

# Chapter 00: Like

I just got proposed to by a man...

Normally, many women would be overjoyed and even encourage their partners to propose sooner, fearing that the longer they waited, the more they might "miss out" (whatever that means). But I felt different. I wasn't feeling joyful; in fact, I was a little scared when he got down on one knee in front of the office with dozens of eyes watching us, creating a pressure that made me uncomfortable.

If I didn't respond, it might crush his ego, and he probably wouldn't have the courage to do anything else. I also didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings, so I casually responded with...

### 'I Do.'

The gold ring fit perfectly on my ring finger, shining brightly as I held on to the pole of the overhead train to keep my body from swaying as the train moved. Honestly, during such a good time, we should have gone out for dinner and maybe watched a movie, ending the night in bed.

But, well... I made an excuse that I had to rush back to work and asked to celebrate another day, which allowed me to escape back to my room alone since we lived in opposite directions.

I'm not ready...

Being in love is a good thing. It ensures that during each holiday, we won't be alone.

During Loy Krathong, I'll have friends to celebrate with. On Valentine's Day, I'll have photos to show my partner. During Buddhist Lent and the end

of Lent, there will be shared activities. That's the benefit of having a partner...

But if that's all it is, wouldn't it be better to just have friends?

I’ve thought about it many times, but there was never a valid reason to break up with the person I was with, so I let it drag on until today, the day he got serious and planned to propose. Even now, I still feel confused.

I’m filled with so many indifferent feelings. How different will it be if I get married? Will it make me feel better than I do now? No one can answer that but me.

The smell? This perfume…

I looked around, searching for the owner of the perfume, my heart racing, and discovered that it belonged to someone I didn’t know, a woman in her thirties, looking exhausted and listening to music alone.

Why do I feel so excited every time I smell this perfume? It must be taking me back to the past, meeting someone I’ve only spoken to once.

There was a study that said… smells can bring back past events, no matter how long ago they happened. Even if they’ve faded into the depths of memory, the brain remembers and can recall that it’s experienced this moment before.

For example, the smell of earth after rain takes me back to my childhood when I would travel to the countryside with my family, or the burning smell reminds me of the charcoal stove when making coconut pancakes.

This perfume... every time I smell it, I think of someone who has passed through my memories, even though it was a long time ago, about ten years, I would say.

### Chanel No. 5

I first encountered this perfume in high school. There was a friend in my class who wore it to school. Every time she showed up, she would bring this fragrance with her. Some said it was too mature for her, but strangely, she didn't give that impression at all.

It was full of elegance. She looked like a queen even in her school uniform, probably because of her personality, nature, and beautiful and striking face. Her Beauty Privilege made me biased, so I saw her every action as graceful.

But this perfume is not suitable for everyone. Although we choose to buy perfume, in reality, these perfumes choose their owners. As we know, this particular fragrance is full of composure and elegance, so when someone who lacks personality wears it, it can seem like they are prematurely aging, like me.

In the end, I can only keep it for show. Sometimes, I spray it in the air just to enjoy the scent, and every time I inhale it, memories of my old friend float back to me.

### Rattikarn

Even her name is memorable. I have never forgotten this friend’s name, but I have never said it out loud. We were not very close; we sat in opposite corners of the classroom. However, she never knew that there was a friend secretly admiring her.

The elegance of Rattikarn made this fragrance seem more precious in my eyes. Whenever I passed someone and smelled her, I would immediately turn around to see if it was her. Whether it was on the street, in a restaurant, or even now… while I was on the sky train going home, the moment I smelled someone coming through the door, I quickly scanned the area to find her. And as always, it was the same smell, but it wasn't her.

For someone who had passed through my life, did I really need to remember her so much? Ten years had passed, and the most we had done was like each other's posts on Facebook. I had never commented on anything other than stickers. Relationships like that exist too.

While I was lost in thought, Rattikarn's status appeared, as if to reinforce, '*You can't forget me.'*

As usual, I liked her post and reread the status, even though I could have simply scrolled past it.

*‘I want to make new memories.’*

So, she must be feeling uncomfortable or lonely right now. I looked at that status and tried to delve into every word to understand what she was feeling. Then, I shuddered, almost dropping my phone when a message popped up just three seconds after I liked it.

## Rattikarn:

Hello, Rungtiwa.

.

To be honest, I reread the name of the person who sent me the message several times because I was in a daze. It felt like I was thinking about her so much that the message seemed to blur my vision, and it couldn’t be real.

## Rungtiwa:

Hey, beautiful.

.

As I typed, I couldn’t help but raise an eyebrow before smiling, feeling a little bad for sending this. “Beautiful” is something I think about her every day, but some things don’t need to be

typed like that.

## Rattikarn:

Do you remember my face?

## Rungtiwa:

Of course I do! We’re friends on Facebook, and your profile picture is right there.

## Rungtiwa:

You were beautiful back then, and you’re still beautiful now.

.

After I complimented her, I started to feel more at ease and less nervous. The person on the other end was silent for several minutes before finally responding, and I almost asked her if she was upset. Some women might take a compliment about their beauty as an insult.

Everyone wants to be seen for their talents more than their looks or something. But fortunately, she didn’t seem like the type to overthink things like I was worried about.

## Rattikarn:

Soft-spoken. By the way, are you free? You responded immediately after I posted that status.

## Rungtiwa:

I’m on the train, just playing around on my phone to kill time on the way. You should be the one asking!

## Rungtiwa:

You never text me, after all this time why did you contact me all of a sudden? I thought something was wrong!

## Rattikarn:

Actually, I was going to ask you to borrow money.

**Rattikarn**: Just kidding! Don’t be silent!

## Rungtiwa:

No, I was just thinking about how to respond. I have 99 baht in my account.

## Rattikarn:

So broke! Which station are you at?

**Rungtiwa**: Phrom Phong.

## Rattikarn:

Get off at Victory Monument.

## Rattikarn:

I’ll take you to dinner.

## Rattikarn:

If you want to know if I’m serious, try getting off there.

## Rattikarn:

See you at exit three.

## Rungtiwa:

Why?

## Rungtiwa:

You’re kidding, right?

## Rungtiwa:

Don’t mess with me!

.

I looked at these messages, frowning but smiling. It had been so long since we last spoke, and suddenly we were joking and challenging each other as if we had been close friends for years.

But the strangest part wasn’t her teasing; it was me, sitting at the wrong station, having gone to Victory Monument instead of going home like I was supposed to. As I walked out of the train station, I was still perplexed about what I was doing. Just because she said she would wait at exit three didn't mean she would actually be there.

*Why wasn’t I going home?*

But since I was already here, changing trains to go home seemed like a waste of time. I might as well check exit three, like Rattikarn said. If I got there and didn’t find her, I could go on a full-blown rant about how she was all talk. However…

*She's really here.*

Her deep voice, unchanged as ever, along with that familiar scent, made my heart skip a beat for a moment. We stood there, staring at each other in silence for what seemed like an eternity until I finally took a step closer, raised an eyebrow, and asked to be sure:

"Is that really you, Rattikarn? You’re even more beautiful in person!" "You’re the same,” she replied.

She was a beauty no one could deny. Her black silk shirt shone against her dark blue jeans, highlighting her fair skin. Her athletic demeanor left me speechless.

"I’m surprised you come with just a simple message." "What would you have done if I hadn’t shown up?" "Probably just sitting there eating alone."

"What kind of humor is inviting a friend you haven't seen in ten years to dinner?"

"Well, I made a silly bet with myself. I thought whoever liked my status first, I would invite them to dinner. Luckily, it was you. If it was someone else or a coworker, I might not know how to act."

"Why would you have trouble action? You could just not text them."

"I can't! It's a game to make life exciting. Following the rules and seeing who shows up, that's the fun part."

"You're weird."

"But there's someone else weird, someone who texts and chats then she agree to meet for dinner. And for this meal, I'm paying you."

