. Having friends. Going out, living life. Meeting good people —like Mui.]

I swallowed hard.

[The truth is… I like Mui too. I always thought I liked men. But with her… she has this pull, this charm that’s impossible to ignore.]

She hummed in understanding.

"You're lucky."

Then she added, almost teasing,

[But you're also terribly unlucky.]

"What are you talking about?" I demanded.

"Explain yourself properly."

Silence.

Then, carefully, she asked,

[Mui is with you, right? Do you have me on speaker?]

I glanced at the woman sitting beside me before replying,

"No."

[Good. Before I go, I’ll tell you one last thing… Think of it as a gift from an old friend—though I doubt you even see me as a friend anymore.]

"....."

[If you ever get the chance to visit Mui’s house, find a moment when she’s not looking. Open the drawer in her wardrobe—the one where she keeps her underwear. Inside, you’ll find all the documents you need to see.]

"What am I supposed to know?"

[Has Mui ever told you she loves you?]

"She has."

[No. She never said she loves you. She said she loves the sound of your heartbeat, didn’t she?]

I froze. I didn’t reply.

"And?"

[I know why she loves you. I know exactly why.]

"....."

[This is my last piece of advice as a friend.]

Her voice was quiet but firm.

[Alright. I’m going now.]

"Don’t do anything stupid!"

[Bye-bye.]

"No! Don’t—!"

I screamed at the top of my lungs.

Mui grabbed my shaking body, holding me steady as the call abruptly ended.

But I already knew. I knew what she had done.

Tears spilled down my face before I could stop them.

Khun Mui, unaware of what had just happened, held me close, whispering reassurances. But I couldn’t hear her.

I could only stare at my phone, my chest tightening with a suffocating guilt.

Had I pushed her too far? Had I been the one to drive her to this?

And what if she jumped… but couldn’t cross over?

Khun Mui's voice broke through my thoughts.

"What’s wrong?"

I turned to her, my voice trembling.

"She jumped."

"....."

**"Faen jumped off the bridge."**

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❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **translate by sunyan**

**Note:**

**Faen mean girlfriend/boyfriend Phuean mean Friend**

# Chapter 32: Mekhala

I won’t let this go easily—not even for a second. The moment I found out that my friend jumped off the bridge that night, I immediately called the police and rescue team to report what had happened.

We had no idea which bridge she had jumped from or which river it was, so searching for her was extremely difficult for the officers. Eventually, they stopped looking and said,

*“The body should float up within three days.”*

"Do we really have to wait for the body to surface? While we can still help her now!"

I was yelling. Khun Mui grabbed my shoulders to calm me down, shaking her head as if telling me to get a hold of myself. Then, she led me to sit and wait in the car. She spoke with the officers for a while before coming back to sit with me in silence.

“They’ve done everything they can. We don’t know the exact location or anything at all. So we have to let them handle it. They probably just said it out of frustration. No one wants this to happen.”

“It’s my fault,”

I started sobbing, guilt weighing heavily on me.

“If I hadn’t pressured her so much, she wouldn’t have made this decision.”

“But didn’t you say yourself that it wasn’t suicide? That she was just trying to go back to her world?”

“She arrived through a swimming pool, but now she jumped into a river. How can we be sure she really made it back? What if she fell and something bad happened? No matter what, she’s still a person like us.”

“For now, all we can do is wait. If there’s any news, the officers will let us know. Try not to worry too much. Just pray that she makes it back to her world.”

“And if she doesn’t?”

“Then it’s her fate.”

"How can you be so cold? She was my only friend!"

My voice shook with frustration. Khun Mui sighed, then reached out to hold my hand, squeezing it as if trying to comfort me.

“She’s not someone who would die so easily. She was always confident in herself. If she decided to jump off that bridge, and we can’t find her…”

"....."

“It means she didn’t make it back.”

That was the only kind of comfort they could offer. No matter how much I cried, screamed, or begged, it wouldn’t bring her back. All I could do now was pray that she truly returned to her world—just like Khun Mui said—or else...

I would have to wait, watching the water, hoping for her to resurface.

. .

Khun Mui took me back home as usual. My parents, who had heard about what happened, were just as worried about my friend as I was.

After all, she had once been a part of our lives, sharing good times with us. The house was filled with silence as everyone let Khun Mui and me go upstairs to rest.

Of course, there was no way I could sleep tonight. So Khun Mui pulled me into a hug, pressing my face against her chest. I could hear her heartbeat pounding—proof that she was just as anxious as I was, even if she didn’t show it. If she lost control, I would lose it even more.

“It’s okay, I’m right here,”

Khun Mui whispered.

“If you cry, I’ll cry with you. If you wake up startled, you’ll see that I’m still here. I’m not going anywhere.” “Thank you for being so kind to me,”

I murmured, hugging her tighter.

“I can’t believe that while we were happy together, someone else was jumping off a bridge.”

Faen had said something interesting before she left, something that hinted at something important—but I didn’t know what it was.

“If it makes you feel any better, we’re not the only ones spending the night together like this. There are so many couples out there doing the same, completely unaware of the millions of people who have left this world tonight.”

“That doesn’t make me feel better at all.”

“Okay, that was the wrong way to comfort you.”

That managed to bring a small smile to my face. Then, I decided to test her by asking something my friend had said before she disappeared.

“Khun Mui, did you ever tell Faen that you loved her?”

The thought suddenly came to me after a long silence, so I decided to change the subject and see how she would react.

“Why are you so good to me? What do you like about me?”

“Because you’re kind and precious.”

“Do you love me, Khun Mui?”

“You should sleep now.”

No response from her dialed. That's right. In this situation, how could I expect her to say those words? When I asked why she liked me, she had plenty to say. But when I asked about love, she dodged the question and told me to go to bed instead.

“I guess it really is time to sleep.”

“Sweetheart, just rest. I’m right here, and I’ll always be here.”

. .

There was still no news from the rescue team or the marine police about whether they had found a body in the river. But I couldn’t blame them— they had no idea where to search.

At the same time, I felt a small sense of relief. Maybe, just maybe, the fact that no body had surfaced meant my friend had successfully returned to her own world.

Life continued as usual. I went to work and came home like always. Mui didn’t stay over this time, since spending too many nights together might look bad.

Instead, she called me throughout the day, sent messages, stickers, and even funny clips to cheer me up. But none of it really helped.

Now, I stood in front of my bathroom mirror. This was the place where I first met her. And I so badly wished that if she had truly gone back, she would at least appear one last time to say goodbye.

“Are you here?” I whispered.

"....."

“Did you make it back to your world? If you’re still here, please answer me… just something, so I can have some peace of mind.”

But I was just talking to my own reflection. There was no response, no sign of her. The emptiness in my chest grew heavier, and my parents, noticing my distress, tried to help by cooking my favorite meals. They stopped mentioning my friend altogether, as if she had never existed.

Strangely enough, they never once questioned how I met her or how she came from another world looking exactly like me. It was as if they had forgotten about her entirely.

.

“Aren’t you at all worried about her?”

I blurted out at the dinner table.

My parents, who had been chatting about something else, fell silent and exchanged glances.

“Who?”

“What do you mean, ‘*who*’? The girl who looks just like me! Stop acting like this never happened.”

Frustration built inside me as they continued to act indifferent. My mother pressed her lips together, set down her fork and knife, and sighed.

“We don’t talk about her because she never truly belonged in this world. The only person who exists here is you.”

“She could be dead.”

“Or maybe she made it back,”

My mother said, trying to stay optimistic.

“If something had gone wrong, the police would have called by now.”

“How can you all talk about this so calmly? Even Khun Mui says the same thing! Am I the only one who cares about her? I tried to send her back. I even pushed her underwater, but she couldn’t return. And now she jumped off a bridge!”

“Don’t blame yourself,”

My father spoke up.

“Right now, that’s exactly what you’re doing—blaming yourself. You reclaimed your own life, and she had to leave. That’s how it should be. Everything in this world follows its fate. If she was meant to die… then she was meant to die.”

"I'm not hungry anymore."

I put down my fork and knife, then stormed off to my room, curling up on my bed with my knees to my chest.

Everyone was so cold about this. No one felt the connection I had with my friend. No one cared because, to them, I was the only one that mattered.

But we had lived together, shared a bed, swapped places at work, and had countless mischievous adventures. How could I forget her? It felt like I had been the one who pushed her off that bridge.

As I sat there blaming myself, Khun Mui called—just like always. She could tell I wasn’t letting this go, so she tried to distract me with small talk, hoping I’d start to forget.

“Sorry for dragging you into this and making you worry too,” I said softly. “What are you talking about? We’re together. If you’re hurting, then I’m hurting too. Let me guess, you’re sitting alone, overthinking everything, right?”

“That’s just how I am. Annoying, huh?”

“You’re still you, and I like you this way. The other one was too wild, too fearless.”

“What, being strong isn’t a good thing? Do you prefer weak people?”

“I like everything about you. Even if you were weaker, I’d still like you just the same.”

**“…Do you love me?”**

“You’re really obsessed with that word, aren’t you?”

“You’ve never once told me you love me, only that you like me. We’ve already been together, shared everything, gotten to know each other… Isn’t it time I asked if you love me?”

“…Can you sleep alone tonight?”

There it was again—changing the subject. I took a deep breath, trying not to push her too hard. I was already exhausted from worrying about my friend.

“I guess I can sleep, but I probably won’t. I’ll just keep wondering if she’ll float to the surface.”

“Want to sleep at my place tonight? I’ll come pick you up.”

“With the way I’m feeling, you still want to do that?”

She chuckled before quickly correcting herself.

“Just to sleep. A change of scenery. You’re not ready to be alone yet. I promise we won’t do anything—unless you jump on me first.”

"....."

“…So, should I come get you?”

"Sounds good. I just don't want to be alone right now. Even though my parents are home, talking to them feels like talking to a mirror—like I’m just talking to myself, feeling everything on my own. At least you actually listen to me."

"Then I'll see you soon."

. .

Khun Mui came to pick me up in the middle of the night and took me to her condo. I still looked lifeless, too worried about what might have happened to my friend. She tried to comfort me, pouring me a glass of water to help me calm down. It actually helped a little.

"Thanks. You're really sweet."

"Who else would I be sweet to if not my girlfriend? Oh, and I got you some pajamas."

She went into her walk-in closet and came back with a cute set, trimmed with mink-like fur on the sleeves and pant legs.

"What do you think? Cute, right?"

"It even has fur."

"I thought it would suit you."

"You really know how to spoil me. How much was it?"

"Why are you asking about the price? I'd buy you anything, no matter how much it costs. Wanna take a bath? I'll wash you."

I glanced at her slyly before shaking my head.

"We agreed—none of that tonight,"

I reminded her with a laugh.

"You're such a flirt."

"Come on, I just want to help you relax."

"You never stop at just relaxing."

"Sex is a form of relaxation too. But if you don't want to, I won’t force anything."

"Khun Mui...Just go take shower first. I don’t even feel like moving right now."

"Hmm.."

"See? And you were acting like you didn’t want to."

"Fine, fine. You're being firm about it tonight, so what can I do? I'll go shower first and run a warm bath for you, okay?"

"Thanks."

She unbuttoned her shirt right in front of me, slipping it off so casually. I watched her toned figure and instantly regretted turning her down. Honestly, maybe being with her would help me unwind. But whatever—I'd only end up feeling guilty anyway.

The beautiful woman had disappeared into the bathroom, leaving me alone with nothing to do. I wandered around the room, idly exploring—something I’d never really done before.

I glanced toward the kitchen, then the study, before my gaze finally landed on the walk-in closet with its neatly arranged wardrobe.

*"The drawer in the wardrobe, near the underwear—open it."*

My friend’s voice echoed in my head, making me pause for a moment. Then, curiosity got the better of me. I walked over to the closet, eyeing the wardrobe—perfectly sized for someone living alone.

I crouched down, my fingers hovering over the bottom drawer. The sound of the shower was still running, giving me a little time to search.

I pulled the drawer open and found a stack of folded papers hidden inside.

*What is this?*

I picked them up and started flipping through them, page by page. My breath hitched. It was all about *me*—photos taken secretly, notes about my whereabouts, and—my medical records?

*Why did she have this? And why was it hidden here?*

Slowly, I stood up, scanning the pages. Every single piece of information was about me. There were even hospital records—details about my heart transplant. The pages were filled with scribbled English, dense and hard to read, but I could still make out the key points.

And then, at the bottom of the report, **The name of the heart’s original owner.**

***Mekhla.***

I barely had time to process it before...

"What are you doing?"

Mui's voice cut through the room. I turned to see her standing at the bathroom door, eyes wide with shock. In a flash, she rushed toward me, snatching the papers from my hands so fast that the edge of a page sliced my finger. Blood welled up, but I barely noticed.

I wasn’t in pain—I was too focused on the documents.

The documents that contained my past.

The documents that linked me to *someone else.*

"Why do you have my medical records?" My voice trembled.

I met her eyes, searching for answers.

"Who is Mekhla? And why do you have so much information about me? You have to explain."

.

# Chapter 33: The Truth

"Do you have an explanation?"

I’m giving her a chance. There’s a lot of information about me in there, and I want to hear from her own mouth what it is. But Khun Mui just stayed silent, saying nothing. That made me really start to get angry. My face must have clearly shown how I felt.

"I want to hear it from you. Don’t make me investigate on my own."

"There’s nothing to explain."

"But the documents in your hands don’t say that."

"Why did you invade my privacy and search through my things?"

"Is that really the important thing right now? If I hadn’t looked, would I have known that someone was investigating me?" I stepped closer to her.

"Hurry up and explain. I’m giving you a chance."

"There’s nothing to explain."

I took a deep breath, trying to hold myself back, then took a step back.

"Fine. Then we have nothing more to talk about today. I’ll find the answers myself... I won’t be staying over tonight. I have things to do."

"Can’t you just let it go?"

She asked in a calm voice. I met her eyes and asked back,

"If it were you, would you just let it go?"

"I would."

"Why?"

"Because you love me."

"And do you love me?"

"....."

"You’ve never said those words to me."

"Haven’t my actions made it clear?"

"If expressing love everyday, having sex happily, and satisfying each other’s desires… then there wouldn’t be such a thing as a one-night stand in this world. I gave you a chance, but you didn’t take it."

"....."

"Now it's my turn. From today on, I'll be the one investigating you… I’ll take my leave now."

"Don't do this. Things between us were going well."

"If '*going* *well*' means keeping secrets, then I don’t want it. I have to know why you did this."

"Because I like you a lot."

"This is the first time you’ve said it… without any feeling. Excuse me."

I turned to leave, but she grabbed my wrist for a moment, looking at me as if pleading.

"At least… let me take you home."

"That’s true. The least you can do right now is take me home… That’s all you're capable of."

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I let her drive me back. We didn’t say a single word along the way. My mind kept circling back to those documents. I even saw something about my heart surgery. The last words of my friend left before disappearing from this world echoed in my head.

*"She didn’t love you. She loved your heart."*

If I thought about it like a novel, it could mean my heart was beautiful— that she liked me because I was kind and compassionate. But we weren’t close enough for that. I had never shown her any kindness beyond just working and letting her flirt with me. That was all.

*"She loved your heart."*

Or… could it be about *my* heart—the one I received? That didn’t seem possible. My heart came from a donor. Even the hospital wouldn’t reveal the recipient’s identity.

So who was Khun Mui? Why did she care about this? No matter how much I thought, I couldn’t figure it out. Before I knew it, we had arrived at my house.

"Are we fighting?"

Mui asked before I got out of the car. I pressed my lips together for a moment, then nodded.

"Yes. We’re fighting."

"About what?"

"There’s no title for it."

"Don’t quibble."

"It’s just like how you always tease me. We both know what this fight is about… I already asked for an explanation, but you refused to give one. When you're in a relationship, keeping secrets and letting the other person find out on their own—it’s no different from cheating."

"How can you compare this to that? Everyone has secrets. I just don’t want to share this one."

"But it just so happens that *your* secret is *about me*."

"What do I have to do for you to let this go? There's nothing to it."

"If there’s nothing, then tell me—why do you have those documents? Why do you have my medical records?"

"I just wanted to know you better. I… okay, fine. I love you."

There was no emotion in her words. I looked at her, feeling hurt, and had to turn away so she wouldn’t see the tears welling up in my eyes. I raised my hand, signaling her to stop.

"That’s enough for tonight. It’s late. We’ll talk later."

"Okay, we’ll talk later. Just give me some time."

"....."

"I’ll gather my thoughts and explain everything to you."

"You’re just going to make up a good story and then blur out the interesting parts… I won’t accept that. Like I said, I *have* to know why we met in the first place."

"...."

"How does this have anything to do with my heart surgery?"

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She left after that. I stood there, watching her car disappear into the distance before heading inside. My mom, hearing the car, came down to meet me at the door, looking surprised.

"I thought you were staying over. Why are you back so late?"

"It’s nothing."

"You two fought, huh?"

"Yes."

"Wow, that's straightforward."

That was all my mom said. I let her close the door while I went upstairs and collapsed onto my bed.

Khun Mui had made a mistake. There was a name in those documents—a man’s name—linked to a private investigation firm. That was what truly unsettled me.

Why had she hired a detective to investigate me? She wasn’t the type to obsessively track someone’s life for no reason.

There had to be *something* about me that made her so interested.

And my gut told me it had to do with my heart.

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Today, I didn’t go to the office. Instead, I was sitting face-to-face with

Nontawat—the name from the documents—inside a private investigator’s office. The moment he saw me, his expression turned uneasy, as if he already knew why I was here.

Since seven in the morning, all the way until now—ten o’clock—my phone hadn’t stopped ringing. Khun Mui had called me at least ten times.

I wasn’t sure if she was panicking because I was digging for the truth or if she was just worried that I hadn’t shown up for work. Maybe she had even stopped by my house and found me missing. It doesn’t matter.

Today is my day. The day I find out the truth about myself and the documents this man had gathered.

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"You have to tell me everything."

"But in my profession, I can’t reveal a client’s secrets."

"Your client’s secret is about me. I don’t know whether your job is technically legal or not—whether you investigate cheating spouses, track down criminals, or take shady contracts—but I don’t care. What I do care about is that someone hired you to investigate who I am, where I came from, and how I got my treatment. If I report this, I’m sure there’s some law that could get you in trouble."

The man swallowed hard. My tone was dead serious. I came fully prepared for this, and I wasn’t leaving without answers.

As we stared each other down in a silent battle of wills, his phone suddenly rang. I didn’t even need to see the caller ID—I knew it was Mui.