"Well, that's how it should be. According to the rules, the person who invites pays. It wouldn't make sense for me to go to a station near your house and not get anything out of it."

"You're quite the talker, aren't you? I hardly ever heard you speak in school."

"Because we never really talked. We only spoke once when…"

"Oh, the time you mentioned how good my perfume smelled, right? I thought I was the only one who remembered that moment. But I guess it’s not surprising; we’ve never really talked seriously, so the first conversation tends to stick in your mind a bit."

We stood there, awkwardly, speechless after that. I decided to change the subject.

"So, where are you taking me to eat?" "Do you have a restaurant in mind?" "Not really."

"Huh? Then why did you suggest this place?"

"I just felt like it was a good middle ground. There should be a few restaurants to choose from in the Rangsit area. It’s like a random choice, just like who would be the first to like the post.”

She shrugged lightly, causing the satin fabric she was wearing to brush against his skin.

“Sometimes randomness isn’t so bad, like now, knowing you, Rungtiwa."

Her words made me a little nervous, and I instinctively ran my hand through my hair, even though I had already tied it tightly back.

"It’s true, sometimes randomness can lead to good things"

Here we were, two strangers suddenly reconnecting after more than ten years apart, having only spoken once about perfume. Now, we were sitting on the terrace of a restaurant, watching the electric trains pass by while soft music played over the speakers.

We had ordered a few dishes, and the rest was beer. I have to admit, I’m not very good at drinking these things. For me, drinking is usually just part of socializing, but now, I was drinking to keep my perfumed companion company. She was sitting cross-legged, her chin resting on her hand, staring at the view as if lost in thought.

*Rattikarn… that’s her name. A name that means “night.”*

There’s nothing questionable about that name. Because she, in a shiny black satin shirt, reminds me of the atmosphere when the sky is dark. It is full of silence and mystery inside her. What I wonder is what made this woman's parents give their daughter that name. Maybe she was born at night, or maybe it's those pitch-black eyes that seem dark and full of wicked charm.

"You're looking at me like that, I can't move."

The pretty-faced girl, still looking at the view, spoke without even moving. I was startled a little and smiled awkwardly.

"Sorry, I got lost in thought."

"When you were looking at me, what were you thinking about?"

"I was wondering what made you have that name and why someone as beautiful as you would invite the first person who liked your Facebook post to dinner instead of inviting a lover."

I said this sincerely, full of curiosity about what she was really thinking. The pretty-faced girl leaned forward a little and turned to smile at me before taking the straw from the cup and putting it in her mouth, mimicking the pose of smoking a cigarette.

"Because I was born at night, that's why I got that name. And the reason I invited you to dinner instead of inviting a lover is because I don't have a lover."

That charming smile made me blush a little, and I secretly worried that she would notice and wonder why I was blushing.

"Isn't that a bad personality? "What do you mean?"

"Well... isn't it strange that you don't have a boyfriend even though you're so pretty? There must be some flaw, so I was asking if you have a bad personality, that's why you don't have a boyfriend."

*Laughs!*

The deep-voiced girl laughed so hard that the straw in her mouth fell out, much to her delight.

"So, just because I don't have a boyfriend, does that mean I have a bad personality? Not having one just means I don't have one. That's all. What about you? Going out to dinner with a friend you haven't seen in ten years, but no one has called you? You don't have a boyfriend?"

"I don't have."

I lied... Why did I answer like that? It felt like I was committing some kind of sin, but... it doesn't matter. Whether I have one or not doesn't affect the good relationship between us.

"Oh, so it turns out that we’re both single.”

The beautiful girl got up from her chair and went to lean against the railing, where she could look down at the street below. Seeing this, I stood next to her because I wanted to smell her. No, I just wanted to be close to her in a way that was hard to explain."

"You’re still wearing the same perfume."

"Is that so?… Hmm, someone once complimented that it smelled nice, so I thought it would suit me. Plus, this brand has been around for a long time, so it must be good to some extent."

"I actually bought some to keep at home, but I’ve never sprayed it." "Why not?"

"This perfume doesn’t suit me."

"So why buy it if it doesn’t suit you? The bottle isn’t cheap."

Rattikarn laughed a little, curious, as if she wanted to continue the conversation.

"Because smelling it reminds me of you." “...”

"When you texted me, I was thinking about you. Honestly, I was really surprised that you texted me and even invited me to meet up. A friend I’ve never spoken to, but now we’re here talking. It seems so coincidental that it’s shocking."

“...”

"But I’m surprised in a good way."

I said that so it wouldn’t seem like I didn’t like something. Why am I thinking so much? Normally, I hardly worry when I’m going to say something, until I met Rattikarn, the mysterious woman, a friend from school.

"Oh, do you know this song?"

The beautiful woman changed the subject and started paying attention to the foreign song, which had a melody and rhythm that evoked loneliness, but at the same time made my heart beat faster, while I tried to follow the lyrics, since my English wasn’t that good. Rattikarn closed her eyes, as if she was

absorbing the lyrics of the song, and I couldn’t help but stare at her, enchanted.

"You’re beautiful."

Maybe because I was starting to get drunk on the beer or maybe because the song aroused emotions, I ended up saying something I wouldn’t normally say. The beautiful woman then opened her eyes and looked directly at me.

"You're beautiful too."

To avoid seeming unfair, when I complimented her, she complimented me too, and then we fell silent.

"Actually... I don't like that perfume."

Rattikarn said, and that made me look at her curiously.

"Perfume? That Chanel one? But you've been wearing it since school, haven't you?"

"I wear it because you said it smells nice."

My heart almost stopped when she looked back at me, in time with the chorus of the song that was playing. The soft, loneliness-filled song made us both come closer, as if we were afraid that the other might move away.

*Under the street light nobody knows our name.*

The scent of the beautiful woman's perfume mixed with the aroma of cigarettes, even though she didn't smoke. Her lips were so moist that I trembled, holding tightly to the hem of her black silk blouse.

*Tracing the tree lines and shadow around your face.*

The light from the passing train allowed me to see the black shadow covering her face, but my shyness, or perhaps the fact that I was staring, made Rattikarn raise her hand and cover my eyes, while pressing her lips against mine more intensely.

*Falling asleep and waking up with the stars.*

The taste of the lipstick on her lips made me want to bite lightly, pulling her closer. She leaned towards me, resting her arms on the railing that separated us from the height.

*It's our little secret.*

We pulled away from each other and stared at each other to confirm if the other person really existed.

*We're keeping it in the dark.*

Without needing to say much, we both knew that what happened today would be our secret forever.

□□□□□

# Chapter 01: Unfriend

I dreamed about that night again...

The night I met her and accidentally kissed her without knowing what would happen next. It was nothing more than a kiss. We both walked home, waving as if nothing had happened, and everything went back to normal.

We became just Facebook friends again.

How much did I have to feel to keep that memory as a recurring dream? Her scent still lingers in my senses, and the wetness of her lips at that moment remains etched in my mind as if it happened yesterday, even though three weeks have passed.

Three weeks is twenty-one days. We acted as if that day was just a dream, something intangible, and we haven't spoken since. Now I've become someone who is glued to my phone, not because I want to shop or check on others, but I want to see if Rattikarn posts anything or if she can like my posts like a regular Facebook friend. But there is nothing. It's like she's become a ghost. That message from her that day seemed like a joke, but when I re-read the messages, the arrangement to meet up serves as evidence that it really happened.

So where did she go? Does she not feel anything about that day? Or is she feeling like me... guilty and uncomfortable about it?

We were friends before, and a passionate kiss like that is not just a friendly greeting.

I looked at Rattikarn's name and pressed my lips together tightly, wishing it would be over. I didn't want to sit around and worry about what she might

post next, making my heart race. So, I decided to unfriend her and immediately rested my face on the table, screaming internally with no one to hear.

It's for the best... I have my own person, and he proposed to me. I shouldn't worry about another woman who didn't even send me a message in my inbox.

.

*Beep!*

The vibration of my phone startled me, making my bangs flutter. My overreaction to my surroundings caught the attention of my friend sitting at the next table.

"Are you okay?"

"No, I was just startled by the phone."

I replied with a dry smile as I picked up my phone, discovering a message from my "boyfriend," Nont, who had sent me several messages without getting a response from me. I could feel his anxiety in every word.

*'Where have you been? Ever since you agreed to marry me, you've been avoiding me. I asked your mother, and she said you weren't home. If you don't get back to me today, I'll come to the office.'*

I bared my teeth slightly, feeling a little irritated. It's not good that my boyfriend knows where I work. He proposed to me in front of a lot of people, and now he's going to confront me in public again; this is going to end in a fight.

*'Busy, you know?'*

*'If you weren't busy, you wouldn't have ignored my messages. Is there something going on between us? Why are you so busy?'*

*'It's work, that's all.'*

*'No matter how busy you are, you still have time to answer calls or text messages. What's really going on? Why aren't you the same as before?'*

*'That's right. I'm not the same.'*

The phrase "I'm not the same" encompasses all the different thoughts I've had about myself. I never realized that I was behaving differently and I started liking women. Over the past ninety days, I've been observing myself and I've found that I've become more "interested" in things related to women.

I admire long hair.

I like looking at beautiful women.

I appreciate women's shapes and softness. I don't know if this is just a phase; maybe later I'll think I got caught up in the moment. But I keep trying to tell myself that I'm living in the present, and this time it's making my heart race more than before.

*'I want to think more about us, okay? Sorry for making you worry. Let's schedule a meeting, but not tonight.'*

My words are always decisive. I don’t like surprises, including the proposal. I only agreed because I didn’t want to embarrass him. Besides, I didn’t feel strongly about whether or not I wanted to get married. It was just neutral. I could get married or not; I didn’t care. But then I got distracted when I met Rattikarn.

*‘Okay, let me know when we can meet to discuss the details.’*

Details… about the wedding, I guess.

Once there’s a proposal and both parties agree, the various ceremonies follow. I just glanced at that message and turned off my phone, I didn’t want to read anything else. I felt uncomfortable with it. If anything could distract me, it would be the work in front of me.

Thank you to my boss for treating me like I’m indispensable. When there’s something going on, I’m the first person called. Like this task too.

I’m reading novels to select the twenty best entries for publication.

My job managing the website has its perks. If there’s nothing to do, my boss lets me play around on the computer until something happens. My job is to be a support person, I’m both a boss and an employee. If someone is sick, hurting, or in trouble, I’m there to comfort them, send them flowers, and basically do whatever it takes to justify my salary.

Right now… I’m reading novels that made it to the top twenty for the New Writer’s Award.

The novel I’m currently reading is a lesbian romance. As I mentioned, I’ve been really into this genre lately. Finding a story where women kiss makes my heart race. Plus, this is the only story in this genre that made it into the top twenty. Maybe it’s because of my own high scores; I can’t help but feel biased, because I want to read more.

"Did you get this story into the finals?"

I quickly turned off the screen, but as they say, if someone sent me a message like that, it means I’m already late. So doing it in a hurry feels really silly, like I’ve done something wrong. These days, reading same-sex romances is no longer something to be ashamed of.

"What do you mean? Are you saying I'm cheating?"

"You're not cheating; I'm just biased... I saw the scores you gave. You got nearly full marks in almost every category. No wonder you didn't make it to the finals."

"But it’s very well written. Are you saying it shouldn’t be considered just because it’s a Yuri story?"

"That’s not it. I admit it’s well written, but I think… it’s a little touchy to read."

"What do you mean?"

"Women touching each other’s breasts, you know?" "Nobody finds it funny when men are jerking their parts."

I said this while feeling a little smug for dismissing this genre. A while ago, stories by men for men weren’t as accepted as they are now. I can’t believe Yuri won’t have that day too.

If anything, I’m one of those who will support it, evidenced by my overwhelming scores that helped it compete against stories by men and the twenty romances on the list.

"Why are you getting mad? I'm just saying it's delicate. Does the writer even know you’re saying that out loud? Maybe I’ll tell Ball."

"Yeah, go ahead and tell him. If Ball fires me, he won’t have anyone as good as me."

I shrugged indifferently because everyone knows that’s what my role is. Right now, the judges are evaluating and commenting on the entries. At first, they’re usually encouraging and try not to be too harsh, since some of the entries come from children. The rules here specify that applicants must be between the ages of 15 and 25. The winner gets a prize of ten thousand baht and has their novel published to pursue their dream.

I’m also currently trying to get this novel by Yuri recognized. If it can be brought to the surface for more people to see, it might spark more interest in writing, leading to more stories to enjoy in the future.

As I read, I get distracted and started browsing social media again, only to feel sad about unfriending the one person who drew me to social media in the first place. Now, I wouldn’t have anything to snoop on; it’s all so boring.

*Ugh!*

I slammed the table in frustration. The junior at the next table, who I had just spoken to, jumped a little and turned to look at me as if she was struggling to breathe.

"Rung... I'm going to try to open my heart to read Yuri, okay? Don't be mad."

*Clang!*

I looked at my junior and growled, "Don't just open your heart, you have to give full marks in all categories! That's an order!"

"Okay, if you say so."

"If you can't, then give up. Do you know who's in charge here?" "My breasts!

"It's true, I give up."

In short, everything I said just to tease my subordinate at work. I'm not a cruel boss abusing my power. The talk about scores was just for fun. If that writer gets those scores, it's because he really writes well, not just because he writes about women loving women, like I teased him to.

"Ugh..."

"Feeling discouraged, I thought of coming up with something new and interesting."

At that moment, my boss, who I had mentioned before, walked into the office just as I was taking a deep breath, frustrated that I being unfriend with Rattikarn. I give a slight growl before turning around to smile brightly with four hearts.

"Don't you have a lot of work to do?"

"I see you've been reading novels all day, you look free."

"Well, novels are part of the project the boss assigned me."

"You still seem free, though. Think about what to do next so that the new writers have activities next month."

"Suddenly asking me to think? Who is supposed to come up with ideas out of nowhere?"

The boss, who is always demanding, dropped a blank sheet of paper on my desk and raised an eyebrow at me.

"Try writing down some ideas on paper and drawing them. You'll see for yourself. Sitting around won't solve anything, right? You've finished reading the novels and scoring, so now do something else. You have one day, then come back and propose."

"One day? Can I leave after that?" "I can't survive without you."

And then the boss walked away, leaving me with a sarcastic curse that I sent after him. I turned to face the blank paper. When I asked my juniors for help, they quickly looked back at their computers, afraid that they would be caught up in my mood again.

But that was okay. Having something to do would keep me from thinking too much about unfriending someone. I might as well turn a crisis into an opportunity.

## Crisis as an opportunity...

I stumbled upon this sentence and thought of the face of Rattikarn, the friend I had just unfriended, my heart pounding like a drum. I thought I saw a potential opportunity. Creating a coincidence can also be seen as an opportunity.

Coincidentally, my company is going to have a training project for young screenwriters or something like that.

Then my thoughts flowed smoothly like a waterfall falling from top to bottom. I made a Mind Map on the paper, planning where to start and where to end. Then I pretended to talk to writers I knew to find out who might be suitable. But in the end, the one who would decide who to choose would still be me.

.

.

Right now, I was regretting having unintentionally unfriended a Facebook friend. I thought about texting her, but what if she thought I was just looking for attention? Right now I'm overthinking everything, doodling and staring at the message box, not daring to type anything before closing the screen. My gaze drifted to the bottom right corner of the computer screen and I realized it's time to go home.

"It was only four o’clock a moment ago."

"You must have had fun brainstorming the project, huh? Wow, you’re amazing! The boss tells you to do something, and you do it. Weren’t you saying you couldn’t think of anything? Why does it seem like you’ve got it all figured out now?"

My junior looked at my sheet of paper and frowned.

“The young screenwriters training project? That’s amazing! The boss will definitely approve."