Before he could react, I snatched the phone and said bluntly,

"She’s calling to tell you what to say, isn’t she? To cover for her in case I found out about you. Well, answer it. And tell her exactly this—that I’m here with you, and you’ve already told me everything."

"If I do that, she’ll kill me."

"And if you don’t, I will kill you."

The person in front of me answered the call. His voice was tense, his words uncertain, but he did as I said—admitting that I was with him and had already heard the whole truth.

Less than three minutes later, the call ended. Now, Khun Mui was probably scrambling to figure out what to say to me next. Even though in reality I didn’t know anything yet.

"Alright. Now that Khun Mui knows I’m here, you can actually tell me the truth. Why did you investigate me? How did you get my medical records? And most importantly…"

I locked eyes with him.

"Does this have anything to do with my heart?"

The detective’s expression tensed. He clasped his hands together on the desk, licked his lips, then hesitated.

"If I tell you, I won’t lose my job, right? You won’t report me?"

"As long as you tell me the *truth*, I won’t do anything. I just… need to know everything."

And then, everything I had wanted to know poured out of the detective’s mouth.

I sat there in silence, my hands gripping my thighs so tightly that my nails dug into my skin—trying to hold back the tears threatening to spill.

Khun Mui had hired this detective to investigate me from the moment she found out where this heart had gone. She had waited patiently, tracking me quietly, learning who I was, where I came from.

Nothing was a coincidence. The time about my job application. Not my interview—she was the one who personally approved me. Not her kindness, her friendly gestures, her daily flowers—chipping away at my defenses, making me trust her.

And she succeeded.

I had become *hers*.

This heart… was *still* hers.

***"I loves the sound of your heartbeat."***

Just hearing that made me tilt my head back and laugh softly, but the tears I had fought so hard to suppress finally fell, streaming down my cheeks.

The detective told me everything. How he had connections that allowed him to trace where my heart transplant had come from. How everything had been under Khun Mui's control.

She didn’t love me.

She didn’t even like me.

She only loved this heart.

And she like me because of it.

Because this heart… belonged to her late girlfriend.

Her ex, who had died in a car accident.

The woman had chosen to donate her heart, hoping to give someone else a second chance at life. But now, that heart felt like a malignant tumor inside my chest, pounding so hard it made my entire body ache.

"Khun Mui’s ex… what was her name?"

"Mekhla."

"That’s a beautiful name."

"I have nothing left to tell you,"

The detective said, sounding drained.

"I’ve told you everything I know. Please, don’t come after me for this. I’m already struggling to deal with Miss Mui."

His expression looked just as broken as mine.

I nodded, accepting his words. I had only ever wanted the truth. Nothing more.

And now I had it.

As I stepped out of the tiny office, a sleek European car was already parked outside—waiting.

Khun Mui stepped out and walked toward me. Her eyes were red, filled with fear over what I had discovered.

I stood there, tears streaming down my face, looking at her with bitter disappointment.

And yet, I couldn’t help but admire her.

"It’s rare, isn’t it? To find someone who loves this faithfully."

"Phuean…"

"Yes, this is Phuean."

I smiled through my tears.

"....."

**"I am not your Mekhla."**

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# Chapter 34: The Promise

As soon as I mentioned Mekhla’s name, Khun Mui’s face turned pale. She didn’t even need to say anything to confirm whether what I had learned was true or not.

Even if she wanted to explain, it seemed like there was no way she could justify herself anymore. The more guilt she showed, the more it hurt me.

It wasn’t the kind of pain that made me want to scream or go crazy. It was a deep, aching pain—one that couldn’t be released, because I had already gone numb.

"You’re not going to explain anything, are you?"

"You already know everything."

She admitted it all, and that hurt even more. If she had just made a big scene, trying to deny it and make me furious, that might have been better.

"Damn it! Why is everyone around me doing this to me? One person is my only friend, yet she tries to steal my life. And the other… my first love, my first girlfriend, shattering my heart while pretending to love me. Loving me, but not really loving me at all?"

"I’m sorry."

"Is that all you can say?"

"Because I know that the more I say, the more it’ll sound like an excuse."

"When were you planning to tell me?"

"I never planned to tell you."

Every word she spoke pierced my heart. I turned to walk away, but she grabbed my wrist. "What?"

"I don’t know."

She held onto my hand, not even realizing why she was doing it. I twisted my wrist free. She didn’t resist. She let go easily, confused with herself. So I asked her again.

"Did you ever love me, Khun Mui?"

The scariest questions always receive the most unpleasant answers. But I still forced myself to ask.

She was silent. No answer. She wouldn’t even look me in the eye.

"I’m not anyone’s replacement! How could you do this to me?!"

I raised my hand, ready to slap her. She stood still, as if offering her face to me. But in the end, I couldn’t bring myself to do it. Instead, I clenched my fist and pounded it against my own chest—the chest that felt like it was about to explode.

"You love this heart so much, don’t you? Fine! I’ll destroy it. I’ll rip it out and throw it in your face!"

"Please, stop being so bitter."

Her eyes welled up with tears, like someone who could no longer fight back with reason.

"You have a good life now."

"Good? What the hell is good about this?"

"....."

"We should have never met. If there was no real love between us, then we shouldn’t have played with each other’s hearts like this."

"This wasn’t a game."

"But to me, you were playing a cruel joke."

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I walked away and hailed a taxi. Khun Mui just stood there, watching me with tears streaming down her face. She didn’t follow me, didn’t chase after me, didn’t shamelessly try to appear in front of me again. That was for the best.

I cried the whole way home.

When I walked into the house, my parents, who had been talking about the news, immediately stopped when they saw me wiping my endless tears.

"What’s wrong, sweetheart? Why are you crying?"

"I don’t want this heart anymore,"

I answered, sounding like someone who had lost all sense.

"It’d be better if I just died."

"What are you saying?!"

My mom’s yelling the moment I mentioned death. I ran upstairs and locked my door, shutting them out for my own privacy. No matter how much they knocked or called my name, I refused to open it.

I threw myself onto my bed, face down, and pounded my fists into the mattress in frustration.

Why did things turn out like this?

Why do bad things keep happening to me over and over again?

I thought getting a new life would be fun, that I’d have so many things to do. But instead, I got tangled up in bizarre situations—a friend in the mirror, my first love ending in heartbreak. Everything that happened to me was nothing but misery.

Is this what they meant by being born to pay for their karma?

But what did I ever done to anyone?

What am I supposed to pay for?

Why do I have to go through this kind of things?

I cried like my heart was about to give out, clawing at my chest so hard that my nails left deep marks. I wished, more than anything, that I could just rip my heart out and throw it in that woman’s face.

She tricked me into loving her.

She used me as a replacement for the love she lost.

What else do I have to go through?

Is there anything more waiting for me beyond this?

Fine, Khun Mui. If you love your precious Mekhla so much, I’ll destroy this heart myself. I don’t want to live as someone’s replacement anymore.

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Since the moment I learned the truth, I stopped going to work—or to put it more accurately, I stopped until the company would have no choice but to fire me. My coworkers called, but I ignored their calls.

As for Khun Mui… she had disappeared completely.

She never reached out again. Maybe she already knew I wouldn’t play along anymore. Or maybe she felt too ashamed to face me.

Right now, my parents were extremely worried about me. I wasn’t speaking as much as I used to. At the dinner table, they tried to start conversations, but I just sat there in silence.

Finally, my mom lost her patience. She slammed her spoon and fork onto her plate with a loud clang, unable to tolerate my lifeless demeanor any longer.

"What’s wrong with you, Phuean? Why won’t you talk? What’s been going on these past few days? Your father and I are really worried about you."

"That’s right. Staying silent like this isn’t good. What happened to our happy home? I miss how it used to be," my father added.

At his words, I shot him a sharp, mocking glance. My gaze was cold, and at that moment, everything around me felt irritating.

"You mean the kind of atmosphere filled with laughter, singing, and joy?"

I let out a short, bitter laugh and scooped a spoonful of rice into my mouth. This was probably one of the first things I had said in days.

"Sorry for being the kind of daughter who can’t play the guitar, who isn’t funny, who doesn’t know how to please anyone. I was only born to bring misery, constantly wondering whether I’ll die today or tomorrow."

"Why are you being so sarcastic with me? That’s not what I meant. If you’re mad at someone, don’t take it out on your parents."

"I’m mad at myself."

"....."

"I’m mad at myself for not being good at anything. My grades are average, my health is terrible, I can’t tell jokes or fit in, I can’t even play the guitar. You and Mom probably wish you had a daughter like *her* instead. But too bad—she’s gone back to where she belongs."

I wasn’t even sure if Faen had really gone back to her own world. But I still wanted to lash out, to make the people around me feel my pain.

"Phuean, your father and I have never thought of you as a burden. But right now, you are making us miserable. You lock yourself in your room all day, don’t go running, don’t do anything, and you’ve even stopped going to work. Did you have a fight with Khun Mui? If that’s the case, I’ll call her over to talk."

"Don’t call her!"

My voice came out half in shock, half in anger.

"I don’t want to see her face. We’re never going to meet again for the rest of our lives."

"How can you take your problems with someone else out on your parents?"

My mom snapped, finally losing her patience.

I placed my spoon and fork down and stood up.

"You’re right, this atmosphere really is terrible," I muttered.

"I should go upstairs. No—actually, I should go out. Maybe that’ll put you two in a better mood."

"Pheun, don’t talk to us like that. Stop being so sarcastic!"

My mom called after me.

"I don’t care."

I grabbed my shoulder bag by the door and walked out.

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Right now, I was acting out. I felt like the world was being too cruel to me. I was alive, but it didn’t feel like I was living my life. And when I finally reclaimed my sense of self, it turned out that being myself was the very thing that kept hurting me over and over again.

For her... I was Mekhala. I wasn’t a lover named Phuean. I was just a replacement for a love that had already died.

Since I had no idea where to go, I hailed a taxi and asked the driver to drop me off at a suspension bridge, where cars rushed past nonstop.

The truth was, I was born and raised in Bangkok, yet I had never explored the city like this before. It had been a dream of mine when my heart was still in good shape—to go out and see everything, to take it all in.

But this time, it was different.

I came here to do something.

Would jumping off this bridge take me to Faen’s world?

No… I wasn’t actually planning to die. But if I did, I wouldn’t care.

Which bridge had she jumped from back then? Was it a canal or the Chao Phraya River? How much did it hurt when she hit the water? If she survived and made it to that other world, did she have any injuries?

If she could cross over, then could I do the same?

My thoughts were a tangled mess—I couldn’t sort out what I should or shouldn’t do.

Just as I stepped forward and gripped the bridge’s railing, staring down at the vast, raging waters below, my phone rang.

I looked down.

It was Khun Mui.

After nearly a week of silence, she was suddenly calling me now.

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

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

***.***

My heart pounded.

I didn’t know how to describe what I was feeling. Was I excited? Happy? Angry?

And was this even my feeling?

Or was it the reaction of a heart that didn’t truly belong to me?

I suddenly remembered a theory I had once read—about how people who received organ transplants sometimes absorbed traits from the original owner without realizing it.

Some people who had never liked durian before would suddenly crave it obsessively after a transplant.

Maybe I only loved her because of this heart.

Maybe... maybe I had never really felt anything for Mui at all.

Maybe this heart—this foreign heart—was forcing me to feel this way.

The call ended.

Then, almost immediately, she called again.

After hesitating for a moment, I finally picked up.

I didn’t say anything.

But the moment she realized I had answered, she spoke first.

[Where are you?]

"None of your business."

[I’m at your house.]

"And what the hell are you sticking your nose in my business for?"

The words I had just spoken felt crude and unnatural on my tongue, but damn, they were satisfying.

I had never spoken to Mui like this before—not with her age, her position, and, most of all, the love I had for her.

But this time, I said it.

And I even smiled.

[Your parents are really worried about you.]

Her voice was steady.

[They asked me to come talk to you... and I want to talk to you too.]

"Talk about what? Is there anything left for us to say?"

[Mekhala.]

I froze at the name.

[If you want to know the truth, I’ll tell you everything. Back then, I couldn’t find the words, but now I can. Ask me anything. I won’t hide anything from you. Just tell me where you are—I’ll come get you.]

"I’m on a bridge. Could be the same one Faen jumped from."

[Don’t do anything reckless.]

"Nothing’s more reckless than how you used me."

[Where are you?]

"Relax, I’m not going to die. I just want to know... if I jump, will I cross over to Faen’s world?"

[Don’t be stupid!]

Her sharp voice startled me.

My heart clenched, the way it used to when I was scolded as a child.

But I quickly pushed that feeling away.

Why the hell was I the one getting scared?

She should be the one who was scared. She was the one who had to answer to me. Old habits were annoying as hell.

"Just wait at my house. I’ll come back. Say what you need to say, then get the hell out of my life. And don’t ever come near me again. Can you promise me that?"

[I promise. After this, you’ll never see me again.]

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# Chapter 35: The Reason

I agreed to come home but asked the taxi driver to drive slowly. I didn't even know why. Maybe I wanted to act a little difficult so the person waiting for me would worry. Or maybe I was afraid that if I heard her story, it would only make my pain worse because of what happened in the past...

There's nothing real....

It took almost an hour to reach my destination, even though the roads weren't congested. A sleek European car, belonging to Khun Mui, was parked not far from my house.

She hadn't gone inside to wait, probably wanting to catch me alone for a conversation-which I was fine with.

My parents knew we had fought. If I brought her inside, they wouldn't be able to resist listening in or trying to mend things, even without understanding the full story.

As soon as I got out of the taxi, Khun Mui, who had been waiting in her car, opened the door and walked toward me. She was still as elegant as ever, like a queen. Her face was strikingly beautiful.

Even though today she wore only a fitted navy-blue T-shirt, skinny jeans, and sneakers, it was strange-on a normal workday, she should have been dressed for the office. But her casual outfit showed that she no longer cared about work.

I'm only her focus.

"Let's go talk somewhere else,"

She said, reaching for my wrist, intending to lead me to her car.

But I instinctively pulled my arm back and clasped my hands behind me, keeping my distance. She glanced at her now-empty hand for a brief moment before pressing her lips together slightly, as if she understood, then nodded.

"I see."

Still, she was thoughtful enough to walk ahead and open the car door for me. Her consideration made me waver. She was always attentive-if she were a man, she'd be the definition of a gentleman. But as a woman, she was simply lovely person.

The air inside the car was refreshingly cool. I wasn't sure if she had just arrived or if she had been sitting here with the engine running for nearly an hour, waiting for me.

We barely spoke as she drove, until she nodded toward a café we were passing.

"Let's talk there. We can order something to eat too."

"Stop making things complicated."

"...."

"If we're going to talk, let's do it right here in the car. It's noisy inside, and I don't want to fake my expressions while listening to you."

"Fine. Then let's talk by the side of the road."

She flicked on the hazard lights and pulled over.

Honestly, no matter what she suggested, I was determined to refuse-just being difficult for the sake of it. If I really thought about it, sitting inside the café wouldn't have been a problem. It was air-conditioned and comfortable. From the lack of parked cars outside, I could guess there weren't many customers inside.

But still, I insisted on making things complicated.

Khun Mui remained silent, and I crossed my arms, waiting for her to speak first.

But the silence stretched on too long. She was too quiet, as if she had no idea where to begin.

"If you can't start, should we just leave? Sitting here in silence is a waste of time."

"I don't know where to begin," she admitted.

"Then get straight to the point-tell me, was my heart, the one beating in my chest, ever truly mine? Or was it always meant for Mekhala, your ex? Why did you approach me?"

My voice rose at the last question, my frustration slipping through.

Khun Mui's eyes turned red at the mention of Mekhala. The confidence she always carried faded into sorrow, and I had to look away. I couldn't stand to see that expression.

It hurt too much.

"You've already heard everything from the investigator. That's the truth."

"That's it? Just like that? Then why even bother talking? This is a waste of time. I'm leaving."

I flung the car door open and stepped out, like someone who extremely angry. I had come to hear her side of the story, but she summed it up in one sentence.

Or maybe this was all I really wanted to hear.

If I listened any longer, I might break down. I might cry. I might realize that I was nothing more than a replacement for someone else's love.

Khun Mui hurried in front of me, running a hand through her hair before pressing her palm to her forehead, the other hand on her hip, thinking hard. Then, she gestured desperately, silently asking me to stay and listen.

"I don't know what to say because what I did was wrong. I know you're furious-so furious you don't even want to see my face. But I want to explain."

"You're not explaining anything!"

"I don't know where to start. You already know everything."

"Then tell me the parts I don't know! Was it just a coincidence that I ended up working with you? Was it a coincidence that you kept approaching me? Just say something, anything!"

I shoved her chest, shouting, my eyes brimming with tears. I tilted my head back, trying to force them back down, but it was useless. The more I tried to stop them, the harder they fell, streaming down both cheeks.

"I was such a fool-loving you with everything I had, thinking you loved me. Even though I had nothing special, you still liked me. You gave me all kinds of ridiculous reasons-'I have a pretty smile,' 'I have nice legs'-whatever nonsense you used to say. But in the end, none of it was ever real, was it?

"...."

"So say it. Say that you loved this heart-not me. Not my body, not any part of me.

"...."

"Even after we slept together."

"You must be in so much pain."

"Yeah, I'm dying. It hurts so much I wanted to walk to the bridge and jump, just to escape this world and end up in another dimension-maybe there, I'd find someone who truly loves me."

"Did you seriously think about jumping off a bridge?"

Khun Mui looked horrified.

"Are you insane? Do you know how long you had to wait for this heart? And now you want to die over me? That's not right. Did you even think about the people who care about you?"

"Don't act like you have the right to lecture me! This is my life! If I could take a knife and cut my chest open, rip this heart out, and throw it in your face, I would, you-"

I wanted to curse at her, but the words wouldn't come out. Instead, I collapsed onto the ground, crouching as sobs wracked my body.

"How could you do this to me? My life was just beginning. Everything was going well. I was given a second chance. And you-you're the one who scarred my new life. Why did we even meet? Why, just so you could hurt me like this?"

I cried, my shoulders shaking violently.

"I'm sorry."

She stood over me, shielding me from the sun. Her shadow covered my entire body, a silent gesture of care. Her voice trembled as much as mine, and I could tell she truly regretted everything but had no idea how to make things right.

"You want an explanation, and I'll give it to you. I just... I don't know how to start. And that only makes you angrier."

"Yes, it does! Even now, all I've heard from you is an apology. Not a single explanation!"