"If you don’t like it, come up with your own ideas.”

I stand up and grabbed my bag, getting ready to go home.

“This job is worth my salary, seriously. Come on, if you can’t think of anything, the boss won’t fire you.”

"Of course not. Who would want to lose someone like me? Are you coming back now? Let’s go down together then."

"Okay, I’ll turn off my computer first."

My junior and I walked to the elevator and went down to the ground floor, where everyone was rushing to go home. The streets were crowded with cars that made my head spin. I actually have a car, but I prefer to take the skytrain because I can’t stand being stuck in traffic. Just as I'm about to go up the stairs, I caught a whiff of perfume from someone passing by and freeze on the fifth step.

No way, it can’t be…

If seen from a third-person perspective, the two of us slowly turned to look at each other, like a scene in slow motion. I couldn’t believe that the person I was thinking about...no, my mind was constantly circling suddenly appeared at my workplace by some coincidence. I was almost breathless when I locked eyes with her, speechless, standing still and just staring back.

"Rung."

The deep voice of someone I hadn't spoken to in over three weeks, or twenty-one days, shocked me so much that my eyes widened. My hand gripped the strap of my bag tightly, not knowing how to react.

.

## Thump, thump...

**Thump, thump...**

That rapid beating of my heart is clearly joy. My body don't even try to hide it.

"It really is you, what a coincidence!"

I raised an eyebrow, not really believing this coincidence. Coincidence?

"You're P'Rung's friend, aren't you? You're beautiful.

Commented a colleague who went out with me, admiring the beauty of Rattikarn, who already famous for her looks.

"It must be a coincidence. We never arranged to meet like this.

The answer, a little provocative and open, made her even more interesting, making me smile and ask about something else."

"And you? What are you doing here?" "I came to write a script nearby."

"Do you live around here?" "Well, not exactly."

The two of us fell silent, and I thought that if it weren’t for the sound of the skytrain passing overhead, we might have heard the crickets chirping.

"Well, relax. I’m heading back now.”

I waved and turned around, preparing to go upstairs. However, after climbing three steps, I had to turn around and found Rattikarn still watching me.

“Is there something you want to say?” "No."

"Then why are you staring?"

"I’m just saying goodbye to you. I don’t need to look, right?"

Her voice, though calm and expressionless, didn't reveal anything; I couldn’t read her at all. The beautiful girl in a shiny black satin shirt with sleeves rolled up to her elbows turned and walked away as I turned in the same direction to walk with my junior.

She’s already gone.

This was the first time we had met in three weeks. I don’t want to know why she didn’t stop?

Are we really just going to talk for a while?

I stopped and turned around. My junior, who is walking with me, freeze and asked in surprise,

“Where are you going, P’Rung? "I’m meeting a friend. Go ahead.”

I said this without even looking at my junior, then ran downstairs and out of the skytrain station to find her immediately. She was already gone, even though it hadn’t even been ten seconds since we said goodbye. I stood there, hands on my hips, furious with myself, regretting that I had only greeted her.

Why do I have to complicate things? If I wanted to see her, I could have just said I wanted to see her, not talked in circles, avoiding our meeting, and quietly walked away to look cool. Besides this coldness, all that left was annoyance and irritation.

"Did you forget something?"

Someone’s low voice coming from the side of the skytrain stairs caught me off guard. She's casually holding her bag in her hands and raises an eyebrow, mimicking my earlier question:

“Why are you looking?” "I forgot."

“…”

"I forgot to say… I’m glad to see you.”

When I said that, I accidentally swallowed hard, and the person in front of me probably noticed my excitement. A wide smile slowly spread across her face until her eyes closed, and she replied to ease my nervousness.

"What a coincidence… I forgot to say that I’m glad to see you too." "Another coincidence?"

"Well, we didn’t agree to be glad to see each other, so it has to be a coincidence, right?"

# Chapter 02: I can't remember

Now, the two of us are looking for a cozy place to sit near my workplace. I usually never here when it’s dark because I just want to go straight home after work, clear my mind, and rest. But tonight, I’m still here because of her *“Rattikarn*.” She was working nearby, so we decided to meet up.

She brought a big bag, the popular kind people bring from Japan. It looked like there might be a laptop or iPad in there, but she didn’t come for work. Instead, she ordered a coffee and decided to chat with me.

"How are you? Well?"

I asked first, to prevent the atmosphere from getting too quiet. The beautiful woman in front of me, who had just taken a hair tie off her wrist to quickly tie her hair, smiled in a cool and charming way with every movement.

"I’m fine. How about you?"

"Same as always. I was wondering where you went."

"I didn’t go anywhere, actually. Sometimes I work from home, other times I work in coffee shops, and occasionally I work in the office to discuss scripts with the team."

She give me a brief summary.

“Like today, I took my laptop to work somewhere new to get a change of scenery.”

So, that’s a laptop in her bag. I glanced at the bag she was carrying and nodded slightly.

"Where were you working right now?"

"I haven’t started yet. I was about to start, and then I bumped into you." "And where did you come from?"

"From my home." "Where are you staying?” “…”

“…”

Silence settled around us. She didn’t answer and just took a sip of her iced coffee. If I had been more polite, I wouldn’t have intruded if she didn’t want to tell me. Her mystery made me curious and strangely happy at the same time.

"I just asked to make conversation. If you don’t want to tell me, I won’t press you.”

I smiled at her to show there was no pressure. Rattikarn bit her lip lightly, shifted a little, opened her mouth to say something, then closed it and opened it again, only to remain silent until I raised my eyebrows.

"Is something wrong?" "No."

"You're talking less than the last time we met."

I brought up the past we never talked about, or rather, we both weren't sure if it was something to talk about. Although we had a few drinks that night, it wasn't like in the movies where the memory fades. I remember every moment, until we went our separate ways when the place closed.

I was thinking about what I should say. Should I act like nothing happened? "..."

"That night."

Finally, she brought it up. I almost choked on my own breath, but I tried to keep my face as if that night was no different from any other, to keep the atmosphere calm and normal.

"When we kissed, you mean?"

I shrugged and asked back. She nodded slowly. "Do you remember?"

"You might not feel good about it."

The probing question made me hesitate. She seemed to be dragging things out, as if she wanted me to say it instead of saying something herself.

"I don't remember."

The answer came out before I could stop myself, and I wanted to smack my mouth three times and dispel it like a bad omen. But it seemed my answer made Rattikaen glare at me and respond with the same calm tone.

"Neither do I... I don't remember."

I don't remember? How can she say that when I remember every detail, even finding that song and singing it from beginning to end?

"Or maybe we didn't want to remember." "Don't you want to remember?"

"Stop asking back every time I ask something." "Why should I stop?"

The music in the coffee shop was so loud I wanted to yell at the owner to turn it off. Why does jazz have to have saxophones? It's giving me a headache!

"That was the mood that night, with the alcohol and all."

"Yeah, right. That night, the atmosphere was good, the music was beautiful, and the alcohol was in my blood too."

"So let's get this straight here. That night was just a slip-up for both of us because of alcohol. I hope you're not blaming me."

"I'm not. Friends, right? Everyone does things like that."

Why am I irritated? Maybe it's because she doesn't feel anything about it, while I was thinking about that night, feeling like an idiot.

"So, we're in the clear now. There's nothing more to talk about." "Okay."

Rattikarn said dryly and stood up. "There's nothing more to discuss."

She stood up and left the store. I could only grit my teeth and huff in frustration. Why was our conversation today so horrible, so completely different from that night? It must be that stupid jazz music, that saxophone- filled jazz that I've hated my entire life. Its high-pitched squeak is giving me a headache!

Just as I was about to go home too, I spotted her bag, left behind. I sighed, rolling my eyes as if they were going to the back of my head. I grabbed my bag and ran outside, calling out to Rattikarn, who had disappeared.

"Rattikarn!"

I shouted her full name, which seemed oddly long, so I shortened it. Rat... Or was it just Karn?"

"Karn!"

Damn, why am I wasting time feeling embarrassed about her name? I looked around until I caught sight of her standing against the wall at the side of the store, smoking a cigarette with her arms crossed and a scowl on her face. I paused, thinking about how to approach her and what to say.

Ah, well, no time to overthink it. I shouted. "Rattikarn, you forgot your bag at the store."

She tossed her hair back and looked at me, blowing out smoke. I usually don't like people who smoke, but there was something unexpectedly sexy about her under the wisps of smoke now. But I had to push that thought away because we were in the middle of an argument.

"I hadn't forgotten. I just went out for a cigarette. You're leaving, right?" "Yes."

"Hand me the bag. Thank you."

I walked towards her and held out the bag. The pretty-faced woman reached out to take it, but frowned when she saw that I wouldn't let go. At this moment, my head was full of confusion. In truth, I should have walked away and let it all end here. Stop confusing myself, stop thinking. We'd lost friends and that kiss was a complicated thing. I... I ended up holding on to it. I didn't want to let go of the bag that was now connecting me and her.

"Cutting the ties of friendship, but why are you still looking at me like that?"

Rattikarn asked, without taking her eyes off me. Her intensity made me take a step towards her, before using both hands to hold her face and kiss her hard and longingly.

"Cutting because I don't want to be friends."

I answered as I pulled away to catch my breath and kissed her again. This time, she turned her head, pulling out her vape. Her jaw still mesmerized me. This was completely out of control.

"Why are we still doing this? We’re not even drinking.” She said, blowing smoke in my face provocatively.

“So you can’t blame it on a lapse in judgment.” "Can I kiss you?"

"..."

"Forget it."

Seeing that she didn't feel the same way, I backed away. Okay... why was I making things difficult? It would be better if we just walked in separate directions like we did that night. But just as I was about to turn around and leave, she grabbed my wrist, pulling me towards her. She pressed me against the wall, biting her lip and sighing heavily, looking as frustrated and confused as I was. She couldn't deny it either, so she pulled me back.

"We don't even have alcohol in our blood."

She murmured, resting her forehead against mine, her nose brushing mine softly.

"So we can't blame anything." "So what is this?"

"I don't know... lust, maybe."

Her direct words caught me off guard, making my cheeks burn. "Can friends feel that?"

"Then let's not be friends."

"You're in a hurry, aren't you? No wonder... you're the impatient type, right?"

"Oka."

I smiled a little. Her face showed surprise, almost as if she wanted to get away from the embarrassment, but I held her by the neck.

"Forget everything else for now. Let's stay here." "Be here..."

Rattikarn leaned down and kissed me again. The feeling was the same as that night, confirming that it had really happened. The smell of smoke and the faint sweetness in her mouth were things I wanted to remember. So, she also smoked that night, that's why her breath had

that faint smell. The sweetness must have come from her vape, which somehow made her even more attractive.

We pulled apart, keeping eye contact for a while. Her hair was getting in the way, so I held it back with one hand.

"I remember now... what it was like to kiss you."

She said, licking her lips lightly, her breathing heavy as if we both wanted more.

"I remember too."

I replied with a smile. "So, what now?"

"The best idea I have... is to add me back." "Why? We haven't spoken since that night." "At least we can still see each other."

"But you never post anything anyway. It seems a bit unfair."

"I'm mostly there to read others. I don't want people to know too much about me. Most of the time, I just share quotes or random stuff."

"Well, if you want to see my status, I'll post one then."

"Okay, if you had to post a status right now, what would it be?" "Rattikarn leaned in and kissed me again before replying briefly: **"I would say... whatever."**

□□□□□

# Chapter 03: Cheating

I'm about to leave, but I have to pretend I don't feel anything. I stand there saying goodbye, calm as always, with a smile, as if nothing had happened other than the coffee shop a few moments ago.

"I added you as a friend; this time, don't unfriend me again."

Rattikarn says after accepting my friend request, still giving me a playful nudge. I shrug lightly, acting like I don't care, even though I was the one acting childish in the first place.

"If I tell you my finger slipped and unfriended you accidental, would you believe me?"

"Go home and sit in front of your computer. Find the unfriend button; you'll see it's not that easy to accidentally press... You have to go to the friends tab first, then scroll down until you unfriend."

With unwavering determination, she explains each step, until she shows me on her phone, until I clear my throat.

"If I say it slipped, then it slipped!"

She smiles slightly, amused, before slinging her cloth bag over her shoulder. "Well, let’s end it here then."

"Hmm."

"Hmm."

Even saying that, neither of us moves, as if there’s still something left to say. I lick my lips, hesitating, wondering whether I should speak or not.

Should I ask for her phone number?

Would that be too hasty? But thinking back a few minutes, I was the one who pushed her against the wall and did more than just ask for her number. Why is it so hard to just say it now?

It shouldn’t be hard. Just say it. If she was okay with a kiss, she’d probably be okay with giving her phone number.

"Actually, I have something to discuss. I just remembered."

Rattikarn’s eyes seem to sparkle, or maybe it’s just my imagination, wishing it were true. The beautiful woman in a black satin dress raises an eyebrow slightly.

"What’s up?"

"The company I work for is planning a project to train young screenwriters."

I straighten up a little, trying to sound professional.

"Actually, they wanted to contact you to be an instructor for the course that will be opening soon. I don't have any connections in that area other than you. Are you interested?"

Rattikaen is quiet, as if she's thinking. For a brief moment, I see her shoulders slump slightly. Or maybe not. I might just be projecting, a little carried away by this wave of feelings.

"I'll have to look into the details first." "In that case."

Finally, my chance comes.

"Can I have your phone number so I can keep in touch? I'll get back to you when everything is ready."

A silence hangs between us. Rattikarn puffs out her cheeks a little, as if she's considering something, before rejecting bluntly.

"If it's for work, it's better to communicate by email. I don't like dealing with work stuff over the phone."

Again...

I swallow hard, feeling embarrassed. The person in front of me smiles knowingly, taking a post-it note out of her bag to write her email.

"Send the details to this email and give me some time..." “...”

"Some time. I’ll get back to you when I decide."

I grab the paper with a stiff hand, muttering “tch” unconsciously, which only makes me seem more childish in her eyes.

"Let’s go back; it’s getting late. This country is not the safest for women."

The beautiful woman walk up the stairs to the train station first. Although we could have walked together, I end up watching her go, deciding to catch a taxi near the bridge.

How arrogant. Thinking I wanted to contact her so much? Ugh!

.

.

I went back to my normal life, but that encounter only made things worse for me than before. Now that we’re online friends, I feel more restless on

social media. I’ve been posting statuses frequently, hoping that one person will see them and maybe like them. Now I understand why people post so often just to get that person’s attention. I almost forgot that I already have a boyfriend.

I just got proposed recently, but I have no real enthusiasm to see him or even respond to him. Everything has been turned upside down since he’s the one who keeps messaging me, while I pretend not to see or read them, even though I hold my phone the whole time.

‘You’ve gone silent again, haven’t you?’

You could say that I’m avoiding him, but if I don’t, he’ll keep bringing up wedding dates, talking about coming over to discuss things with my family when I’m nowhere near ready. None of this is his fault, though. It’s all my fault. I’m too scared to face the truth that I don’t want to get married. Or rather, I don’t want to hurt him.

He didn’t do anything wrong.

"You’re so busy; your phone keeps ringing all day. Aren’t you going to answer it?"

My nearby coworker comments, having noticed my phone vibrating for a while without me noticing. I manage a weak smile.

"Sorry, is this bothering you?"

"No, not really. You just don’t seem to be answering much lately. Are you hiding from debt or what?"

"You could say I’m hiding." I reply awkwardly.

""But it’s not from debt. Never mind; I’m going to turn off my phone." "You’re fighting with your husband, aren’t you?"

"He’s not my husband…"

I snap, my tone sharp enough to make my coworker flinch and throw up her hands in apology.

"Sorry, I talk too fast sometimes."