"Mekhala... she was my first love."

She started with her name.

My heart skipped a beat, a strange, unfamiliar rhythm-as if this heart wasn't really mine, but someone else's, eagerly listening to the story.

"She died because of me."

And just like that, the words finally spilled from her lips. She had found a place to begin.

She started telling me everything-piece by piece, every tiny detail unraveling before me. The more she spoke, the more my heart ached, as if it understood her pain.

I clutched my chest, still crouched on the ground, while she stood above me, blocking the sunlight.

*Mekhala-her first love.*

They had been classmates long ago but never particularly close. They reconnected years later at a school reunion. Back then, they had barely spoken, too focused on their studies to build any kind of real friendship. But when they met again as adults, something just clicked.

They fell in love instantly, without hesitation, without caring that they were both women.

At the time, Khun Mui was just an ordinary young woman trying to build her business from the ground up. Her world was filled with stress and struggles. But Mekhala was always there-her one source of comfort, standing by her side through every hardship.

They didn't see each other often, maybe only a few times a week. But there was never a single day they didn't talk. They never fought, because they had promised-if one of them was angry, the other would be the calming water.

*Mekhala was the love that completed her.*

Khun Mui had no family-her parents had passed away. Mekhla was the only person in her life, filling every role: friend, parent, sibling, lover, and

family. They had dreams together-dreams of a future they would build once they achieved success.

They would travel the world.

They would adopt a child and raise them with love.

They would build a big house filled with as many dogs and cats as possible.

They would own the largest flower garden in the province, one where they could grow colorful tulips, because Mekhala loved them.

While Khun Mui worked tirelessly, Mekhala stayed home, taking care of everything. If Khun Mui was hungry, Mekhala would cook and either send the food by motorcycle or deliver it herself. The older employees at the company all knew that Mekhala was her partner.

No one dared to say anything about it, and even if they did, Khun Mui wouldn't have cared-she was happy with her life just the way it was.

Mekhala was her safe haven, the only comfort she had.

Her first love was kind and pure, always smiling. And because of her, Khun Mui believed she could never love anyone else again. Their love story wasn't dramatic or full of ups and downs-just the simple, undeniable fact that Mekhala had always been her refuge.

They had a habit of hugging each other and listening to each other's heartbeat every day. Until one day, Mekhala asked her softly:

"If I die one day, whose heartbeat will you listen to?"

And that was when the idea of organ donation began.

Mekhala decided to donate her heart, saying that if anything ever happened to her, at least a part of her would still be alive-her heart would continue beating inside someone else. She made Khun Mui promise to find her again.

"If you want to hear my heartbeat again, you have to find the person who carries my heart."

Mekhala was gentle and sensitive, yet incredibly strong. She went ahead and registered as an organ donor, even though Khun Mui didn't approve. It felt like an ill omen-like how some people believe that buying health insurance will keep them from getting sick, or that taking too many photos together means a breakup is coming.

Or how... donating your body might mean you'll leave this world sooner than expected.

But Mekhala didn't believe in such superstitions. She made her decision. And then, one day, the day Khun Mui feared the most arrived.

Mekhala had cooked for her, just like always. She got on a motorcycle to deliver it, just like always. But that day, a car ran a red light, crashing into her as she crossed the intersection-on her green light.

Flesh against metal.

Metal always wins.

Her body was thrown through the air, crashing to the ground. She was critically injured. By the time they reached the hospital, her brain was gonecompletely unresponsive.

But her heart was still beating.

And at that very same moment...

I was in a hospital bed, my body failing me.

My heart was slowing down.

I was dying.

At the exact moment my old heart failed, a new one arrived-Mekhala's heart.

She lived on through me.

That was the whole story of Mekhala.

Khun Mui was devastated. She couldn't eat, couldn't sleep-her life collapsed. She had no reason to keep going. But she remembered what Mekhala had said:

"I will still be alive if my heart beats inside someone else."

And that someone was me.

Khun Mui started a new life by seeking me out, seeing me as Mekhala's replacement from the very beginning. Whenever she missed her, she would hold me, listening to the heartbeat inside my chest-Mekhala's heartbeatreassuring herself that Mekhala hadn't truly disappeared.

She did everything she could to make up for what she had lost.

Her business was thriving. She had achieved everything she wanted-except for the one thing she longed for the most.

Mekhala.

She sent tulips to me because Mekhala loved them.

She picked me up and drove me everywhere because she would never trust another driver again.

Whatever I wanted, she bought it without hesitation, no matter the cost. Money meant nothing to her-only my happiness did.

But everything she did... she did for that woman.

Mekhala.

Not me.

I sobbed uncontrollably as I listened to the whole story. Khun Mui was crying, too, barely able to look me in the eye. She had finally laid everything bare.

I slowly got up, looking at her with emotions too tangled to separate-pity, resentment, and something else I couldn't name.

And then I asked, one last time.

"Give me a clear answer."

"Why do you like me?"

She didn't hesitate.

**"Because your heart belongs to Mekhala."**

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# Chapter 36: My Heart Won't Accept it

That was probably the most honest thing you've ever said, Khun Mui. Ever since I've known you, if you didn't dodge the question, you'd change the subject or twist the meaning into something else.

But this time, you got straight to the point.

You like me because of Mekhala's heart inside my chest.

I wanted to open my mouth and ask,

"What about me?"

But I was too ashamed. Because no matter how she answered, I knew it would either be silence or the plain truth. And either way, I would feel awful-heartbroken, even more than before.

Slowly, I wiped my tears away, feeling weak and drained. The sun still blazed down from the sky, pounding against my head, making me dizzy. But what was worse was the sudden sharp pain in my left chest. It hurt so much I had to clutch it tightly. Khun Mui, seeing how unwell I was, was about to rush toward me.

But I held up my hand to stop her.

"Don't even think about touching me."

I staggered backward, my steps unsteady.

"I despise you."

"I understand," Mui said,

"But you don't look well. You really don't. At least let me take you home."

"I can't even share a car with you. Just the thought of breathing the same air makes me feel sick. I was deceived all this time-I became a replacement for a woman I don't even know. You used me as a tool to satisfy your desires because you were thinking of someone who's gone."

"You're going too far! It's not like that!"

Her voice trembled. She was trying her hardest to reach me, to explain.

"Your words are too harsh. There is truth in what you say, but not all of it. Still... I'm grateful. Even if there were hidden reasons, I'm still grateful it was you."

"I don't even see what's special about myself. How could you possibly like me? I can't dance, I can't play music, I don't get along with my coworkers that well. I was born in the wrong place, at the wrong time. No-maybe I shouldn't have existed at all. Just like Faen said... If my parents had a choice, they would've chosen her over me. She has everything I do-except an interesting personality. She's captivating. And I'm just... boring."

"That's not true."

"But the one thing Faen doesn't have is Mekhala's heart. If not for that, you would've chosen her instead."

"Don't belittle yourself like that."

"Then tell me-if I didn't have this heart, would you have ever come close to me? Would you have noticed me at all? If this heart was inside someone else, you'd be chasing after them instead, wouldn't you? Like a dog in heatyou don't care who it is, as long as it's there."

She didn't fight back against my harsh words. She just looked guilty, pitiful even. I turned away, refusing to look at her anymore. There would be no more feelings left for her.

From now on, you and I...

"Let's end this here."

"Phuean..."

Khun Mui's face was filled with sorrow.

"Does it really have to be this way?"

"You were the one who said this would be our last time seeing each other. At the very least, do something right-let me remember you as someone who keeps your promises. No-you have to keep your promises. You even managed to track down whose body Mekhala's heart ended up in, just because your ex asked you to. All I'm asking is for you to disappear from my life. You can do that, can't you? Do you hear me?"

I turned to leave, searching for a taxi to take me home. But my damn heartit felt like it was working overtime. Ever since I saw Khun Mui, it had been beating out of rhythm. It was an organ beyond my control, but it shouldn't be like this.

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Thud!

A sharp pain shot through my chest, spreading to my back and shoulders. The same sensation as before. It was a warning-this wasn't normal. My heart was struggling.

Even now... was Mekhala's heart rejecting my body?

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Thud!

"Ouch.."

I clutched my left side and collapsed onto the ground. Khun Mui wasn't far away-she rushed toward me, cradling me in her arms. Carefully, she shielded me from the sun, as if it was second nature to her.

I tried to resist, but my body wouldn't cooperate.

"What's wrong?"

"Leave me alone."

"This isn't the time to be stubborn! I'm calling an ambulance."

She pulled out her phone and dialed emergency services, just as she said she would.

My heartbeat pounded erratically, crashing against my ribcage so hard that even she could feel it.

"Leave me. If I die, it's my problem."

"You can't die!"

"Why...?"

I still had enough strength to argue, though I was fading fast. My lips were turning bluish, my fingertips going pale, and Khun Mui saw everything. "Is it because of this heart? If I die, someone else can have it-"

"Stop mocking me! I'm sorry, okay? Please, don't let anything happen to you,"

Khun Mui sobbed, holding me tightly.

"This is all my fault... all of it."

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Thump...Thump...

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"If I survive this... I hope we never see each other again."

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Thump... thump...

Thump...

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"Consider us dead to each other. We'll never meet again."

"Phuean!"

And that was the last thing I heard before everything went black.

I didn't know if I would ever wake up again.

But what angered me the most... was that the last face I saw before I died was hers.

The woman I loved.

But this woman never loved me at all.

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My chest hurts so much...

I felt the pressure, the impact until my eyes slowly open. There was only the hardness in the narrow space and the sound of a siren wailing in the distance.

And Khun Mui, she was right there, sitting close, watching over me. Tears streamed down her face as the paramedics worked frantically. One of them wiped the sweat off his forehead and muttered,

"Pulse is back."

Then they spoke in some medical language I couldn't understand. Khun Mui clutched my hand so tightly, begging me not to leave. But even through all this pain, I still used every ounce of strength I had left to pry her hand away.

"You broke your promise."

"....."

"You said you wouldn't show your face again."

"Now isn't the time. Please, don't talk. We're almost at the hospital."

I could feel the ambulance speeding up, sirens blaring as it turned into some facility. Then came the rush of movement-I was pulled out, still lying on the stretcher, and wheeled off in a hurry.

Khun Mui ran alongside, holding onto the bed, refusing to let go.

"Get lost..." I whispered.

"I don't want to see you anymore."

"Please, don't do this."

"If you stay, I'll leave myself... Get lost."

She finally let go. Stopped in place.

I was wheeled away at full speed.

Khun Mui's figure faded from view.

Then the emergency room doors slammed shut.

My eyelids grew heavy. Doctors and nurses crowded around me, attaching things to my body, spreading gel, checking vitals-doing whatever they had to do. But I was too exhausted to fight anymore.

"Stay awake!" A voice pleaded.

"You have to-"

Easy for them to say.

But if I close my eyes now... what happens next?

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"I want to raise a dog."

That was what I blurted out, as if a small part of me still clung to life. There were still so many things I wanted to do. But it seemed like it was too late.

"We need to hurry."

The doctors and nurses rushed to save me. I gave a faint smile and let my eyes drift shut, surrendering. I was so tired of living like this. My childhood wasn't fun, and now I had to go through all this? Maybe it was better to just... not exist anymore.

I don't want to live anymore.

Images of Khun Mui flashed through my mind. Even though I said I hated her, that I never wanted to see her again, she was still etched into my memories.

No... no more. I didn't think I could find happiness in this world. Whatever happens, let it happen.

I'm sorry, everyone.

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Gasp!

I woke up with a start in a white room that didn't look like a house at all. I was still dazed and groggy, but the shock was enough to wake me up quickly.

My head was foggy, my body sluggish, but the shock of waking up helped me snap into awareness. My thoughts, still dazed from sleep or maybe medication, started realigning as I scanned my surroundings carefully.

And then it hit me-I was in a hospital. I... survived?

But which world am I in now?

That thought sent a wave of panic through me. I needed to confirm where I was. I searched desperately for any writing or signs. If I couldn't read them, that meant I was still in Faen's world. But if I could read them... it meant I had made it back.

Wires and tubes covered my body, attached to different machines-an IV pole, a heart monitor, a blood pressure cuff. Judging by all of this, my condition must have been serious.

I had no idea how long I had been unconscious.

Everything hurt. My whole body ached, and judging by the pain, something was probably broken. But of course-after jumping from that height, even if I landed in water, the impact and gravity wouldn't have made it easy.

But that didn't matter right now.

I had to know where I was.

.

Thud!

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I tried to get out of bed, but my limbs were too weak. I collapsed onto the floor. A machine started beeping frantically, and within seconds, nurses flooded the room.

One of them rushed out to call the on-duty doctor, excited that I was awake.

The others tried to help me up, but my legs were too frail. Every touch sent pain shooting through me, making me wince.

"Where... where am I?" I croaked.

"You're in a hospital,"

A nurse answered.

"Oh, I know that," I snapped.

"I meant which world this is!"

But before I could get an answer, my eyes drifted toward the nurse's name tag pinned to her uniform. The moment I read the letters with ease, my eyes widened in astonishment.

"I really made it back..."

The letters on the name tag were in a language I could read effortlessly.

That meant my jump from the bridge hadn't killed me, and I had returned.

But... honestly? I wasn't that happy about it.

This world wasn't any better than the one I had left behind.

Being me was just miserable, no matter where I was.

"Oh? The patient is awake?"

A sweet yet firm voice spoke up. I didn't even need to look. I knew that voice.

Slowly, I turned my head, locking eyes with the owner of that voice-

"You again?!"

"What was that?"

Fate. Destiny.

Call it whatever you want.

There were two billion people in this world, and yet the first person I saw after waking up was her.

If this wasn't fate, then what the hell was it?

Still dazed, I could only stare at the woman in a doctor's coat, her features all too familiar.

She stared back at me with the professional yet kind expression of a doctorcompassionate yet serious.

"Let me check your condition," she said.

She went through all the necessary procedures while the nurses helped me back onto the bed. Then, she started asking the usual questions to make sure my brain hadn't been washed away by the river.

"Do you remember your name?"

"Of course."

"What's your name?"

"Faen."

"That's a cute name,"

She said, smiling as if rewarding a child for answering correctly.

"Do you remember how you got here?"

"I don't remember the trip, but I remember how I got here... And I know you."

She raised a skeptical eyebrow.

"How do you know me?"

"We met... in my dreams."

Her smile turned cool at that. She thought I was joking. And then, just like that, she changed the subject.

"Were you trying to kill yourself?"

"I wish I could die. But I didn't."

I answered like it was no big deal.

"No, I wasn't trying to die. I just wanted to go back home."

"How does jumping off a bridge take you home? You're not in the best shape right now. I'll have to run more tests, and if you recover..."

"Can I stay with you, Doctor?"

"What?"

The nurses exchanged amused glances. I look more playful. The doctor, who look serious type. She arched an eyebrow, then smirked slightly and shook her head.

"So playful. Alright, I believe you weren't trying to kill yourself. Do you realize you're famous now?"

"Famous?" I blinked.

"Why?"

She didn't answer right away. Instead, she carried on with her tests, checking me thoroughly. Then, she let me rest.

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But just as I was about to sleep, she returned for one last check-up.

I had a feeling she might disappear-or worse, another doctor might replace her on duty. I couldn't let that happen. So, I grabbed my chance.

"Khun Mui?"

"Doctor,"

She corrected me instantly, then chuckled softly.

"You definitely have a sense of humor. Your mental health seems fine. So why jump off a bridge?"

"I wanted to go for a swim."

"Your little 'swim' caused chaos across the entire country."

She crossed her arms.

"In case you didn't know."

"The entire country?" I gawked.

"All that... over one bridge jump?"

"You'll find out soon enough. Get some rest."

"Do you have a boyfriend?"

I blurted out.

"What kind of question is that?"

If Khun Mui belonged to Phuean's world, then in this world...

*Who did this version of her belong to?*

There had to be a reason for us to meet again. I believed that.

"Will we meet again?"

"Of course. I'm your attending physician."

"Fate, obviously."

I snapped my fingers.

"So, I'm officially your patient now, huh? That means... you're my doctor, right?"

"Yes."

"In this world, you're a doctor. That's completely different from the other world."

I mused before gasping.

"Oh! But I need to confirm something. Do you have a boyfriend?"

"That has nothing to do with your treatment. I won't answer... Now, get some rest. Once you recover, you'll have to deal with a lot of things."

"You don't have to answer that. At least tell me your nickname... What should I call you?"

That question was easier to answer-still a little personal, but not as invasive.

She sighed, probably fed up with how nosy her patient was, but finally gave in.

"Mew."

And with that, she walked away. I let myself fall back onto the bed, my body aching all over. The pain in my broken leg made me wince, but despite that, I felt oddly at ease.

Because I met her again. Even if it was a different version. Alright. Deep breaths. In this world, I wouldn't have to compete or steal the spotlight from anyone.

I could just... live as myself.

Since I had my life back, I was going to make the most of it-because if there was one thing I learned from the other world

*That being someone else never lasts.*

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And Mew was absolutely right. Not long after my condition improved, I became an overnight sensation.

People jumped off bridges into rivers all the time-it wasn't exactly newsworthy.

But what made me special was...

I had floated down a raging river for three whole days and nights-and survived.

Security cameras from various docks had captured me drifting from one place to another-completely motionless, lying on my back.

It was bizarre.

*"Are you a professional swimmer?"*

*"How did you stay afloat for three days?"*

*"The Naga must have protected her underwater!"*

*"She's a mermaid."*

Just like that, I became famous overnight-like my life had flipped.

Journalists, writers, students-everyone wanted an interview. And if that wasn't enough, even a national sports coach claimed I had a gift and should compete in professional swimming.

Was this world always this ridiculous?

. .

"Let the patient rest. She's exhausted today."

Dr. Mew suddenly appeared, cutting off the reporters and personally wheeling me away.I smiled a little, watching her defend me. Then I tilted my head back and looked up at my rescuer with great joy in my heart.

"You in this dimension are much kinder than in the other one."

"What dimension?"

"A mysterious one... You probably wouldn't believe me if I told you,"

I mumbled to myself.

"Doctor Mew. I think I've fallen in love with you."

The wheelchair I was sitting in came to a sudden stop for a moment before being pushed forward again. The doctor, who had just been confessed to, blushed a soft shade of orange, like someone shy.

"You're just joking around."

"I'm not joking. I was already grateful to you before you even realized it. Meeting you here, in this situation, makes me believe in the power of the universe."

"The power of the universe?"