"It’s not your fault. I’m just in a bad mood." "Stress from wedding planning, I guess?"

She continues, and since I can’t avoid the subject, I think it’s best to get it over with.

"Something like that."

"Everyone gets stressed before a wedding. My sister fought with her fiancé over little things until they almost called it off. But now they laugh about it. Relax, the wedding will work out."

"Hmm."

"Or is the problem not about the wedding?" She insists noticing my lack of enthusiasm. "Or... is it a third party?"

I sit up straight, giving a subtle signal that maybe that’s closer to the truth, which makes her lean forward excitedly.

"It’s not exactly a third party. Just a friend. People kiss their friends sometimes, right?"

"Holy shit!"

Her reaction almost makes me fall out of my chair. I blink at her as she looks back in shock, eyes wide.

"W-what?"

"So that’s why you’re avoiding calls. Your boyfriend kissed another woman and called it a ‘friendly kiss’? What nerve! Friends don’t kiss like that!"

"Seriously? Friends don’t kiss… right?"

I avoid her gaze, feeling an unexpected guilt that should probably be directed at my own boyfriend.

"He’s proposing to you because he feels guilty, right? If you hadn’t caught him, he wouldn’t have gotten down on one knee with all those witnesses around. If I were you, I wouldn’t marry him. Someone like that deserves to be called a cheater in front of everyone."

"Was it considered cheating?"

"Yeah, sure. Even if you say it was a moment of weakness, no one would accidentally trip and end up kissing a friend. That was consent from both sides. This ‘friend’ must be so nice, huh?

Just friends, but they allow a kiss. Gross." "Forget it."

I quickly changed the subject, feeling like I was being berated over and over, and that should have been enough.

“Let’s talk about something else."

"Okay, for your own good, Rung. You’re probably stressed right now. If you need someone to talk to, I’m here to listen.”

I sighed and went back into work mode, choosing not to share any work details with Ratthikarn yet, because honestly, the boss hadn’t approved it, and I hadn’t prepared any plans yet.

Everything was still in the preparation phase. I would wait until I was calmer to reach out, so it would seem more professional and avoid seeming like I was desperate to talk.

.

.

In the evening, when I was leaving the office with my coworker, as usual, Non, who had texted me earlier, showed up waiting at the entrance of the building, which irritated me.

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

"I tried, but you didn't answer the phone and hung up the phone."

Non said, looking at me with a piercing gaze as if she was cutting me with a knife.

"Hello, Nong."

"Go ahead and go home. I'll go with Non."

"Are you sure? Don't you want me to stay with you?"

I nodded, asking my coworker, who was acting as a bodyguard, to leave, although she seemed puzzled by Non's presence.

"What's wrong with your Nong? Why was she looking at me like that?" "Don't mind her. So, what brought you here?"

"It's not like I just randomly showed up. I used to come here often at night to wait for you. But lately, it's been rare because you don't answer my calls or keep in touch."

"I'm busy with work."

"No matter how busy you are, you should answer your phone. We're about to get married..."

"Non..."

I quickly interrupted when I heard the sharp word "marriage." He seemed to sense my reaction.

"I don't want to talk about this right now."

"When are we going to talk about this? I've already proposed and told my family. We need to set a date to visit and formally ask for your hand."

"I haven't told my family yet."

"Why? What's going on? Ever since I proposed, something feels off. You've been avoiding me, not answering my calls, and refusing to talk about it."

"..."

"Rung."

"I cheated on you, Non." "..."

"That's why I'm not ready to get married, because now, it feels like my heart doesn't belong to you alone."

Confessing the truth felt like an act of repentance. Even though I'm not a Christian, I thought it might save me from the depths of hell. But surprisingly, Non didn't react as I expected.

*'Let's discuss this when you're in a better mood.'*

He, who had been so stubborn before, suddenly asked to leave as soon as he heard this. I couldn't say anything more, which was probably for the best. I didn't want to say too much; if I said more, things that shouldn't be said might slip out, hurting him even more.

Now, back in my room, I was sitting in front of my laptop, sketching out plans to present to my boss for a new project idea, as well as writing a preliminary email to Ratthikarn with the details. As I typed, I glanced at the perfume on my bedside table, which I occasionally sprayed. Pausing, I

sprayed it in the air, and the floral scent of No.5 immediately brought her image back to my mind.

Ratthikarn... A woman full of mystery, seductive, with black as her signature color, her hair, her eyes, and the clothes she wore.

Cigarettes didn't really suit a woman, but it was strange; when she held one and exhaled, it looked sexy enough to make me stare, envying that smoke.

Her height was a perfect match, enough for me to lean into her neck and smell the fragrance. Her lips moist with a slight sweetness from the cigarette liquid and the softness of her chest, it was so unlike a man’s body…

I threw myself on the bed, staring at the ceiling, imagining that if we switched from standing to lying down, we could do so much more. The feel of her bare skin against mine, what would it be like?

Her scent, mixed with No.5, would be intoxicating. Her sound at its peak, what tone would it be?

Lying in bed, I curled up, hugging myself. Between my legs, a dampness suggested something raw. I rolled in the sheets, wishing someone were beside me, someone who could release these emotions rising inside me.

This lust…

**I miss her… Ratthikarn.**

**OOOOO**

# Chapter 04: Invite

I emailed her the details...

After more than five hours, I still hadn't received a response, and I began to worry if she had actually received my email. Normally, we would have called each other by now, but since I didn't have her number, all I could do was wait. I couldn't pressure her or press her for an immediate response because I wasn't authorized to do so.

The only other option I had was the Facebook inbox I had added her to, but I chose not to message her there. I wanted to keep that space for personal conversations rather than work-related matters. I still couldn't figure out how she defined the boundaries of our relationship. In the end, all I could do was wait, wait, wait.

"Damn it!"

I clenched my fist and threw it on my desk in frustration. The novel I had submitted for consideration made me want to scream. The accumulated frustration from the email and personal issues made it impossible for me to differentiate them any further.

"What’s wrong, sis?"

"What kind of Yuri romance is this? The moment they get to the love scene, the female lead suddenly has a dick! What the hell!"

I had misunderstood the term “Yuri”. The writer had given no hint beforehand that this genre was fantasy, where women could have anything from a penis to a unicorn in this world. I was in shock and didn’t know when I would stop being shocked.

"Is this one of those Omega stories or something?"

"Omega Verse, maybe? I’m not sure, but if they’re going to write it like that, they should have a warning at the beginning to prepare us. Describing her as a delicate woman with a sweet face, then suddenly pulling down her pants and revealing a dick? Who’s going to accept that? Disqualified! No way!"

My tone and demeanor must have seemed overly intense, leaving my coworkers stunned into silence. I bit my lip and closed my eyes, forcing a smile. Everything today seemed to be going wrong. The romance novel I had been waiting for, the one I had read every chapter of, had betrayed me, changing from a sweet romance between long-haired girls to suddenly featuring a penis out of nowhere!

I admit it... I was being irrational, and everything was within the jurisdiction of the judges. I had sent the email hours ago, but it seemed like nothing was happening. And here I was, left waiting like I was nothing.

## Rungtiwa:

Did you get the email I sent? I am waiting for your reply. If you did, just let me know.

.

.

Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to know if the other party was aware of my message, so I decided to send it. She had read it, but she hadn't responded, making me feel like I was about to scream.

I'm almost thirty, but I feel as restless as a fourteen-year-old girl, moving impulsively as if my period about to start at any moment, which was annoying.

Three hours later, she finally responded with a simple “Noted,” without any further comment about her interest in the content. I read the email just before the end of the work day and gritted my teeth at her indifference. Just

as I was about to scream or attack someone, I got a message back in my inbox.

## Rattikarn:

Let me read the details first.

## Rungtiwa:

I sent it earlier. Why are you responding now? I thought the email hadn’t been sent.

## Rattikarn:

I just woke up. Sorry, my sleep schedule isn’t like everyone else’s.

## Rattikarn:

Last night, I watched a horror movie; it was really scary!

.

Seeing her response and her adorable comment about the horror movie lifted my mood. I couldn’t help but laugh. My coworker sitting next to me slowly leaned over to see what was going on, and I looked at her in surprise.

"What’s wrong? Do you have something to say?"

"I just noticed you’re smiling today. Who are you talking to?" "A troublemaker."

I replied honestly before turning my attention back to the messages.

## Rungtiwa:

That must have been a lot of fun.

## Rattikarn:

I’m just waking up now. I’ll read it and get back to you. Well, you asked me to come, didn’t you?

## Rungtiwa:

But you said you wanted to read the job details first. You didn’t say whether

you’re going to do that or not.

## Rattikarn:

I have to play hard to get to get some.

## Rattikarn:

I have to make myself seem valuable.

## Rungtiwa:

There’s a lot of content.

## Rattikarn:

Well, she’s the heroine of this story, after all.

## Rungtiwa:

Very smart.

.

She didn’t answer any further. I felt like this conversation wasn’t enough for me, like I was being served a delicious dish but not allowed to fully enjoy it. Every moment that passed only intensified my desire. I wanted to talk to her more, about anything, to make up for the lost time.

‘Last night, I…’

I hadn’t finished typing because I was stuck choosing the right words between ‘I miss you’ and ‘I think about you’. Our relationship seemed distant, but there was a closeness that friends don’t usually share. I couldn’t quite define it, so I had to be careful in our conversations to avoid stumbling. I still couldn’t figure out what she was thinking.

## Rungtiwa:

I was thinking about you last night too.

*Seeing the cigarette smoke reminded me of her… Seeing the color black made me think of her…*

Now, I felt like a smoker, addicted to the nicotine hidden in these reminders. She was the same. We both knew it was dangerous, but we wanted to get closer without any signs of stopping.

## Rattikarn:

Thinking in what way?

## Rungtiwa:

The usual way.

## Rattikarn:

Aww.

.

Aww... Is that right? The cold person who is one moment sweet and gentle, then fierce and passionate is now typing "aww". If it were spoken, I would wonder what tone she would use.

See, with just one word, I could imagine her in so many tones.

## Rungtiwa:

What are you saying?

## Rattikarn:

Nothing. If you are thinking about me in general, then that is it.

.

.

And everything went back to the usual silence. She didn't answer again until it was time to leave work. Everyone in the office started to leave little by little, and the boss started turning off the lights, signaling that it was time to go home, as he didn't want to waste electricity. I shook my head, regretting that our conversation had ended so soon and without further development before closing my computer and preparing to leave.

However, I was surprised when I went downstairs and found her waiting outside the building in a black t-shirt, casual jeans, and her hair tied up

high, leaning against the wall as if she was waiting for someone. "Rattikarn."

"Surprise!"

The beautiful girl smiled at me and walked over, still carrying her large canvas bag.

"What are you doing here?"

"I told you, my house isn't far from here. Besides, I thought of you, so I stopped by. It was worth it, right? Look at your face."

I quickly pressed my hand against my cheek in shock, not knowing what my expression was at that moment, but it made her laugh.

"What face am I making?"

"That's it. I guess it's worth it... I should go now."

She turned to leave, and I instinctively grabbed her arm, forgetting all pretense because I missed her so much.

"Wait, why are you leaving?" "Then why should I stay?" “...”

"If you give me a good reason, I can stay."

She was controlling the situation again, but my desire to be with her made me admit the truth.

*"I miss you."*

.

.

We took the skytrain and got off at a station near the river, where we could catch a ferry to the other side and find a shopping mall. She said she wanted to ride a boat at dusk. Although the passenger boat was crowded with people, it didn’t take away from our enjoyment.

Since I wasn’t familiar with these boats, it seemed like an exciting experience. I didn’t feel like it was a waste of time because I was able to talk to her more than before.

"The reason I agreed to go on a date is because you asked me nicely."

I looked at the water at night. The smell wasn’t particularly pleasant, but combined with the atmosphere and her presence by my side, it wasn’t bad at all.

"So this is a date, huh?”

Rattikarn raises an eyebrow slightly and laughed. "Friends don’t go on dates, you know."

"But friends don’t kiss either."

"True. So what exactly are we? Definitely not friends. And as for a couple… that’s even further from the truth."

She turned to meet my gaze with a slight, almost teasing smile and leaned in closer, allowing me to smell her perfume.

"Have you ever dated a girl before?"

Rattikarn’s question made me feel embarrassed. I was a little scared and secretly worried that someone on the boat might hear us, but no one was paying attention because everyone was too busy with their phones.

"Never."

"So what made you kiss me?"

"I’m not sure. I would say it was the atmosphere at that moment, or maybe the effects of the alcohol. But the second time it happened… there was no alcohol or a pleasant atmosphere, just a narrow alley next to a shop, and yet it made us kiss. Maybe it was because of your perfume."

"And if I don’t wear perfume again, you won’t feel like kissing me anymore, right?"

"I’m not sure."

"So that means you like Coco¹, the perfume designer, right? It’s probably not because you like kissing me."

"Now, I can’t smell your perfume, just the smell of the river." I turned to face her and moved closer too.

"But I still want to kiss you."

"So that means... you don't like the perfume." "True. So what does that mean?"

We stared at each other in silence, but before I knew it, Rattikarn's hand slowly reached out to rest on the back of mine, her thumb gently circling, as if teasing me. The rush of feelings was like waves crashing on the beach, almost knocking me over with excitement. Then, I was startled when I noticed someone walking nearby, which prompted me to quickly pull my hand away. This made Rattikarn lick her lips as I was suddenly overcome with guilt.

"We're almost at the beach. Let's go to the mall, it's cooler there."

Rattikarn said before pulling her hand away and gesturing towards the mall. "Hmm."

Why did I do that... why did I get embarrassed just because someone passed by?

I wasn't sure if I had hurt that beautiful girl's feelings as we walked together. I couldn't help but look at her hand, feeling regretful. I wanted to hold her, but I wasn’t sure if she would still be open to it after I had pulled my hand away like that.

"Are you angry?"

I asked as we continued walking in the air conditioning, talking about various things without mentioning what had happened on the boat again. Rattikarn turned to look at me and raised an eyebrow slightly.

"About what?"

"If you’re not angry, then there’s nothing."

"You’re a bit brave but scared, aren’t you, Rungtiwa?" The beautiful girl said with a smile.

Her words carried a hint of condescension, which irritated me a bit, prompting me to ask back in a firm tone.

"What do you mean?"

"If it wasn’t like that, then there would be nothing." "You’re angry."

I said directly in the middle of the mall. We weren’t speaking loudly, but the atmosphere around us seemed to have frozen.

"Just say clearly what you’re angry about so I can respond properly." "About you pulling your hand away on the boat."

She pouted and shrugged.

"It’s not anger. I understand that you’re probably not used to it and are worried about other people’s stares."

Rattikarn said, shrugging as she ran her finger through the belt loop of her jeans, looking relaxed.

"I just wanted to tell you that if you want to do something like that with a girl, you need to be a little bolder and more open-minded. Because if you can’t even accept something like that, then forget about doing anything else. It’s just not in your nature."

"I can’t forget."

I answered honestly, my voice shaking slightly in fear that she wasn’t interested in me anymore.

“...”

"I haven’t been able to forget you for a long time. If you know anything, please teach me. I want to know what’s right and what’s wrong."

"Where can you learn something like that?"

Rattikarn laughed and punched my arm lightly, as if she had calmed down. "Let’s go for a walk; I was a little stressed there."

She walked ahead, but I grabbed her wrist again, gathering all the courage and curiosity I had to call her back.

**"Do you want to come to my place?"**

**00000**

# Chapter 05: Don't go

Right now, she, my high school classmate who I’ve barely spoken to, is standing in my room, which has a bed in the middle. She’s smoking a cigarette on the balcony and waiting for the new beer I told her I had in the fridge. The view behind her, combined with the vapor from the e-cigarette, makes for a beautiful view. The backdrop for Rattikarn is the orange highway lights visible from my room.