"If we truly wish for something, it will come true. And you appeared. Once I recover, get ready for me to pursue you."

"You don't even know if I already have a partner."

"Doctors usually don't have partners."

"Why do you think that?"

"They don't have time."

"That's true."

"That's why I'll be the one to make time to court you. You just have to sit back and wait for me,"

I said confidently, then paused as if something had just occurred to me.

"But... you don't have... a lover who passed away or something, right?"

"Why would my lover be dead?"

"Great."

"Honestly, I don't quite understand half of what you're saying, but you seem playful, so I won't take it too seriously."

"A lover can be playful, sure. But when I said I'd pursue you, I meant it,"

I said, looking up at her from below. She glanced down, meeting my gaze with a steady stare.

"You like tulips, don't you?"

She blinked in surprise

"Where did you get that from?"

"I just know. I love you, doctor."

"You..."

She trailed off, her voice caught between disbelief and amusement.

Meanwhile, I giggled, thoroughly enjoying her reaction.

"You're really something else."

I leaned back comfortably in the wheelchair, my yes twinkling.

"People are only shine when they're in the right place at the right time."

"...."

"And right now, I'm exactly where I'm meant to be."

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❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **sunyan**

# Chapter 37: Start Over on Day 1

The only thing that can heal us is time… No matter how much it hurts, as time passes, the pain will lessen. In every sorrow, time will help heal everything.

What once hurt a lot will hurt less, and for some people, the pain may disappear entirely, turning into nothing more than a joke. I try to think of my past as a valuable experience.

Pain makes us more mature, helps us grow, and broadens our perspective. But if you ask me whether I’d go through it all again, I’d have to say no.

Three years have passed since I broke up with that woman. Everything has finally fallen into place. Now, I have a new life. I’ve just adjusted to my new heart after surgery, and I’ve promised myself that I won’t let myself get hurt again.

As for work, I’ve found something I enjoy and do well—writing online and self-publishing my own books. Since my health isn’t the best and my parents don’t want me working outside the house anymore, this job suits me perfectly.

I can work from home, avoid meeting too many people, stay under my parents’ watchful eyes, and still make money. It’s not a huge amount, but it’s the best I can do for myself.

My stories have gained so much attention that they’ve made it to the top charts. Many publishing houses have contacted me about printing my books, but I find it more convenient to do everything myself.

I get to talk directly with my readers, and it gives me a sense of purpose. It’s tiring, but I’m okay with that. My assistant is my mom—whenever there’s an order, she helps pack the books into boxes and waits for the delivery service to pick them up.

It’s surprisingly convenient. I still wonder why I never thought of this job before. It’s perfect for someone with poor health, yet it allows me to use my imagination and creativity to craft stories that people enjoy.

“Sold four books today,”

I tell my mom as we work together.

Every day, there are orders. Not in truckloads, but enough to make me happy. Four books a day is enough to get by, and by the end of the month, it adds up to a decent income. “Have you started a new story yet?”

My mom asks.

I shake my head.

“The old one isn’t finished yet. This is just the first volume.”

“That novel must be really long.”

“Well… I have a lot of imagination.”

My story’s plot is a bit supernatural. I based it on my own life and gave it the most fitting title:

***Mirror – Friends and Lovers Can’t Replace Each Other.***

The first volume tells the story of a heroine who meets someone in the mirror who looks exactly like her. I don’t think I need to explain much— most people probably already know the plot.

I’ve just finished Volume One and published it for sale. My readers are incredibly patient, willing to wait for the second volume because they want to know how it all ends. But to be honest…

*I don’t even know how to end it myself.*

All the characters in the story have different names, but the main plot revolves around me, Mui-my ex, and the story of my new heart, which originally came from Mui’s ex.

Some readers have criticized the heroine for being too kind, saying it’s frustrating. Sometimes, reading the comments feels like getting stabbed in the heart because it’s like they’re talking about me.

Maybe the readers are right. Being too kind has destroyed people over and over again, and I’ve been hurt just the same.

“I read your story too,” Mom says.

“Huh?”

I look at her in embarrassment, my face heating up.

“Didn’t I tell you not to read it? Mom!”

“I was curious about what my daughter wrote.”

“Did you read all of it?”

“I finished Volume One. It ended when the heroine collapsed after learning the truth about the heart, and the other person promised never to see her again.”

"...."

“Did Khun Mui ever contact you?”

Mom gets straight to the point because she knows my novel is based on real events. Every time her name comes up, my face tenses up. This time is no different.

“You’re bringing her up again, Mom.”

“I just want to know. Did she really disappear from your life for good?”

“We agreed to go our separate ways.”

“And you don’t miss her at all?”

“I don’t think so. Maybe it’s because… of the new heart I received.”

The second surgery, after I collapsed that day, gave me a new heart. And this time, I hope the same thing won’t happen again. “It doesn’t race anymore when I talk about her.”

“But you still get angry every time you hear her name.”

“Let’s not talk about it. It’s in the past. It’s been three years, Mom. She has a new life now. Life moves on.”

“You’re strong.”

Mom gives me a smile and changes the subject as we finish packing the last box.

“By the way, we’re out of bubble wrap for the books.”

"Oh no, what do we do now? If more orders come in, we won’t have anything to wrap the books with! Ordering online takes two to three days, sometimes even longer."

"Go to *Sampheng*. They should have it."

Just hearing the name makes me sweat, but there’s no other choice.

"Well, that works. At least I’ll get more driving practice."

"Will I even survive this?"

"Are you coming too, Mom?"

"Of course! Who would let you go alone?"

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In my parents’ eyes, I’m still a child. Maybe it’s because I’ve just recovered from an illness that’s plagued me since childhood. They’re extra cautious, always looking out for me. No matter where I go, Mom follows. But at least now, they’ve finally let me drive.

"Alright then. It’s been a while since I last went to Sampheng."

Today is unbearably hot. The sky, usually bright and clear, is gloomy as if rain is on the way. Mom, always prepared, brings two umbrellas just in case.

She’s worried that if it rains, I’ll catch a cold easily, so she makes sure to be extra careful.

"Mom, stop acting like I’m still as weak as before. I’m better now. You’re making me feel like I’m still sick."

"It’s not that, sweetheart. It’s just a mother’s concern. The weather today is strange—no wind, just this heavy heat. It’s definitely going to rain."

No matter how many reasons I give her, Mom will always fuss over me. So I let her be, taking an umbrella of my own. Knowing her, if it does rain, she’ll probably hold hers over me instead.

"Honestly, we could just order online, you know."

"It won’t arrive in time, Mom. We need the fastest option… but where do we even start looking?"

"Just walk around. We’ll find it eventually."

Walking through Sampheng today isn’t so bad. It’s been a long time since I last went out. Part of it was because I needed to take care of my fragile health. The other part… well, I just didn’t want to meet people.

Ever since my last job, where I had to deal with gossiping coworkers who nitpicked everything I did—and let’s not even talk about the fake friends— I’ve been wary of humans altogether.

As we browse through little knick-knacks, our original mission to find bubble wrap gets sidetracked. Mom stops to look at Thai fabrics, giving me the perfect excuse to wander off on my own. If she loses track of me, she’ll just call.

Hmm… now, where’s the bubble wrap store?

I kept walking. The rain had started to fall lightly. While some people stopped to find shelter, I took the chance to open my umbrella, already prepared. I stopped at a red light, waiting to cross the street.

As soon as the pedestrian light turned green, I took long strides to cross— only to come to a sudden halt, my whole body jolting.

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***Thump....Thump....***

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My heart pounded so hard it felt like it would burst out of my chest. Not from pain, but from a strange, fluttering shock.

What was this…?

What was happening?

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***Thump....Thump....***

It was fast, intense, and completely unexplainable. And then…

**“Phuen.”**

That familiar voice called my name. I whipped my head around instantly— and there she was. The person I had once vowed never to see again.

Mui stood in the light drizzle, staring at me with the same stunned expression I had.

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***Thump.....Thump...***

***Thump....Thump....***

***Thumpthumpthumpthump..***

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I couldn’t speak. I just stood frozen, gripping my umbrella as the rain started to fall harder. Around us, people rushed across the street, running to escape the rain.

But we remained locked in place, eyes meeting, as if time itself had stopped. As if the entire world had vanished, leaving only the two of us.

**“Khun Mui.”**

**“Phuen.”**

The traffic signal started beeping, warning pedestrians to hurry before the cars moved again. Mui tried to run toward me but got pushed aside by the rushing crowd. My feet instinctively stepped forward to follow her—but I stopped myself just in time.

“Phuen… Phuen!”

Her voice kept calling me, but I turned away. I forced myself to walk in the direction I had originally intended, ignoring the pull in my chest.

There were 77 provinces in Thailand. Hundreds of districts in Bangkok. And yet, we ran into each other here, in a place we shouldn’t have. Had she followed me? That didn’t seem likely. If she had wanted to, she had three whole years to do so. She would have appeared before now.

*So why today? Why here?*

Lost in thought, my pace quickened until I almost forgot why I was even here in the first place.

Then my phone rang.

My heart lurched, afraid it might be her. But when I saw Mom’s number on the screen, I let out a small breath and answered.

"Where did you go, Phuen? It's raining. I've been looking everywhere for you!"

"I'm coming now. Let's just go home."

"Are you okay?"

Mom could sense the unease in my voice. I didn’t explain, just told her to meet me at the car—I didn't want to retrace my steps back to where I had come from.

"I don’t feel too well. Let’s just order online instead."

That was all it took for Mom to agree to leave. She never hesitated when I mentioned feeling unwell, though the truth was… it wasn’t my body that felt sick. It was my heart.

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Since returning home, I hadn’t spoken to anyone. I shut myself in my room, thoughts consumed by the person I saw today.

*A thousand days.*

A thousand days of convincing myself I had moved on. The time apart had gradually faded the longing, the ache. But today, those thousand days crumbled. And now, I was starting over.

Damn it… starting over. Like I was back at square one.

The sky remained gloomy. The rain poured heavily, fueled by the earlier heat. And that rain only deepened my sadness, leaving me incapable of doing anything—not even writing.

Raindrops tapped against the roof. The sky, once tinged red, darkened to black. If the storm continued, the power might go out. Another excuse not to write. Another reason to disappoint my readers, who were expecting today’s update.

But I couldn’t focus. Because her face wouldn’t leave my mind.

And just as I was drowning in those thoughts—my phone rang.

I glanced at the screen...'Khun Mui'.

My heart stuttered. The same erratic rhythm as before. This wasn’t even the same heart she once knew, yet somehow, it still reacted the same way.

I stared at the phone for a long time, debating what to do. And in the end… I answered.

"Why are you calling?"

No greeting. My voice was cold, tinged with irritation. But her response— her one simple sentence—completely unraveled me.

From trying to stay strong… from trying to resist… I found myself pressing my lips together, heart pounding, unable to deny the truth.

Because I am happy.

**"I miss you."**

Silence.

The sound of rain filtered through the phone.

Mui wasn’t at her condo—she had to be outside for me to hear it so clearly.

I swallowed.

"We agreed never to see each other again."

"But today, we did."

"Was this your plan?"

I had every reason to be suspicious. She had a history of hiring detectives to follow me, to dig into my life. How could I not think she was scheming again?

"No. Today was a real coincidence. And it made me... start over."

**Start over.**

Even she thought the same way.

After a long silence, Mui spoke again.

"Can you come down and talk?"

"Come down? What do you mean?"

"I'm sitting in my car. I'm parked in front of your house."

I immediately rushed to the window.

And there it was—the same car, unchanged by time.

I bit my lip. Annoyed? Yes. Happy? Also yes. A mix of everything, swirling together in a mess of emotions.

"What is there left to talk about?"

"I miss you."

"Stop saying that."

"I can't think of any other words. This is all I have."

"Go home, Khun Mui." "I'll wait until you come out."

She hung up.

I glanced at her car again. The door opened. And then—there she was. Standing in the pouring rain, completely unprotected.

Lightning streaked across the sky, thunder roaring in the distance.

What if she gets struck by lightning?

No....I’m not going down there.

No is no...

I threw myself onto my bed, crossing my arms, pretending she didn’t exist. I rolled around for a good ten minutes, but the nagging feeling wouldn’t go away.

I gave in.

Peeking out the window again, I found her still standing there—staring right at me.

Her eyes locked onto mine. Stubborn. Determined. The kind of unwavering focus that made my heart clench.

And she was soaked. Drenched like a lost puppy in the rain.

She was pressuring me.

No. I won’t fall for it.

I let her wait, thinking that eventually, she’d give up and leave...But she didn’t.

One hour passed.

She was still there.

And I… I couldn’t take it anymore.

With a frustrated sigh, I stomped downstairs, grabbed an umbrella by the door, and marched outside, fury burning in my chest. The rain pounded down around us as I reached her.

"Why are you doing this?"

I snapped, shoving her by the shoulders. She staggered slightly, dripping wet, yet still—she smiled.

A small, soft, knowing smile.

She tilted her head, looking at me with nothing but warmth.

"To make you come down."

"What do you want?"

"To see you."

"Well, you've seen me. Now leave."

"You cut your hair."

She completely ignored my hostility, her eyes scanning me with quiet focus, taking in every change.

"You’re still as beautiful as ever."

"Spare me the sweet talk. I’m not the same person anymore. And this heart —it's not your ex-girlfriend’s heart. Stop bothering me. I've moved on."

"I’m glad to hear that. At least I know you’re doing well and living your life."

*And you?*

The words almost slipped out, but I bit them back.

"You haven’t changed at all. If you came just to say hi, then leave. The rain’s heavy. You might get struck by lightning."

"You’re worried about me."

"I just don’t want anyone dropping dead in front of my house." She let out a soft chuckle.

"I haven’t seen you in over a thousand days... Three years."

"Yes. Three years. And everything has changed. New friends, new heart, new life. Everything is new. Whatever was old—I left it behind."

"Unlike me. Three years have passed, and I’m still stuck in the past."

"How fitting. Even when you were with me, you were stuck on your old love."

"That old love doesn’t matter anymore."

Her voice was steady.

"Because my heart raced the moment I saw you today. And now… it's starting over."

"Can you stop with this number-counting nonsense? Is this really the time? Go home before you get sick."

"I’ll come back."

"Come back for what?"

"For you."

I clenched my jaw.

"Meeting you again made me realize something. Whether it’s my old heart or a new one, my feelings for you never changed."

Her fingers—ice cold and trembling from the rain—reached up to touch my cheek.

I stepped back immediately, rejecting the contact outright.

"Don’t touch me. And don’t think about coming back. I don’t want you anymore."

She exhaled softly, her eyes locked onto mine.

"I won’t rewrite the past."

"....."

"But this time, I’ll make the present the best it can be. I’ll come back for you."

She stepped closer, closing the space between us. Now we stood under the same umbrella, the rain drumming against the fabric above. Before I could back away, she leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to my cheek.

"And I’ll love you exactly as you are."

"No."

"...."

"You have no right."

"Maybe not. But I’m asking for a chance. And I’m hoping—so much—that you’ll give me one."

Her face, soaked with rain, held an expression so fragile that for a second, I almost wavered....Almost.

But I couldn’t trust her.... Not again.

I held her gaze, gripping the umbrella tight, as if it were some kind of shield.

"Do you really think standing in the rain, looking pitiful, will make me forgive you?"

My voice was cold, steady.

"If you copied some dramatic music video, I suggest watching another one. This trick won’t work on me. Just go. I’ve moved on."

She exhaled, but instead of looking defeated, her lips curled into a small smile.

"Me too."

I frowned.

"I’ve started over too,"

She said, her voice steady.

"Because meeting you today made me realize something."

Her fingers twitched at her sides, as if holding back the urge to reach for me.

"One thousand days have passed…"

"...."

"And today is day one of starting over."

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**Note:**

**about Shampeng :**

**the same market and the same situation (rainy day and *Thump...*) when Teacher Renu meet Jao Jom (Lay) in Rhythm Vol 2**

**(but this scene also appeared in Prologue Rhythm Vol 1)**

# Chapter 38: 21 Days

After more than a thousand days have passed, I finally have to start over. It's strange; even though I've changed my heart, when I meet you, my heart races just like before. Does this mean it's not about the organ but about feelings and the brain?

As for Mui, she knew that I had a new heart, not from her an old lover like before. But she keep came back and said,

***"I misses you.***

***"I am starting over."***

How similar it is. It means that over the past three years, nothing has changed. The longing has subsided a bit, but when we meet, it becomes more intense.

Tonight, I couldn't sleep at all, tossing and turning restlessly. My mind was filled with images of her, drenched in rain, standing and talking to me in front of the house.

I didn't even share my umbrella with her, trying to be as heartless as possible, hoping she'd see my indifference and walk away angrily, but no, Mui stood in the rain, I letting her into the house, and said behind me,

"Hurry inside... the drizzle will make you sick."

*Damn it.*

I jolted up at 4 a.m., angrily at myself and pounding the side of the bed. Just a little kindness from her, and my heart races uncontrollably. We had decided not to see each other again; why did we have to meet today?

Is coincidence real? Among hundreds, thousands of people passing by, why do I recognize only you? My heart races only for you. In these three years, I haven't felt this way about anyone else, but with her, how can I not be angry?

And being soaked like that, will she get sick?

There it is; I still care about her. Clothes clinging from the rain might make you ill, not to mention getting into an air-conditioned car to drive back to your condo. You're bound to get sick.

Fuck it, it's none of my business.

With that thought, I lay down again, pulling the blanket over my head. I must sleep; I won't let anyone have power over me.

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It's 5 a.m. now...

Okay, no need to sleep. I got up, changed into workout clothes, put on sneakers, and prepared to jog in the neighborhood. My mother, who always wakes up early to cook and make offerings, saw that I...

I was about to go for a run outside when she hurried over to stop me out of concern.

"It rained heavily last night. There might still be mist in the air. Just take a break today."

"I can’t skip it. I need to run so my heart can beat fast."

Even though, in reality, it was already beating fast. I needed to trick my body and mind into thinking that the reason my heart was racing was because of the adrenaline from exercising.

"I need to stay strong."

"But the ground is wet. What if you slip, fall, and hit your head?"

"Mom… you're worrying too much again. I already told you—I’m back to being normal. Let me live my life."

"You already ‘lived your life’ before, and look how that turned out—almost dying from a heart attack and being rushed to the hospital. I’m not taking that risk again."

"Mom, I’m just going for a run. People need to stay strong, you know?"

I gave her a quick kiss on the cheek, trying to be affectionate.

"I’m off now. I can’t sit still any longer."

"And why are you so restless?"

"Starting over."

My mother didn’t understand what I meant, but she stepped aside and let me go. By now, the sky was turning blue, signaling that the sun was about to rise—my favorite time of the day. It felt like I was racing against the sun or something like that.

As I jogged along the path, the neighborhood guard cycled past and greeted me like we were old acquaintances. I felt much better now. My heart was pounding from the workout—not from restlessness. This was how I coped.

But then…

"Mind if I join you?"

Someone suddenly ran up alongside me. It was Mui, still wearing the same damp outfit from yesterday. Seeing her next to me made my eyes go wide like I’d seen a ghost.

"You still haven’t gone home?"

"I didn’t feel like going back. And I figured out that you run every morning, so I waited for you instead."

I slowed my pace and came to a stop. She, who had been running ahead, also stopped and turned to look at me with curiosity.

"You’re not running anymore?"

"I thought we had settled this three years ago. I already asked you not to see me again. You’re making things really complicated."

"Things got complicated the moment I ran into you yesterday."

"Can’t you just forget about it?"

"Can you do it?"

"...."

"Seeing you again only makes everything clearer,"

She said seriously, then sighed.

"This has nothing to do with your old heart."

"Stop talking. I don’t want to hear it."

I raised my hands to cover my ears and shook my head.

"I’ve already made my decision. I’m not going back."

"21 days."

"What?"

"I’m going to pursue you for 21 days. If it doesn’t work, I promise I’ll disappear from your life for good."

"Why 21 days?"

"There’s a theory that says people get used to something after doing it for 21 days. Maybe if I stick around, you’ll get used to having me in your life again… and we can get back together."

"Don’t believe in such ridiculous theories. What you did was unforgivable."

"I know… but at least respect my request."

"You’re so selfish."

She didn’t even try to deny it.

"I always put myself first. And being near you gives me hope again. Just give me a chance—"

Before she could finish, she sneezed.

I looked at her with concern and suddenly realized—she was still wearing the same rain-soaked clothes from last night. The thought made me step closer and lightly touch her sleeve to check if it was still damp.

"You’ve been wearing this all night?"

I let out a sigh.

"Since we used to know each other, I’ll do you a favor. Come inside and change before you go home."

Her eyes lit up, and that annoyed me even more.

"Change clothes and leave. That’s it. Nothing more."

"I’m not expecting anything more,"

She said with a smile.

"But if something unexpected happens, I’ll be grateful."

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*Starting over...Again.*

Mom looked a little puzzled when she saw Mui walk into the house with me, but I didn’t explain. I just pushed Mui toward the stairs so she could go up and change. Luckily, we were about the same size, though my clothes made her look a little different—just a t-shirt and shorts.

"I'm not wearing a bra… it's showing."

"...."

I quickly turned my face away, not wanting to look at her figure any longer —it was already making my heart race more than it should. After changing, the beautiful-faced woman just stood there, unsure of what to do next. She hugged herself, sat down on the bed, and pursed her lips as if thinking.

"Now that you've changed, you should head home. Oh, and don’t forget to take some medicine—you’re already catching a cold."

"I’m happy."

"About what?"

"You’re worried about me."

She smiled in satisfaction, a smile I hadn’t seen in a long time. But I just frowned and shrugged.

"Well, after all you're a fellow human being and we live on the same planet.

Now, go. I’ll walk you to the front gate. Oh, and cross your arms while you walk… it’s a little too obvious that you’re not wearing a bra."

She smiled but said nothing, obediently crossing her arms as she walked downstairs. She greeted my mom briefly. Mom looked like she wanted to chat, but I cut in before the conversation could start—I didn’t want her staying any longer.

"Khun Mui has to leave now, Mom."

"I’ll come visit again,"

She announced, completely ignoring my opinion.

I shot her a glare. At first, I had planned to walk her to the front gate, but I changed my mind and took her all the way to her car instead.

"Message me when you get to your condo,"

I said without looking at her.

The beautiful-faced troublemaker took that as an invitation to tease me.

"Can I call instead?"

"Just text me. I don’t want to hear your voice. And don’t come see me again. This ends here."

"21 days. Start counting."

"No matter how many days, it won’t change anything. If anything, you’ll just annoy me even more."

She looked a little disheartened but let out a small sigh.

"Just 21 days. I promise that if it doesn’t work out the way I hope, I’ll leave your life forever."

The word *forever* made my chest feel oddly heavy. But I hid it behind an expressionless face.

"Good."

"So that means… you agree to 21 days?"

"It’s not like that..."

Then she drove away, leaving me with nothing but her smile in the rearview mirror. I stood there, frowning, but my heart was still racing from that smile.

With a sigh, I turned and walked back inside, only to find my mom peeking curiously, clearly intrigued. It had been years since she last saw Mui, and she wasted no time bombarding me with questions.

"What’s going on? Why did Khun Mui suddenly show up after disappearing for so long?"

"She just had something on her mind and drove over to talk. It’s nothing."

"Is she asking to get back together?" I blinked in surprise.

"Back together? What do you mean?"

"Weren’t you and Khun Mui dating?"

"Mom." My eyes widened.

"Khun Mui is a woman."

"Oh, don’t play dumb. Your father and I aren’t clueless. Whoever you love, we love too. But we thought you two broke up since she disappeared for years. So why is she back now? Trying to win you over?"

I knew my parents had their suspicions, but I never expected them to come right out and say it. I hesitated for a moment before muttering,

"Something like that, I guess."

"Three years and she just now decides to come back? Isn't that a bit too long?"

"It *is* too long. And we’re never getting back together."

"Yeah, sure,"

Mom said with a small smirk.

I frowned.

"What’s that supposed to mean?"

"Oh, nothing. It’s just that your face is practically glowing. She probably won you over the moment she showed up at the door."

"That’s not true. I didn’t smile. I have no intention of getting back with her… She asked for 21 days to try and change my mind. And if she fails, she’ll leave… forever."

Mom scoffed.

"Forever? Sounds like something out of a novel. Do people even say that in real life?"

"Either way, it’s not happening. There’s no hope."

"Well, I like Khun Mui."

"Then *you* should date her."

"And where would that leave your father?"

I couldn't be bothered to argue with Mom, so I just turned and walked upstairs.

But as I passed by, I noticed the clothes Mui had taken off and forgotten to take with her. I picked them up, absentmindedly bringing them closer to my nose. The faint scent of her perfume still lingered on the fabric.

The moment I realized what I was doing, I quickly tossed them aside because I remember I should hate her.

***Damn it... Everything was finally going great. Why did she have to come back?***

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# Chapter 39: Starting Over Forever

Alright, I’ve already moved on from the past. After getting through last night, I told myself that today I would forget about her present and never go back to the past.

Even if I have to "*start over*" again, so be it. I’ve already counted over a thousand days before—what’s one more time? As long as she doesn’t come and bother me, that’s all I ask.

Luckily, my work allows me to stay home. When I need to communicate, I do it through email. No need to meet anyone in person. That means I won’t have to see anyone—not even her.

Let’s see how she plans to spend these 21 days trying to win me back.

But… nothing happened. She didn’t do anything like I expected. Even though she said she needed 21 days—if I count yesterday, that’s already one day gone. Normally, she’s someone who means what she says.

I saw it firsthand when she promised to love her ex, even after she had passed away, keeping that promise as if her heart still belonged to her. Even if it was all a lie to me, she still stuck to her word.

So this time… was she just messing around with me?

*Or… could she be sick?* 😅

That’s right—she was out in the rain yesterday. She even sneezed. But so what? That’s her problem. It has nothing to do with me.

Irritated… She said she would come to make it up to me, but now that she hasn’t shown up, it feels like I’m the one waiting for her. This doesn't make sense.

But no matter how annoyed I am, I have enough pride not to text her to check if she’s okay. That would make it seem like I care when I don’t.

Besides, today has been a great day for my book sales—nearly thirty copies sold, breaking my personal record. And that’s not even counting the ebooks, which have been downloaded over a hundred times.

Even on bad days, there’s still something good to be found. It’s not all that terrible.

Terrible? Just because she hasn’t texted me? It’s not that bad.

. .

I went downstairs to pack books, my face tense with frustration. My mom, who was helping me, noticed and glanced at me knowingly, as if she understood me better than I understood myself.

“What’s wrong? Why do you look so grumpy? Did Khun Mui do something to upset you again?”

“Why does it have to be Khun Mui? I’ve already forgotten about her.”

“Oh, really? Then… I guess you don’t need this anymore.”

Mom picked up a bouquet of white tulips and handed it to me. My heart pounded as I looked at the flowers, then back at her, confused.

"Why did you buy flowers for me, Mom?"

"Are you crazy? Why would I waste money buying flowers? Someone left them at our front door, so I figured they were for us. Or are they not?" "They probably aren't."

"Oh, really? Then I'll just throw them away."

Mom stood up, ready to toss them as she said, but I quickly grabbed the hem of her shirt.

"I feel bad wasting them."

"....."

"I'll just keep them myself."

Mom smiled knowingly without saying anything and went back to packing. Damn it.

*Starting over… again.*

*. .*

After finishing up, I went back upstairs to continue writing my novel. To be honest, I couldn’t focus at all.

The white tulips sitting on my desk kept catching my eye, and the face of the person I suspected had sent them kept floating into my head. I tried to shake it off. This was ridiculous.

Just one flower, and it was affecting me this much? Over a thousand days of trying to forget her—did they mean nothing?

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***Ding!***

A message notification popped up on my phone. I had been zoning out, assuming it was just another spam message about free delivery promos or discounts. But when I picked up my phone and saw who it was from, my eyes widened.

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**Mui: Do you like the flowers?**

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Just that one sentence made my heart pound like a drum. Looks like this socalled new heart of mine wasn’t helping at all.

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**Me:**

**No. I never said I liked tulips.**

**Mui:**

**Then what kind of flowers do you like?**

**Me:**

**Whatever you send, I won’t like any of them.**

**Mui:**

**That’s fine. I’ll keep sending them—every kind—until you like them.**

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I pursed my lips slightly, trying hard to hold back a smile. I didn’t want to admit that I was happy that she contacted me.

*And just like before…*

*She really did what she said.*

The next day, a large bouquet of assorted flowers was delivered. Mom knocked on my door and handed me the gigantic bundle, each flower was unique. A small card was attached.

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**"Pick one and tell me which flower you like… – Mui"**

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This was the most over-the-top way to apologize. I took the flowers and counted the varieties—there were quite a lot. I had no idea what to do with them, so in the end, Mom placed them in vases all around the house.

The mix of different flowers made the whole place look chaotic. Eventually, I picked out a single yellow tulip from the bunch and placed it back on my desk, just like before.

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**Mui:**

**I’ve sent you every kind of flower now. So, which one do you like?**

**Me:**

**None of them. Don’t send any more. They’re cluttering up the house.**

**It’s messy.**

**Mui:**

**If you don’t like flowers, then what do you like?**

**Me:**

**I like everything—as long as it’s not from you.**

.

I continued throwing cold words at her, even though I felt guilty the moment I sent them. But still… this was what she deserved. Did she think she could get whatever she wanted just by asking? She had me once, but she would never have me again.

**...Maybe...No, not maybe. Definitely not.**

I was firm in my decision not to fall for her again. It hadn’t even been five days, and I was already starting to waver? No way. I had been hurt too much—tricked, heartbroken. I couldn’t forgive her so easily.

**Even if, deep down, I actually did like tulips…**😅

*Sigh.*

*Starting over… again.*

*. .*

Lately, a lot had been happening. Mui had come back, I got a new job that let me work from home. I have more fame and income were growing, and I was reconnecting with old friends.

There was even an upcoming high school reunion. Everything was happening so fast.

I hesitated about going since I wasn’t particularly close to anyone, but in the end, I decided to attend. Mom, however, was completely against it.

“What’s the point of going? You’ll just sit around talking about old times or bragging about who’s doing better in life. Flaunting wealth back and forth. I don’t see the appeal. I don’t want you going back there.”

“So, what? You don’t want me to have a social life outside of family?”

“You have Khun Mui, don’t you?”

At the mention of that name, my face instantly soured. Mom noticed and couldn’t help but ask seriously,

“What’s wrong?”

"Did something happen between you and Khun Mui?"

"Mom, what are you saying?"

I was startled the moment she asked that. But her words didn’t have any hidden meaning.

"Why are you so shocked? I meant, did you have a fight? Khun Mui disappeared for three years, and now that she's back, you don’t seem happy at all. What exactly did you break up about?"

"What breakup, Mom? We’re both women."

"Stop pretending. I'm modern enough to understand what’s what."

"And how did talking about meeting my friends suddenly turn into a conversation about Khun Mui? I don’t know!"

I waved my hands in the air as if trying to push her name out of my head.

"I've already decided to go. If they talk about the past, I’ll just listen. If they show off their wealth, I’ll show off too. Writers aren’t always broke!"

"And what if you drink alcohol? No way, I’m not taking that risk."

"I'm going, Mom. You can't stop me."

"Phuean...promise me you'll only drink soda."

"Fine."

"Soda isn’t good either."

"Then I'll drink water."

"You're not going."

"I'm going."

Now that I was older and healthy again, I had started pushing back against my mom like any grown child. Meeting people was a part of life—some encounters would be good, some bad—but my parents needed to let me live my own life.

In the end, I went to meet my friends as planned, and Mom couldn’t stop me. Even though it was a last-minute invitation, I accepted it through a Facebook inbox message.

Dad acted as my chauffeur, dropping me off at the restaurant with strict instructions—I had to be home by 10 PM, not a minute later.

Sometimes, I felt frustrated that my parents guarded me like a cobra protecting its eggs. What were they so worried about? I was fine now.

"You have to be home by 10. Dad will pick you up."

"No, I'll take a taxi."

"What? After I brought you here, you're still being stubborn? Taxis aren't safe these days."

"I'm an adult, and I still need my dad to drive me around? It’s embarrassing in front of my friends. No, I’ll get home on my own."

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That was all I said before stepping out of the car. I gave Dad a respectful wai and walked straight into the restaurant without looking back.

Around twenty people had gathered tonight. Each time someone arrived, they were greeted warmly. As I walked in…

As soon as I walked in, everyone greeted me warmly—they still remembered me.

"You really came! We haven't seen you in so long. You’ve gotten even prettier!"

Even though it was just polite flattery, it still felt nice. The atmosphere was lively, full of laughter and fun, just as expected. Everyone reminisced about the past—petanque competitions, who dated whom from different classes.

I just sat there quietly, sipping my water. (Still being a good girl for Mom, of course.) I listened, smiling, but felt a little out of place. I had missed a lot of school back then, so I didn’t have many shared memories to contribute.

"What about you? How’s your health now? You used to faint all the time as a kid. Are you doing better, or are you still getting sick all the time?"

That was what my classmates remembered about me. It made me a little uncomfortable, but I just smiled and answered casually.

"Guess what? I got a new heart! Now I’m as healthy as a normal person."

"If you’re really fine now, then you can drink alcohol, right?"

That was the turning point. I froze for a second. My friend sitting beside me saw my reaction and immediately waved her hands in protest.

"No way! Just because she’s healthy now doesn’t mean she should put bad stuff into her body. What if she collapses again? Don’t cause trouble."

Hearing that, I felt like I was ruining the fun. I didn’t want to be the reason the party lost its energy, so I shook my head.

"It’s fine. I can drink."

"Then have some! It’ll be more fun. Sitting there drinking just water is so boring."

One of the guys mixed me a drink, eager to liven things up. I took a small sip and immediately made a face—this was my first time trying alcohol.

If Mom found out, she’d probably whip me until my back was covered in welts. But I couldn't back down. I could lose many things, but not my pride or the party’s mood.

Since I had never drunk before, just one sip made my face feel hot, my heart race, and the world spin a little. But I forced myself to act normal. I even started talking more.

When my friends asked about my personal life and work, I spilled everything like it wasn’t a big deal.

"I’m a writer now. Lots of imagination, working from home. It’s pretty comfortable."

"People say writers are always broke. Is that true?"

"It depends,"

I said, taking another sip like I was really getting into it.

"Maybe it’s just luck."

"Writers can be rich! I’ve seen posts on Facebook—some writers show off their earnings, making hundreds of thousands, even millions,"

My friend beside me chimed in.

"Have you ever made that much?"

"Not that much, but enough to support myself."

"Have you ever shown off your earnings like that?"

"No way, haha!"

I laughed, covering my mouth, feeling my face heat up.

"I’m scared of the tax office. I pay everything properly, but it’s still scary. Haha… Pour me another! This is getting good."

I had no idea when I started thinking alcohol tasted good, but the conversation kept flowing, and my friends kept asking questions. So, I kept talking about my life.

"I used to have a friend… but she was in the mirror."

My story took on a surreal tone, like something straight out of a novel.

"We used to talk through the glass. And one day, she just jumped out— another version of me..."

My friends burst into laughter, thinking I was completely drunk. They listened intently, only to turn to each other and giggle.

"What? You don’t believe me? She almost took over my life! And then there was my ex, who—hey, my drink’s empty! Pour me another!"

"That’s enough."

"Come on, I’m just getting started!"

"You have to go home."

Suddenly, the table completely silent. A presence loomed behind me, hands resting firmly on my shoulders, a voice whispering near my ear.

Everyone looked stunned by the unexpected guest. Even in my tipsy state, when I turned to see who it was, my eyes widened in shock.

"How did you get here?"

"I came to take you home."

"How did you even know I was here? No, I’m not leaving with you. I’ll take a taxi. And besides, it’s only—"

I glanced at my watch.

"Oh no, it’s already 10:30?! Time flew by… Anyway, everyone, this woman came to find me because my old heart used to belong to her ex."

"You’re drunk,"

Mui said, trying to pull me up, but I shook her off.

"Don’t touch me. I’m not leaving with you!"

"You really are drunk. Just go home,"

My friends urged, concern in their voices.

"Your face is completely red."

"Why is everyone trying to chasing me away?"

"We’re not, but you’re really, really drunk," One of them replied.

"I'm not drunk! I’ll prove it—I'll stand up."

I pushed myself up, but the world tilted a full 90 degrees. I nearly collapsed, but Mui caught me just in time.

"You really are drunk. There’s no way you can get home like this. Your mom will kill you."

"I'm not going home. I still want to stay."

"You're leaving."

Her voice was sharp, commanding enough to make me freeze. The entire table fell silent under the sheer authority in her tone. I pouted, suddenly feeling small.

The guys at the table helped Mui support me, half-carrying me toward the car. When we reached it, I blinked, confused.

"Whose car is this?"

"Mine."

"Since when do you drive a Lamborghini?"

"For a while now. Business is doing well."

"Even with the economy in the gutter?"

I slurred, slipping out a curse. Mui shot me a serious look, and I instinctively shrank back.

"Sorry, boss… But I’m still not going with you. I don’t care if it’s a Lamborghini or a Ferrari."

"You don’t have a choice. Please help me get her in the car."

The scissor doors lifted, drawing a round of impressed murmurs from the guys before they awkwardly loaded me inside. Mui thanked them, but before she could get in, one of them asked who she was.

And her answer made my heart skip a beat.

**"I’m her girlfriend."**

Damn it.....her answer really bad.

Start over again...

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# Chapter 40: The Stubborn Drunk Person

She said you’d take me home, but why am I in her room now?

I had no strength to resist. The alcohol made my world spin, making it hard to walk straight, let alone fight back.

Khun Mui stepped out of the bathroom a moment later, carrying a small pink basin and a washcloth. Her voice was calm but firm as she gave me an order.

"Sit down."

"Why did you bring me here, Khun Mui? You said you’d take me home. It’s already past eleven. My mom is going to kill me!"

My words were slurred, but I was still sober enough to be scared of my mom since I was late.

"Do you really think you can go home like this? Between being late and coming home drunk, slurring your words—if you were your mom, which one would make you angrier?"

I had no argument for that. I just purse my lips tightly and continued standing.

"Sit."

"Why do I have to sit?"

"I'm going to wipe your face and body."

"No way!" I resisted.

"Why should I listen to you? I never asked you to be nice to me. Don’t act all caring just to get something out of it—I won’t fall for it."

"I’m not trying to make you like me. I’m just worried about you. You look like a stray dog right now."

"Huh?!"

My eyes widened in anger, but I was still swaying unsteadily.

"Did you just call me a dog? Are you trying to get into trouble?!"

"You have a sharp tongue when you're drunk," She remarked, unfazed.

"Fine. If you won’t sit, then just stand there."

She placed the basin on the coffee table and wrung out the cloth, and reached out to wipe my face. I tried to dodge, but in the end, I lost to her persistence.

The cool damp cloth against my skin helped ease some of the heat from my face. It made me feel a little less drunk, but I was still staggering like I was on a boat being rocked by giant waves.

"Feeling better?"

"Not at all,"

I lied. Nothing she did could possibly make me feel good.

"If wiping you down isn’t enough, then go take a shower."

"I can’t do it. I just want to sleep,"

I mumbled as I flopped onto the couch and started to lie down.

Mui let out a small sigh, her patience starting to wear thin. Her voice turned more serious.

"You can’t sleep like that. Get up."

I jumped upright at her command—my body reacted before my brain even processed it. My voice was thick with exhaustion as I spoke.

"You keep ordering me around. What do you want now?"

"Can I have you?"

"No way. I’m not that easy."

"That’s great. But we are not ready for sex tonight."

She pulled me to my feet, but I let my body go limp, making myself as heavy as possible just to annoy her.

"Go take a shower. It'll help clear your head."

"I can’t even stand properly. How am I supposed to shower?"

"I’ll bathe you."

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Before I knew it, I was in the bathroom. Khun Mui stood there with her arms crossed, staring at me with an authoritative gaze—not lustful, but firm, like a boss expecting obedience.

I didn’t know why I felt the need to comply with her, but I found myself slowly undressing, stopping when I was down to my underwear. At least I had something left to cover myself. Khun Mui shook her head.

"Take it all off."

"No way."

"How are you going to take a shower if you don’t?"

"You’re here. How can I undress in front of you?"

"It’s not like I’ve never seen you before."

"That was in the past. Things aren’t the same anymore."

"I know that it's not the same now."

Her voice softened, tinged with something almost sad. But then, just as quickly, her usual arrogance returned.

"If you won’t take it off, I’ll do it for you."

"No—hey!"

With one swift motion, she reached behind me and unclasped my bra effortlessly with just one hand.

I was stunned. Whether it was in the past or now, she was still unbelievably skilled with her hands—no matter the task.

Now, my upper body was bare, leaving only a tiny pair of panties as my last defense.

"At least let me keep one thing on. Have some respect for my dignity, please."

Khun Mui smiled at my words, seeming amused. She didn’t try to force me any further. Instead, she started undressing herself, completely naked without a hint of embarrassment.

"Why are you taking off your clothes, Khun Mui?"

I asked, eyes widening.

"I’m showering too."

"But you said you will going to bathe me."

"If I’m going to bathe you, I’ll get wet anyway. Let's bathe together."

"And you took everything off? Don’t you feel embarrassed?"

"Should I be? It’s not like you’ve never seen it before… Go take a shower, I’ll scrub your back."

I felt like I had sobered up halfway—there were just too many surprises in one night. Who would’ve thought that one drunken mistake would lead to seeing her like this?

She was always in good shape before, but after three years apart, she was even more toned. Her abs had defined lines, proof of regular and intense workouts. My heart pounded erratically. We were both standing there, completely naked.

Okay, fine—I still had my panties on. But at this point, it barely counted. And yet, I still stubbornly clung to them, acting as if that tiny piece of fabric made a difference.

The shower turned on, and before I could protest, Khun Mui pushed me under the water. The cold droplets soaked my hair and body, washing away the last remnants of my drunken haze.

She kept her word, carefully washing me, even going as far as shampooing my hair. The gentle touch of her fingers massaging my scalp made me close my eyes in unexpected comfort.

**"I miss you."**

Her voice was quiet, almost hesitant, as she spoke—perhaps noticing that I had finally stopped resisting.

I didn’t say anything, but in my heart, I had already answered:

*I miss you too.*

"Maybe it’s too late to ask this, but I’ll ask anyway."

"What is it?"

"Have you been doing well lately?"

It was such a simple question, yet it made my throat tighten.

The past three years without her had been difficult. Even though I had moved on, my heart still skipped a beat whenever I thought of her. I always forced myself to push those thoughts away.

Could I say I was doing well? Or had I just been suppressing emotions I wasn’t supposed to feel?

"I’m fine," I answered.

"That’s good to hear."

"And you? Have you been doing well?"

"Sometimes. Sometimes not. The guilt I have toward you… I tried drowning it in work, just to forget. If there’s one good thing about it, though, working harder made me richer."

"Hmm, looks like we're the same. I found myself too during the time we were apart."

"So that means… you were searching for yourself because you missed me too?"

"...."

"How about we get back together?"

She spoke with a teasing lilt, rinsing the last of the shampoo from my hair. Then, without warning, she wrapped her arms around me from behind.

Our wet bodies pressed together, skin against skin, the heat between us mixing with the steam of the shower. I could no longer tell if the warmth I felt was from the water or something more primal stirring within me.

"Don't take advantage of a drunk person. Even if I'm drunk, I still have enough sense not to give in so easily."

"Don't you love me, even a little?"

Her voice was soft, pleading, making me weak, but I remained strong.

"I think about it. But I don’t miss you. A book with the same ending will always end the same way."

"Then let's tear out the old ending and rewrite a new one," she countered.

"I'm tired. Let's stop here."

She tightened her embrace, holding me firmly against her. I had to fight against my own instincts, my own raw emotions, to keep anything from happening that I might regret when sober.

"Are you going to force me?"

I asked quietly.

"Why, is mutual consent not an option?"

"If I let this happen,"

I said, voice turning cold,

"when morning comes, we won't have to see each other again. Ever. Your choice."

Khun Mui clicked her tongue, loosening her hold on me. She turned me around to face her, studying me intently.

"Fine. I won’t force you. But if you make the first move tonight…"

"Not happening." "Let’s see about that."

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Ah, so this is what being drunk feels like. A feverish heat coursing through me, the world spinning, my limbs heavy, yet a strange, reckless courage filling me in ways sobriety never allowed.

Now, we were lying in bed together. I turned my back to her, putting as much distance as I could. But she, being herself, rolled over and draped an arm across my body as if claiming her right to do so.

"Don’t touch me."

"Not even a little cuddle? You’re adorable when you're sulking like this."

She laughed and pulled her hand away, but I don't know why I felt irritated when she pulled her hand away. Did I give up just by saying that? What happened to sticking around until the twenty-one days were up?

"Then Khun Mui, let's sleep."

I let out a long sigh, acting annoyed, but in fact I was feeling some raw emotion that had flared up since I took a shower. Right now, I felt hot, restless, and my body was craving it so much that I tried to suppress it.

When I saw that she was lying on her side with her back to the other side, I felt even more uncomfortable and irritated. I was restless lying there by myself. Khun Mui, who saw that I was tossing and turning, probably couldn't sleep either, so she asked with concern.

"Are you not feeling well? Should I go buy you some hangover medicine? Maybe it will help."

"Can you just stay still?"

I said, then turned to her side, staring at her and pressing my lips together tightly. The beautiful girl looked into my eyes for a moment and smiled as if she was starting to get a sign.

"And if I don't?"

"You have to stay still."

"...."

"...I'll take care of things myself."

Before I could think twice, I climbed towards her by straddling her body. It seemed that I could no longer resist the drive from within. The pretty girl laid on her back, looking at what I would do next. She didn’t move as I asked her to. As for me, I straddled her legs with my clothes still on and moved slowly.

"You're burning up," she murmured.

"God, you're so damn sexy like this."

"Don't talk."

"Fine."

"Be quiet."

I set my own pace, grinding against her, gripping her shoulders. The pretty girl raised her legs to give me a better position. I burying my face against the curve of her neck.

My lips found her skin, biting, marking, losing myself in the way she responded—her sharp intake of breath, the way her body tensed beneath mine. The sound of her, the way she gasped just slightly, sent my pulse racing, like someone who was enjoying the pleasure alone and tormenting the other party by hurting her.

My body went still, my breathing ragged. The fire within me slowly dulled to embers as exhaustion took over. I collapsed against her, nuzzling into her warmth, unable to lift myself away.

"Let me stay like this for a bit," I whispered.

"For as long as you want,"

And with that, I closed my eyes. I didn’t know when I drifted off, but by the time I woke up… It had already begun..

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# Chapter 41: So embarrassing.How could I do that?

I was awake, but I still lay in bed. Now, I was lying face down on my pillow while Mui had already gotten up to take a shower. She was still inside the bathroom, and because she woke up, I woke up too.

The effects of the alcohol had mostly worn off, leaving behind only a pounding headache that felt like my head was about to explode. But no matter how much my head hurt, it was nothing compared to the embarrassment of what I had done last night.

Even though I was drunk, I remembered everything that happened.

Not long after, the sound of running water stopped. The bathroom door opened, but Khun Mui lingered in the dressing room. I pretended to be asleep because I couldn’t face her after what had happened last night.

About ten minutes later, she came out and stopped beside the bed. Then, she sat down next to me and gently shook my shoulder, speaking in a soft, affectionate voice.

"Phuean, wake up and go take a shower. I’ll take you home."

"Mmm..."

I pretended to groan sleepily, even though I was already wide awake. The beautiful-faced woman paused for a moment before lightly tapping my cheek and laughing.

"If you don’t wake up, I’ll kiss you."

"....."

I pursed my lips tightly. She probably already knew I was awake but was just playing along. Finally, I opened my eyes to meet her gaze. Her eyes were full of warmth and concern, making me melt.

"Fine, I’ll go shower."

"So cute."

I got up from the bed, preparing to go to the bathroom, avoiding her eyes the entire time. But just as I was about to leave, Khun Mui grabbed my arm without saying a word.

"What?"

"Nothing... I just wanted to look at you right after you wake up. You're so cute."

"Messy hair, unwashed face, unbrushed teeth—you call this cute? Do you ever say anything truthful?"

"I love you."

"....."

"That’s the truth."

"Liar."

I shook off her hand and quickly ran into the bathroom to shower and change. The first thing I noticed was a toothbrush with toothpaste already squeezed onto it. There was only one toothbrush, which meant it was hers.

I stared at it for a moment, thinking, before picking it up and using it without hesitation. There was nothing to be embarrassed about anymore. After all, we had already done much more than this last night. Sharing a toothbrush was nothing compared to that.

After I finished showering and getting dressed, Khun Mui had already prepared a fresh set of clothes for me—her own clothes. Our sizes weren’t too different, and that included her underwear. Once I was dressed, I stepped out to face her, deciding to bring up last night’s events.

"I was really drunk last night."

"..."

"And… a lot happened."

That included everything I had done. Khun Mui kept a neutral expression, probably trying to keep me from feeling awkward, or maybe she just didn’t mind.

But the more indifferent she seemed, the worse I felt. I didn’t know how to react anymore.

"So… don’t take it seriously."

"Since when have I ever taken things like this seriously? Besides… it was fun."

Her words "it's fun" make my face burn. If I looked in a mirror right now, I was sure I’d be as red as a tomato. Alright, I needed to make things clear.

"Let’s just pretend last night never happened."

"Wow, that sounds like I got used and tossed aside."

"I was drunk!"

I waved my hands around frantically, trying to defend myself.

"It’s not like this happens often—oh!"

As I spoke, my eyes landed on her neck—covered in dark marks. Evidence of my reckless behavior last night when my emotions had completely taken over.

I ran a hand over my face, trying to keep my composure, before finally saying what I had to say.

"Let’s not meet each other again." "But it's not even twenty-one days yet."

Her voice held a hint of disappointment.

"I haven’t even had the chance to properly show you how much I care."

"There’s no need. Everything you do is just annoying."

I searched my mind for the cruelest words possible—the kind someone would use to break things off.

"I moved on a long time ago. I don’t want to keep restarting over and over again. I’m tired."

"You say that, but you’ve restarted just like me. The difference is, I’m already on two, three, four… I’ve lost count."

"No matter how high you count, I want this to end here. There’s so many things in this world for us to do and to see… Let me go and find someone better, Khun Mui."

"...."

"I hope you understand. You’re smart, and you know what I say. And don’t bother driving me home—I’ll take a taxi myself."

"But I already told your mom I’d take you home."

"If you're going to start taking things seriously, then start now. I don’t want to be weak when it comes to you anymore."

I cut her off. Khun Mui closed her eyes for a moment before nodding.

"Then at least let me walk you to the taxi."

"But—"

"No but..."

Since I was firm, she was firm too. Fine. Walking me to a taxi wouldn’t shake my resolve. I am not that nervous.

We both left the room and took the elevator down in silence. I kept a noticeable distance between us, making it clear how serious I was.

Through the reflection in the elevator’s glass panel, I saw her standing with her hands casually in her pockets, her beautiful face looking slightly downcast. I pretended not to notice.

Once we reached the ground floor, I quickly flagged down a taxi. Khun Mui opened the door for me with the utmost care and gentleness. Just as I got into the car, she made my heart race one last time with a simple request.

"Text me when you get home."

"...."

"If you don’t, I’ll drive to your house myself."

"Fine. I’ll text you."

. .

As expected, when I got home, my mom scolded me endlessly. She even figured out I had been drinking and was too drunk to come home. I stared at her in surprise and immediately blamed the person who had picked me up last night.

"Did Khun Mui tell you, Mom?"

"Did she need to? The moment I knew you didn’t come home, I could guess. She didn’t say anything."

"If she didn’t say anything, then how did you know? Maybe I just wanted to stay over at her place because we used to date."

"But you broke up, didn’t you? Exes don’t randomly sleep over unless there’s a good reason. Khun Mui knew that if she brought you home reeking of alcohol, I’d kill you."

"And yet I came home looking fine, and you’re still mad." I pouted.

Mom bared her teeth and raised a hand as if she was about to smack me, but I knew she wouldn’t.

"Still arguing? You know your health isn’t good."

"I’m fine now, Mom. Stop babying me so much. Let me live a normal life— I just want to be like everyone else."

"Your heart isn’t ‘like everyone else’s.’ Instead of taking care of your body, you’re putting bad things into it."

"I’m not talking to you anymore. You just keep nagging."

"Phuean....I nag because I love you! Hey, don’t just walk away from me!"

If I stayed, she’d just keep going. So I rushed upstairs, locked my bedroom door, and collapsed onto my bed, completely drained.

Not long after, my phone chimed with a message from a certain beautifulfaced person. I opened the screen, and I couldn't help but smilev—before quickly frown again when I realized what I was doing.

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**Mui: Did you get home yet?**

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But being the stubborn person that I was, I just read it and didn’t reply. She didn’t send anything else after that.

What? That’s it? She could’ve at least texted again. Or called!

Wait… why was I acting like I wanted her attention?

I tossed my phone aside and closed my eyes, trying to sleep. When I woke up again, two hours had passed. Maybe it was because I was still hungover, but after some rest, I felt much better. The room had stopped spinning, and my headache was gone.

I went downstairs to find something to eat.

"Finally came down, huh? I made some rice porridge—I’ll heat it up for you."

"Thanks, Mom."

No matter how much she nagged, in the end, she still took care of me.

As I waited, my eyes drifted to the TV, which was showing a news report about a car accident. A vehicle had crashed off the road. My brow furrowed slightly when I recognized the model of the car. My heart dropped.

"The porridge is ready. Why do you look like that?"

"Mom…Khun Mui..."

"What?"

"That’s Khun Mui’s car."

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❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ ❤ **sunyan**

# Chapter 42: Stop Counting

My mother looked back and forth between the news and my face, her expression turning pale like mine.

"No way... Khun Mui doesn't drive this model."

"Khun Mui just bought a new one... No, that can't be."

I quickly grabbed my phone and called her. But the call kept disconnectingthree, four times. My growing anxiety killed my appetite completely. I ran upstairs to grab my wallet, ready to leave the house immediately.

"Where are you going?"

"To see Khun Mui."

"It might not be Khun Mui's car."

"It has to be hers-a Lamborghini."

"There are plenty of people who drive that brand."

"It's not just a coincidence. I have to check."

I kept trying to call her, but the call wouldn't go through So, I decided to call her workplace instead. Khun Mui's secretary greeted me cheerfully, but when I asked if Khun Mui had come to work, she denied it

"No, she didn't come in today."

I turned back to the TV, but the news had already switched topics. Without hesitation, I rushed outside and called for a motorcycle taxi near my house.

Seeing me act recklessly. Mom quickly ran after me and grabbed my arm.

"Where are you going to look for her?"

"The place in the news."

"Do you even know where that is? I didn't catch it earlier."

"I didn't listen either"

"Calm down. It's probably not Khun Mui."

"Mom, that's her car. I remember it. A brand-new one- it's definitely Khun Mui's. Khun Mui messaged me earlier, but I didn't reply. What have I done?"

Tears streamed down my face as guilt consumed me.

"I played too hard to get. If something happened to Khun Mui, I...-"

"Go check her condo first. If she's not there, then call the hospitals. I'll try to find out from the internet where the accident happened. Whatever you do, stay calm, Phuean. Don't panic."

"Yes, Mom"

"Do you want Dad to drive you? Taking a motorcycle is dangerous."

"But it's faster in traffic. I can't talk now, Mom. I'm too worried."

I told the motorcycle taxi driver to take me straight to Khun Mui's condo and hopped on, my mind burning with anxiety. I had guessed right-today, the traffic was worse than usual, though I had no idea why.

Luckily, the motorcycle could weave through narrow alleys, and before long, I arrived at the condo. But I couldn't go up because access to the elevator required a keycard. I had no choice but to approach the front desk and explain why I needed to go upstairs.

"I'm here to make sure she's safe. She's not answering my calls. Please, let me go up."

The receptionist recognized me immediately since Khun Mui had brought me here last night, and this wasn't my first visit. Still, she had to follow the rules, so she tried calling Khun Mui's room. No one answered.

"She's probably not home."

"Please, just let me go up and knock on her door at least."

My voice trembled.

The receptionist looked at me with sympathy and hesitation before calling security to escort me up. As soon as we reached the door, I knocked hard, almost pounding on it.

"Khun Mui! It's me, Phuean. Open the door! Khun Mui!"

No response. I rubbed my hands together anxiously. I just needed to know she was here. Was that too much to ask?

"Can we break in?"

"If no one answers, that probably means no one's inside. Please calm down and try calling her again."

"You! I've already called her hundreds of times, and she hasn't picked up! What's the harm in opening the door? I just need to make sure she's okay!"

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*Click!*

The door unlocked from the inside.

Khun Mui stood there, looking groggy as if she had just woken up. Both I and the security guard froze mid-argument.

"Phuean? What are you doing here? And with security?"

"Are you okay?"

"Why wouldn't I b-"

Before she could finish her sentence, I threw my arms around her and burst into tears, overwhelmed with relief. Khun Mui looked confused but hugged me back, gently patting my back. Then, she dismissed the guard and pulled me inside.

Just then, my mom called.

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[Phuean, that wasn't Khun Mui's car. The crash happened in Chanthaburi. Didn't Khun Mui stay in the city?]

"I've found Khun Mui."

[Look at you, panicking for nothing. Didn't you say that car had to be hers? Hand the phone to Khun Mui.]

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Feeling a bit embarrassed, I passed the phone to Khun Mui without daring to make eye contact. She talked to my mom for a bit before hanging up. Then, she casually smoothed her slightly messy hair and turned to look at me- before flashing a teasing smile.

"You thought I was dead?"

"Well, you drive a Lambo..."

"And so do plenty of other people."

"But not everyone."

"And I'm not the only one who drives one. Your mom said the car in the news was yellow. Mine's lime green."

"...Oh."

My face fell. The tears I had shed earlier almost felt like they were retreating back into my eyes. So basically... I rushed all the way here for nothing.

"I must've mixed up the colors."

"You were in my car just last night."

"It was dark! How was I supposed to remember?"

Khun Mui chuckled.

"Still, I'm happy you were this worried. Even though just yesterday, you broke my heart by telling me we should never see each other again."

I stiffened. Now that I knew she was safe, my pride kicked in again. Straightening my posture, I forced a cold tone.

"Well, I'm glad you're fine. I'll be going now."

I turned to leave, reaching for the doorknob-but stopped when I felt a hand gently grab my arm.

"You're leaving already?"

Her voice had a slight whine to it, making my heart melt. I had no idea how many times I had counted to one since seeing her. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath, bit my lip, and turned to face her. She was looking at me with that soft, pleading expression that made it impossible to walk away.

"Screw it."

"...."

"I'm done playing hard to get. I am not counting yo one anymore. I've stopped counting."

"What do you mean?"

I lunged forward and kissed her, pushing her down onto the bed with nothing but my overwhelming emotions guiding me. Khun Mui's face was frozen in shock, unable to react, until she finally collapsed onto the mattress with me straddling her.

I bit my lip, savoring the sight of her beneath me. My arms pinned her down, keeping her from going anywhere.

The longing I felt for her was immeasurable-far beyond anything I could count. It wasn't about old heartbreaks anymore. This was real. This was me.

**"I missed you."**

"Phuean..."

"Honestly, I was starting to move on. But then you showed up and made me start over from one again. If you wanted a fresh start with someone else, you shouldn't have let me see you."

"I don't want to start over with anyone else."

"Then let's start over together."

Silence filled the room. Khun Mui gazed at me, her eyes welling with tearstears of relief, of happiness. I looked into those beautiful eyes and smiled, feeling my own heart swell with emotion.

"This time, there are no more excuses. I don't have your ex's heart anymore."

"No more excuses," she whispered.

"Thank you, Phuean. I love you... for who you are."

"When did it start for you?"

"When I lose you."

"You're lucky,"

I leaned down until our noses touching.

"Because your Phuean is back."

"Yeah... really lucky."

She laughed softly, and from there, we made up for lost time. Last night, I had taken the first step, but this time, we were both in it together-giving, sharing, feeling. And from the way things were going, this love was nowhere near ending anytime soon.

We are starting over. It's counting one in love, not counting one to forget...

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As they say lying down and talking is better than sitting and talking. Maybe this was what they meant. Now, here we were, both of us are naked, speaking without words-just touches, breaths, and heartbeats.

We looked like we had just run a marathon, our skin glistening with sweat, our chests rising and falling heavily. Both of us lay flat on our backs, staring at the ceiling in silence.

The quiet stretched on for too long, so I finally spoke first.

"I lost to you... I couldn't even last 21 days."

"You broke my heart."

"And now?"

"Feels like we're 14 again."

"....."

"....."

We both giggled before turning to face each other, gazing into each other's eyes with nothing but affection. I had been enchanted by her from the very first moment-three years ago, and even now.

A woman as beautiful and perfect as her... how did she end up with me? I had wondered about it every single day, and today, I decided I had to ask.

**"Why do you love me?"**

**"No reason."**

"That's the first time you've answered like this."

Normally, whenever I asked for a reason, she always had one. She'd say I was beautiful, or that I had a great body, or that she loved how easily I laughed-something like that. But this time, she had nothing to say.

"I once read a book. It said... love has no reason. If it has a reason, then it's not love. And right now, I have no reason to love you anymore. If you ask me, I won't be able to answer."

"Sounds like a good book." I smiled.

"So what about before, when you always had an answer?"

"Maybe I didn't love you enough back then. And that feeling has haunted me ever since... When you left, in these past three years, there wasn't a single day I didn't think about you."

"....."

"I've counted from one to a thousand. But the moment I see you again, it starts from one all over again-and I think it always continue like this. I have no reason for loving you anymore."

"You sure know how to sweet-talk."

"I just need to finally say how I feel. If I lose you again, I don't think I can handle it. I've already lost love once, and then you came and filled that space."

"Are you the owner of my heart?"

"Yes.."

"Why are you so obsessed with that heart?"

"It was a promise."

She reached out, cupping my cheek, then puckered her lips playfully.

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

"We're being honest with each other, aren't we?"

"Yeah, well... we don't even have any clothes left to hide behind,"

She teased, making us both laugh. Then, she continued.

"My ex once told me that if she ever passed away, her heart would still be here. That if I still loved her and didn't want to feel like she was truly gone, I should find the person who received her heart... and fall in love with her all over again." "I see..."

"Are you mad?"

"If it were before, I probably would be. But it's been three years. My heart's grown a lot... though I was really stupid about it before."

"Guess we should thank that news report for making you misunderstand and rush over here." "Don't even-"

"You're so cute."

We tumbled together again, playfully wrestling rather than anything more serious. Our laughter filled the room in a way it never had before. Even she looked happier than ever.

"When I heard you had an accident, all those stupid reasons vanished in an instant. I kept blaming myself, wondering why I ever hurt you like that. If I loved you, why did I have to play hard to get?"

"And now we've ended up here. It's a pretty nice story, don't you think?"

I glanced out the window and saw that the sky had darkened. I had rushed over here in the afternoon, and now it was almost nightfall. Seeing that, I realized-I had to leave soon.

"I should get going. I've been here too long. Mom's probably wondering why I haven't come home yet."

"Can't you stay? I still miss you."

She hugged me again, rubbing her head against my chest like a cat.

"Your mom knows you're with me. She probably won't mind."

"That's true... What kind of spell did you cast on my parents, anyway? They love and accept our relationship more than trying to break us apart."

"Because I'm talented, smart, and beautiful."

"Great. Now I have a reason to hate you."

"....."

"But I still have to leave anyway."

I slowly sat up, feeling sore all over. After everything that happened, my body felt like I had just done an intense workout without rest. I knew I was going to sleep like a rock tonight-probably without dreaming at all.

"Would you mind taking me home?"

"I would mind."

"What? You're just going to stop caring about me now that you got what you wanted? I thought you'd take better care of me"

"It's because I don't want you to leave."

"You know how strict my parents are about curfews."

"But your mom doesn't even check up on you that much, does she?"

"It is true,"

I nodded in agreement. But since I usually went home on time, the thought of passing the deadline made me feel worried anyway.

"Hey, hey, take me home. I'm afraid I'll fall asleep in the taxi."

"Are you crazy? Of course, I'll take you home. Who would let you take a taxi back? But... I still want to be with you a little longer."

"You're totally head over heels,"

I giggled and leaned down to kiss her cheek.

"But I really have to go now. By the way, where did our clothes and up?"

I looked around, searching for the scattered clothes, picking them up piece by piece. Khun Mui sat up and watched me get dressed, deep in thought, before suddenly blurting out.

"Why don't we move in together?"

"...What?"

"Let's live together. Or, if you want to... let's get married."

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# Chapter 43: The Right Place

Finally, I was free from my family. At first, my parents were strongly against the idea of me moving in with Mui at her condo. But when she spoke to them and assured them she would take good care of me, they eventually gave in.

She was reliable, and my parents had always liked her. Though they hesitated for quite some time, in the end, they agreed to let me go.

Now, I was packing only the essentials. Mui had told me I didn't need to bring anything at all-she had already prepared everything. But when I mentioned that leaving my belongings behind would feel like a sign that I would return home, she immediately relented, as if afraid my words might come true.

Sometimes, she was surprisingly cute, believing in omens like that.

Still, I didn't have much to take with me- just personal necessities like my toothbrush, comb, and my usual perfume. Mui was right; her place had everything I needed. I could walk out of this house with nothing at all.

Well.... at least I had my toothbrush.

As I was finishing up in the bathroom, a voice suddenly spoke up. Startled, I dropped what I was holding. When I looked up at the mirror, I saw someone I hadn't seen in over three years.

For a moment, I wondered if I was dreaming. If everything that had happened before had just been a figment of my imagination- because it had all been too miraculous to be real.

"Hey... How've you been?"

"...You're not dead."

"Is that how you greet me?"

"No, I mean... you jumped off the bridge"

Was it just a coincidence that she appeared in front of me now? Or was something else at work?

Either way, she was really standing there. She hadn't changed a bit-her hair, her outfit, het confident smirk. But there was something different this time.

She looked happy.

What had happened to her after that day?

"I missed you,"

Faen said, leaning casually against the sink.

"It's been a while since we last saw each other."

"Three years"

"A lot happened during that time"

"Do you even know how scared I was that the authorities would find your body?"

"After everything I did to you, you still care about me? I have to admit, I'm touched"

She scratched her cheek awkwardly, looking almost embarrassed.

"I don't even know what I was thinking back then. Trying to take everything from you... just because your life seemed so much better than mine."

"That's all in the past now."

"Yeah... the past is the past."

We both fell silent, reminiscing about the things she had done. Somehow, it all felt like a story-one we could laugh about now, something to tell future generations like a strange fairy tale.

Then, as if trying to change the subject, she suddenly blurted out-

"I have a girlfriend now."

"Huh?"

"She's a doctor"

"A doctor? Wow"

"She is as good as your precious Mui, I'd say,"

She teased, winking.

"In fact, your Mui exists in my world too. And guess what? I won her over."

"Wait- Khun Mui? In your world? She's a doctor there?"

"Yep," she grinned.

"But she's nothing like your Mui-just looks the same. I was shocked when I first saw her. Hes name is Mew."

"Another 'M' name, huh?"

I laughed, feeling oddly excited by all of this.

"So... how's your life now?"

She took a deep breath, then smirked.

"Jumping off that bridge was like getting a fresh start. I became famous overnight."

"Famous?"

"Yeah! People were amazed when I was found floating in the water after three days-alive. Reporters swarmed me. My story went viral."

I listened, wide-eyed, as she recounted everything that had happened since then. There were so many details, and surprisingly, most of them were good.

"Oh, and now I'm a musician"

"A musician?"

"Yeah. I, uh... borrowed some songs from your world and introduced them here."

She grinned shamelessly.

"Top of the charts. Nationwide hits."

"You're actually bragging about that?"

"I couldn't help it! The music from your world is amazing, and this world didn't have anything like it. So now, I'm a successful singer, making good money."

I shock my head, half amused, half exasperated.

"Well, congrats. But if you're making good money, why are you still hanging around in a bathroom?"

She chuckled

"I'm packing up. Getting ready to move in with my girlfriend."

I blinked, then let out a small laugh.

"What a coincidence. So am I."

"So, you're moving in with your Mui? You two have really come a long way. I thought you might have broken up for good" "We did-three years ago. But now that we're back together..."

I placed a hand over my heart and gave her an update.

"I have a new heart now."

"Wait, what? How did that happen?"

This time, I told my own story. She listened intently, her mouth falling open a few times in shock. When I finally finished, she smiled.

"That's great. Nothing can stand in your way now. You don't have to question anymore whether she loves you or just your old heart. If you found your way back to each other, that's fate."

"When I saw Khun Mui again, my heart raced-not because of the old heart, but because of me. I don't know if it's my heart's doing or just my brain processing emotions, but..."

"Does it matter?" She grinned.

"Love is love. And now, we both have someone. I never realized how good it feels to be in the right place, at the right time."

"Yeah... it's fulfilling."

She hesitated before speaking again.

"I'm sorry for everything I did back then. I don't even know what came over me."

"I told you, let it go."

"Can you forgive me?"

"I forgave you the moment I saw your face in this mirror. I'm happy to see you again-to know you're doing well, that you're not suffering anymore. You even have fame and success now."

She let out a small laugh.

"Maybe it's fate. Oh, by the way, I have a confession to make."

"What is it?"

"I never actually did anything with Mui. All that stuff I told you before? About how she touched me and all that? I made it all up." I exhaled sharply, not surprised.

"I figured as much. Khun Mui isn't that kind of person."

"So you're saying I am?"

"I'm saying you used to be messy. But I understand why you did it." She chuckled.

"You're too understanding. If it were anyone else, they'd have smashed through this mirror to slap me by now."

"If I could reach through, I'd hug you instead. I missed you, Faen."

She blinked at me, then smiled back.

"I missed you too. But... this is probably the last time we'll ever see each other."

"As long as we both know we're doing well and have no regrets, that's enough."

Faen said with smile.

"You look brighter, you know Must be the love glow."

"Stop teasing"

We were caught up in our conversation when Khun Mui, who had been waiting downstairs, came up and knocked on the bathroom door. Faen heard it too and made a playful pout, nodding toward the door.

"Your person is here for you. Looks like it's time for us to go our separate ways. I need to leave too-my person is waiting."

"Live a good life"

"Tell that to yourself. Your love story is just beginning. Take care of it and make it last."

"You too."

"Phuean, what are you doing in there? Are you done yet?"

Khun Mui's voice came through the door, full of concern. She probably thought I had fainted or that something was wrong. I quickly called back.

"I'm done!" I turned back to Faen.

"I have to go now."

"I'm happy for you. I hope you have a wonderful life"

"Same to you."

Faen took a step back and disappeared. I stared at the mirror for a moment, feeling a lump in my throat. We had just met again, and now we had to say goodbye.

Khun Mui knocked again, bringing me back to reality. I opened the door and smiled at her.

"Are you okay? You were in there for so long."

"I was just packing, thinking about what to bring... and in the end, I only grabbed a comb and a toothbrush"

"That's all you need. But it sounded like you were talking to someone. Were you on the phone with someone I don't know?"

Khun Mui gave me a playful side-eye, smiling. I pinched her cheek lightly in response.

"Nope. I disappeared for just a little while and you came looking for me like I flew off to America or something."

"So, have you finished packing?"

"Yeah..."

"Then let's go."

"Yes. Let's go start our new life together."

"Yeah..."

I smiled at her and wrapped my arms around her. Khun Mui laughed, surprised by my sudden affection, but hugged me back.

This must be what it feels like to be exactly where you're meant to be, at the right place, at the right time. And now, I was here-with Khun Mui.

As for my friend, she had found her person too. I could only hope with all my heart that she would live happily in her new life-no more struggles, no more lies, no more pretending to be someone else like she used to.

"Let's go"

Khun Mui pulled away gently, picked up my bag, and took my hand, holding it firmly as if afraid I might get lost or change my mind. I locked at our joined hands, squeezed hers a little tighter, and smiled with all the love I had. Then, I said something I had probably never said before.

**"I love you."**

"Hmm?"

"If I never told you before, I'm sorry. And if you want to hear it again, just ask."

"I love you too. And you can tell me anytime, because it will always be the truth." ***Right place.***

***Right time.***

***Right person.***

**I couldn't ask for anything more.**

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**-----The End-----**

# Chapter SPECIAL 01: An Old Lover

**PART: MUI**

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"Can I put my clothes together with yours?"

Phuean, my sweet-faced girlfriend, asked while putting her clothes into the closet. She had only brought four or five outfits, and I had no problem at all with her mixing them with mine.

Her every movement showed how hesitant she was about moving in with me. Seeing that, I walked up behind her, wrapped my arms around her, rested my chin on her shoulder, and whispered near her ear-because I knew I could.

"You can do whatever you want. This is your home now."

"But... you organized your clothes by color so neatly. If I mix mine in, it'll-"

"This is your home. Your things belong here,"

I repeated, making sure she understood our relationship.

"You can mess up the house, spill a drink, break a glass, or even pee in the sink if you want-so why would I care about a few clothes?"

"What kind of crazy person pees in the sink? You're ridiculous, Khun Mui!"

She pouted but still hesitated to put her clothes in the closet. In the end, I grabbed them from her hands and hung them up randomly. The once perfectly arranged rows of clothes were now a chaotic mis of colors "Khun Mai! That looks terrible!"

"It's a closet. It doesn't need to look good."

"But you're so meticulous. Your clothes are always color-coordinated, not a single wrinkle in sight. It feels like I'm messing up your whole house."

"I only arranged them because I had free time. Just put them in and come watch a movie with me. You've been standing in front of that closet for an hour now." "But-"

"Just do it."

She finally obeyed after I insisted, though she furrowed her brows, clearly unhappy with the messy wardrobe. I didn't want her to stress over such small things, so I immediately pulled her out of the walk-in closet and led her to the living room to relax.

"Are you really sure you want me to move in?" she asked again.

"I was the one who invited you, remember?"

"But you've always lived alone. Having someone move in suddenly-won't you feel uncomfortable."

"It's not like I've never been in a relationship before. You're not the first person I've dated, you know."

At that, Phuean opened her mouth as if to say something, but then she quickly shut it and just nodded in understanding.

"....."

"What? Just saying that made you go silent?"

"I just don't know what to say."

"I know you want to ask about my ex-girlfriend."

She opened her mouth again, hesitated, then closed it. I knew it was on her mind. I had only ever told her the basics about my past. She knew that my heart had once belonged to someone else, but I had never gone into detail.

Honestly, I was ready to talk about it now. We're in a relationship-there shouldn't be any secrets between us.

"If you won't ask, then I'll just tell you."

"You don't have to. It's in the past."

"You're too curious for that. I don't want you to keep wondering. I've already told you-I love you, and right now, I only love you. There's no room left for anyone else, past or future."

Even though I felt a little guilty saying it, I had to be honest.

"She's in the past now. It was beautiful, but I don't love her anymore. That doesn't mean I've forgotten her, though-I just want you to understand that."

"Khun Mui..."

I pulled her into my arms and lay back on the couch, staring up at the ceiling.

"Where should I start? Do you want to hear from the very beginning?"

"Tell me whatever you feel like. Or don't tell me at all. I'm not forcing you."

"I want to tell you."

"As you wish."

"Me and Mekhala... we started dating when we were in university together..."

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I began by telling her about the first time I met Mekhala. We had entered the same university, were in the same class, went through freshman initiation together, and were paired up as partners in one of the orientation activities. That meant she was the first friend I made there.

Because we endured the same hardships of hazing and shared the same lecture notes, we became inseparable-so much so that no one could tell where one of us ended and the other began.

People often teased us about being a lesbian couple. That annoyed me, because I saw our relationship as something special. We were best friends, but people insisted on seeing us as lovers.

"You don't need to get upset about it,"

She had told me.

Mekhala had a sweet, doll-like face. She spoke slowly, but when she smiled, she looked like a mischievous three-year-old. She was openminded-not exactly well-behaved, but not rebellious either.

"How can I not be upset? They keep saying we're a lesbian couple!"

"Mui, you're so old-fashioned."

"Old-fashioned? How?"

"Are you homophobic? Just because they teased us about being lesbians, you got that upset?"

She looked straight into my eyes. Mekhala was always firm and direct, especially when talking about things like this. It was me who looked away first.

"It's not like that. I was just worried you'd overthink it. We're close-what if the teasing made you start avoiding me?"

"Did I do that?"

"No..."

"Then why worry? Besides... being your girlfriend wouldn't be so bad.

You're beautiful. Walking next to you isn't embarrassing at all. If anything, I'm the one who doesn't seem good enough for you."

"Why are you putting yourself down like that? You're adorable!"

"See? We both look good together. If we were a couple, it wouldn't be a problem, would it?"

She was so casual about it, like it didn't bother her at all. Seeing that, I felt relieved too. We were inseparable, always going places together, speaking the same language, understanding each other without effort.

And if I didn't understand something, she would explain it patiently until I saw things her way.

But one day, everything changed. That was the day a senior from another faculty started courting Mekhala.

It wasn't surprising-she was friendly and charming. I had admirers too, but I rejected them all because I felt that having a boyfriend would mean drifting away from her. So I chose to stay single.

But Mekhla was different-she was open to anyone who pursued her. That made me feel small, like I didn't matter as much to her.

"You went to the movies with Pen-Neung?"

I asked, feeling uncomfortable when I found out my best friend had gone on a date.

"You left me behind."

"What? It was just a movie. Why are you overreacting? We didn't do anything but stare at the screen and then go home."

"Do you like him?"

"He's not bad."

"...."

"But I like you more. Watching a movie with you must've been way more fun than watching one with him."

She tried to appease me with a playful tone, but I wasn't amused. I kept pouting-just like my name, Mui.

When Mekhala saw I wasn't getting over it, she hugged me and rested her chin on my shoulder.

"Why? Are you jealous?"

"You used the wrong word. I'm protective,"

I corrected her, not wanting to make it sound awkward.

"So many people have tried to date me, but I never paid attention to any of them because I didn't want you to be alone. But you.. you don't think like I do at all."

"We're different people. We can't think the same way about everything. So that's why... no wonder you never accepted anyone who approached you. You really cared about my feelings, huh?"

"Of course. We didn't love each other equally."

"Then... should we just love each other instead?"

"Stop joking around."

"I'm serious"

She looked into my eyes with such sincerity that I nearly fell off the bed in shock.

"You..."

"If no one who approaches me is better than you, and no one who approaches you is better than me... then why not just go with the rumors?"

"The rumors? That we're a lesbian couple?"

"Do you hate the idea?"

"Well... I don't hate it, but isn't it weird? We're best friends."

"Just try one kiss and we'll find out."

"You're talking nonsense-"

Before I could finish, Mekhala lunged at me, pressing her lips to mine. At first, I resisted, but the moment I felt her warmth, my heart pounded, and my body burned like fire.

She pulled away, eyes hazy with something intoxicating, and that was all it took for me to grab her, pushing her down onto the bed.

"Damn it... you're making me feel weird."

"That just means we've liked each other for a long time."

"So... what do we do now?"

"I'll show you."

With that, she flipped me onto the bed and did exactly as she said. That was our first time. It was unforgettable, thrilling, and the moment we truly discovered love and desire.

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From then on, we were officially together. Whenever someone teased us, we didn't care. Sometimes, we even smirked and played along. Everyone in our class knew something was definitely going on, but no one paid much attention. It was university-everyone had their own lives.

But for us, life revolved around each other. After class, instead of heading straight home, we went to her dorm, spending all our time together. We were obsessed with each other, lost in a world of our own, unashamed. She was my first, and I was hers. We were each other's firsts.

And that only made our bond stronger.

I thought I could never love anyone else in this life-only her. A woman so gentle yet firm, someone who never looked away when meeting my gaze.

Sometimes, I even felt small under her sharp words when I made a mistake. She was my everything.

"I'm thinking about donating my body."

She said it out of nowhere while we were sitting in a cafe together. I was busy researching for a report when I glanced up at her over the rim of my glasses, confused.

"Why are you suddenly thinking about that?"

"Life is uncertain. I was watching a movie yesterday, and it made me realize... we never know when our time will come."

"You're not going to die."

"How do you know?"

"Because I'll protect you."

"That's adorable."

She smiled, took a small sip of her drink, and continued,

"But listen, I'm not thinking about body donation just to be kind. I want to extend my own life."

"What do you mean?"

My eyes widened with curiosity.

"Think about it. Even if I die, some part of me will still exist. If something happens to me-if my heart, liver, lungs, spleen, or whatever can be used to save someone else-it means I'm still here. I'll still be part of this world, living on through them."

"You have such a weird way of thinking."

"What?"

"Just saying... If something happened to you-"

"Don't say that."

"It's just hypothetical-"

"I said don't"

"At least listen-"

She locked eyes with me, firm and unyielding, making me shrink under her gaze again.

"Listen carefully to what I'm saying. Don't brush this off."

"Alright, alright. No need to be so serious."

As soon as I said that, the stern look on her face softened into a sweet smile-one of those smiles that could melt my heart in an instant.

"If I die and my organs are transplanted into someone else, you have to find out where they went."

"How would I even do that? They don't reveal donor identities."

"You have to do it. Find them. That way, I can always be with you forever."

"Even after death, you're still this possessive?"

"I just love what's mine... Now, promise that you'll do it. That you'll find me."

"And what exactly are you planning to donate?"

"The symbol of love-the heart."

"What..?"

**"I'm going to donate my heart."**

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# Chapter SPECIAL 02: Forever

I took Phuean to the columbarium, where the ashes of the deceased were kept.... Mekhala.

The black-and-white photo bore no smile, no expression-just a gaze that seemed to pierce through us.

Phuean glanced at the picture, then at me, before reaching out to hold my hand. A silent gesture that she understood how much it must have hurt to share this story.

I smiled faintly and shook my head, as if to say it was okay.

"I'm not that sad anymore. Now, I have you."

I stepped closer, brushing the dust off Mekhala's picture with the sleeve of my white shirt, making sure it was spotless.

"I brought you here... so she could meet you."

"Do you think she'd be upset?"

"No. She's been inside you before-she understands. In a way, she's the one who led you to me."

"...Did we meet by chance, or was it something you planned?"

At her question, I simply smiled knowingly. She was wary, perhaps wondering if everything had been orchestrated by me.

"I told you, she brought you to me. It was all just a coincidence."

I laid a tulip on the ground and folded my hands in front of me.

"I'm not finished telling you the story yet."

"You don't have to finish if you don't want to."

"But I do. We've come this far, haven't we?"

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Mekhala and I had been together for a long time-practically living as one. Then one day, I was hit with a terrible period cramp. We were both starving, but I could barely move. So, she offered to go buy food.

Just before she left, she turned to me and said something that, at the time, felt sweet but strangely fluttery.

"I love you."

"What's this? You're just going downstairs to get food. Do you really have to say that?"

"I don't know. I just wanted to tell you."

"You know what? That actually makes my menstrual cramps feel better."

"That's why I said it-so you'd be in a good mood"

And with that, she opened the door and walked out.

I had no idea... that it would be the last time I ever saw her eyes. That she would never come back.

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At that time, I waited for nearly two hours-hungry, impatient, my hormones making my mood swing wildly. I was getting irritated. I tried calling her, but she didn't pick up.

I swore that when she came back, I'd scream at her three or four times just to let out my frustration.

But it wasn't until my fifth call that someone finally answered.

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**"Mekhala, where are you? I've been waiting for you all day!"**

**[I'm sorry... I'm not Mekhala. Are you someone close to her? Right now, she...]**

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The moment the stranger explained what had happened, I nearly jumped out of the window and rushed to hail a taxi.

She had been hit by a car while crossing the street, coming back with our dinner. The ambulance had taken her to the hospital, but she was in critical condition-unconscious, her body broken.

The doctors said her brain had suffered severe trauma, her internal organs were shattered beyond repair. The only thing still working was her heart. She was brain-dead. Her family had to decide what to do next.

At first, her family couldn't accept it. Neither could I. All I could do was wait outside her hospital room, unable to see her, hoping for a miracle. But she never woke up. She just lay there, trapped in a body that could no longer respond

Four days later, her family made the heartbreaking decision to let her go. The ventilator was turned off, and she was allowed to rest in peace. I cried until I had no tears left.

*My first love.*

*My best friend.*

*My first everything*

*And just like that, she was gone.*

. .

The hospital informed us that Mekhala had registered as an organ donor.

Only one thing could be used-her heart.

**And that was how I found Phuean.**

Five years passed, and I still couldn't forget. I threw myself into work, first as an employee, then as an entrepreneur.

I built a company from the ground up, determined to earn enough money to do what I had sworn I would-find the person who had received Mekhala's heart.

I poured everything into my business, growing it from just three employees to thirty, moving into a bigger office. And when the time was right, I hired the best investigator I could find.

Someone with the experience, the skill, and the determination to track down the person who now carried her heart.

Three months later, the detective returned with an answer I needed.

The recipient was a woman, three years younger than me. She had suffered from heart disease since childhood. She had always been weak, but now... now she was living a full, happy life.

I stared at her picture, silent. I had found her. But now that I had, what was I supposed to do next?

Until the voice of Mekhala, who have been spoken before, echo in my head.

"Find the recipient"

I found her, but what if I found her? I had no idea.

But whether it was fate or something else, the job opening announcement led me to meet her on the interview day. She was Phuean-the person in the photo I had just been staring at in the documents.

She was a quiet and reserved girl, lacking confidence. She sat with hunched shoulders and answered questions hesitantly, as if afraid.

Many interviewers saw that she wouldn't pass, but I was the only one who insisted on hiring her.

I was the owner. The final decision was mine. Ten voices couldn't outweigh my single vote. If I wanted something, I would get it.

And that was the beginning of everything. Phuean joined the company, and I approached her in a way that everyone could see. Even though we had nothing in common, what she had was enough for me to approached her.

**Mekhala's heart.**

But they're truly different. Her face, her posture, her demeanor-everything was different. She looked so lonely, especially when she had no coworkers to eat with because she didn't know how to approach people.

I felt both affection and sympathy for her, so I reached out to her in my own way. Even though I knew that doing so would make her a target of office gossip, I didn't care.

I didn't care if the whole world disliked her. What mattered was that I liked her.

**I love her heart.**

I approached her in the boldest way possible. Someone who had never even questioned if she liked women found herself flustered by my kindness. And that was exactly what I wanted. But she resisted me, clearly feeling that I had gone too far.

*I gave her tulips.*

*I visited her often.*

*I went running with her.*

*I got close to her family.*

. .

Phuean was a sweet gentle but decisive person. But with her girlfriend, she became fragile and insecure. Yet, she had moments of stubbornness that I found endearing.

Even though she was hesitant, she still had the courage to reject me when I pushed too hard.

The more time passed, the more I absorbed her essence. At some point, my sympathy turned into something more- but I didn't know when.

And that wasn't even the most extraordinary part.

There was the mystery of her switching places with someone else-someone with a heart on the right side.

This new person was bright and cheerful. In just one day, she connected with those around her as if she were an entirely different person.

And of course, the moment I hugged her, I felt the heartbeat from the opposite side of her chest. The scent of her was different. I knew instantly that she wasn't the same person.

Not to mention the tulips I had given her, now discarded in the trash.

That's when I started wondering-did she have a twin?

But the truth was even more unbelievable. Not only was she not a twin, but she came from another world. No one would believe me if I said it out loud, but I believed it.

She tried so hard to blend in-changing the way she dressed, altering her tone of voice-but no matter how much she tried, she was still someone else. I resisted, but I didn't show it.

I knew exactly what she was planning to do next. She even asked to come to my room, clearly preparing to take things further. But I didn't go along with it.

"You need to go home. Your mother will worry about you."

"No, she won't. Let me stay here... please?"

She clung to my arm, her eyes full of obvious seduction. I looked at her with disgust, pulled my arm away, and shook my head with restraint.

"You need to go home."

My firm tone made the impostor flinch slightly before reluctantly agreeing. In the end, she could no longer pretend to be Phuean.

Secrets never stay hidden for long. Not even mine.

Phuean found out the truth after coming to my room. She discovered the documents the detective had sent me, even though I had hidden them in my closet. I guessed the impostor had found them first and asked her to investigate further.

I was speechless, unable to say anything, and could only accept the truth. She asked if I loved her. At that moment, I couldn't answer.

I wasn't sure.

If I loved her... then what about Mekhala?

And that was when I realized- Phuean was not weak or softhearted person. She cut me off completely, without any mercy. And the distance between us lasted for three years.

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"When did you fall in love with me, Khun Mui?"

Sitting together in the car on our way to dinner, her question made me smile.

"I don't know"

"Why do you love me?"

"I already told you-there's no reason."

"Now I suddenly want a reason."

She smiled, reaching out to gently stroke my arm.

"Thank you for telling me everything. I feel at peace now. You can love me... and still love Mekhala, too."

"You're too generous."

I replied softly, holding her hand with one of mine while steering with the other.

"I admits that forgetting Mekhala made me feel guilty. But I also believe that if she truly loved me, she'd be happy that I found love again. Thank you... for taking her heart. Thank you for coming into my life."

"I don't feel worthy to you."

"You deserve it more than anyone. And don't say that again."

My voice grew firmer, making her shrink back slightly, as she always did when her confidence wavered.

"Don't look so down about yourself."

"This is just how I am. No matter how you look at it, I don't have any charm at all. I really don't understand why you love me."

"Love doesn't need a reason. If it has a reason, then it's not love."

"You got that from a book. You told me before."

"Yeah... but I only truly understood what it meant recently. Before, I had a million reasons to like you. But now, I don't have any."

"What can I do to make you happier?"

"Just smile. Be happy with the life you have left. You've been given a second chance-twice. And this second time, I have to be part of it."

"....."

"Forever."

"Forever doesn't exist."

"Then let's make it happen."

"You know... Actually I like tulips."

She changed the subject. I glanced at her, raising an eyebrow.

"Oh?"

"I don't even know when it started. They say when you receive an organ transplant, your personality can change. I used to think I liked roses, but somehow, I became obsessed with tulips instead."

"....."

"And... thank you. I love you."

I smiled as she said it, her face flushed with shyness.

"Is that from Mekhala's heart?"

"I remember when I first got this heart... it pounded so hard when I saw you. Maybe it was Mekhala's feelings."

She paused, then sighed.

"But when I found out why you liked me, I hated this heart. I must have hated it so much that my body rejected it. I collapsed, and they had to replace it immediately."

I listened in silence, pressing my lips together as guilt weighed on me. I had caused her to fall once again.

"But after getting a new heart... and meeting you again... my heart still beats just as fast as it did the first time I saw you."

I turned to her, locking eyes before giving her the biggest smile.

"Same here. Even though I knew you had a new heart, my own heart still raced the moment I saw you that day."

"So this time... we really love each other, right? It's not because of the heart anymore?"

**"Yes. We truly love each other now."**

We held hands, gripping tightly- so tightly that it felt like if I let go, she might disappear. But I wouldn't let go again.

It no longer mattered whose heart she carried.

Because now, I loved her for who she was. No reason, no conditions. She might be fragile, lacking confidence, hesitant at times-but she was still her.

"I love you for who you are."

"And I love you too... even if this heart is a new one."

We smiled at each other before looking ahead, toward the road in front of us.

The future was uncertain, but the present was what mattered most.

The road ahead was long, but we were together now.

And I believed it would stay that way forever.

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**------THE END-----**