*‘Do you want to come over to my place?’*

Thinking back to when I said that is incredibly embarrassing, but if I hadn’t, we wouldn’t have ended up here in my room.

‘Sure, it sounds fun, but it has to have beer.’ That’s the answer.

I walked over to the balcony and handed her a cold beer I’d just opened, while she looked away. The conversation started with her leading the way.

"Is this a rented room or did you buy it outright?" "I did, but I haven’t finished paying for it yet." "Are you from the countryside?"

"Bangkok. But I wanted to move out and live alone. It’s not convenient to live with my parents."

"Wow."

She looked at me with a smile and took another sip of her beer with a playful glint in her eyes. I could read her thoughts to a certain extent.

"What about you? Do you still live with your parents?" "I live alone too."

"Quite similar then." "It’s not the same."

"How can living alone not be the same?"

"If I had a choice, I would rather live with my parents. But, you know…"

She trailed off and shrugged. I remained silent, seemingly understanding the implication, before quickly apologizing.

"Sorry for bringing up a sensitive subject."

"It’s not that sensitive. It happened a long time ago. I’m fine now." She leaned against the balcony and looked at the room.

"You have a lot on your mind, huh?" "Why do you say that?"

"Just looking at the room."

I looked at my room. While it wasn’t as tidy as a hotel, it wasn’t so messy that it would be embarrassing for a guest. The fact that I dared invite her here meant that I had some level of trust.

"What’s wrong with the room?"

"It’s messy, like you bought a bunch of stuff and just piled it up without using it. Honestly, your room is spacious if you cleaned some things."

"I’ve thought about cleaning things up. I read books and watch documentaries, I get inspired to clean up, but when it comes to actually doing it, I have a hard time letting go."

"You’re very attached to your belongings."

"I think so. If I really wanted to, I could, but it’s hard to throw things away by myself."

"I’ll help.”

She said, reaching out to play with the button on my shirt, teasing slightly as if she was getting drunk.

"Now that I know where you live." "So, will you come again?"

"If the room owner allows it."

Rattikarn tapped my button rhythmically before pulling her hand back.

"Let me call a taxi first. If I get too drunk, the driver might take advantage of me."

The beautiful girl said this with a smile as she took out her phone to open the app. The mix of surprise and disappointment made me quickly grab her wrist, as if the phone was hot and I wanted her to put it down.

"Are you going home?" "Yes."

"I thought you would..."

"You thought I was going to spend the night?"

She looked at me with her bright eyes and tilted her head flirtatiously, as if she was really starting to get drunk.

"Are you crazy? When did we get so close that you invited me to spend the night?"

"If you want to spend the night, you don’t have to be close to do it." "You’re pretty easygoing, huh? You must bring people over often."

She said before entering the room, as if she was trying to leave, but throwing a glance back to invite me in more than anything.

"I noticed there are men’s socks under that Japanese table."

I shivered a little and quickly looked under the table, only to hear her laugh, as if she was trying to catch me.

"Wow, you’re easy to fool. There really are some, huh?" "None."

"Do you really believe that?"

She bit her tongue a little and shrugged.

"Believe it if you want, but I’m still not spending the night here." "If you’re not going to stay, then why did you come?"

"Well, you invited me here."

Now, I was nervous. I had been so excited for a moment that she agreed to come, thinking that everything would work out. This wasn’t something that had never happened before, but I had never been the person to ask someone to spend the night here. Usually, when I went to my boyfriend’s house, I was the one who pretended to leave just to be persuaded to stay.

"Have you ever slept with a girl before?" "What?"

"Cute."

Rattikarn reached out and lightly touched my nose, tilting her head as she wrapped her arms around my neck and spoke sweetly. Normally, she already looked great, but now, a little tipsy, she looked like a little girl, which was completely different from her normal self.

"Even though you’ve never done anything like this with a girl, you still invited her over."

"So why shouldn’t I be brave? What’s scary about you?" "Do you know how girls do it?"

"It’s probably not that different from what guys do."

"You just want to experiment. Once you get what you want, you’ll get bored… like guys who want to try something with another guy just once. When it’s no longer exciting, they leave."

Rattikarn pulled me closer until our lips were almost touching. "But let me tell you something..."

“...”

"You won’t get me easily." "Well, you never know."

I was the one who pressed my lips against hers, but she tried to cover her mouth and laughed playfully, which frustrated me.

"No way."

My hands began to explore her body, trying to find a way in, hoping that it would soften her heart. To keep Rattikarn from moving too far away, I slowly pushed her down onto the nearby mattress and straddled her. She raised her eyebrows a little and held her hands up in surrender.

"Go ahead."

She gave in so easily that I frowned. "If you have the ability to do so."

Her condescension made me grit my teeth. My hands slowly pulled the hem of her blouse out of her jeans and unbuttoned them one by one, revealing the black lingerie that contrasted sharply with her pale skin, untouched by the sunlight. Having only experienced muscular bodies and being the only one who usually got taken advantage of, I started to fumble as I tried to take the lead. I leaned in to kiss her, but she giggled like she was tickled.

"This is no fun at all." "What?"

I froze when she said that. Rattikarn took a cigarette out of her jeans, lit it, and took a deep drag before exhaling the smoke in my face.

"Have you ever slept with a guy who had never done that before?" “...”

"It’s boring."

She pushed me away and sit up, inhaling the smoke into her lungs. At that moment, I felt embarrassed and angry.

"It’s because I’ve never done that with a girl." "Because you don’t like girls, right?"

"Just because I like you doesn’t mean I like girls, is that it." "Wow.”

Rattikarn chuckled lightly.

“That sounds good to hear."

"Stop laughing. Everyone has their first time. It’s not like you’re born and immediately start sleeping with girls.”

She looked at me thoughtfully. Her silence made me fidget, unsure of where to put my hands, until she leaned in and kissed my cheek softly.

“But I’ve known I’ve liked girls since the moment I was born. That’s why we’re different.”

She said, brushing her lips against my neck lightly.

“If you really like me, then you should be willing to wait.” "Why do I have to wait?"

"Because I’m not ready."

"Not ready for what? You came to my room, you kissed me. Your body language and actions must mean you like me too, right?"

"Smug."

She reached out to pinch my nose lightly and pouted like she was teasing me.

"Haven’t you ever been to a club and kissed a stranger?" "Never."

"Oh really? I thought that was normal." She laughed lightly and sighed.

"Let’s do it when I’m more ready next time." "So why not this time?"

She stand up, buttoning her blouse, her expression playful.

*"Because I’m on my period."*

That reason was acceptable because women get along well. When that time of the month comes around, hormones can make us restless. Some get irritable, some crave spicy food, and some feel restless and needy. I didn’t know what kind of person Rattikarn was, but I was sure she was good at teasing.

Teasing to make you want more.

.

.

After that day, we met again because she had to come and discuss work at the company, with my boss also attending the meeting. She was completely different from the last time. Now she was calm, focused on her work, making the room look serious in an instant.

And yes… she still looked stunning.

*‘Let’s have dinner tonight.’ ‘I’m in a meeting, I can’t.’*

I would have agreed if the person who asked had been someone at the table across from me, but the message came from Non, my ex-boyfriend. I had to call him my ex because I had already told him how I felt, that I wasn’t ready to get married and that I liked girls. But it seemed like he thought I would change my mind.

Just because I liked boys in the past doesn’t mean I couldn’t like girls now.

We spent about an hour in the meeting, and when it was over, Rattikarn thanked everyone for their trust and picked up her documents and bag, preparing to leave while giving me a quick glance.

"Khun Rungtiwa."

"What is it, Khun Rattikarn?"

In front of so many people, she called me by my full name, which irritated me a little. No matter the situation, I would prefer her to call me by my nickname more casually, but that's how professionals are.

"Are you free tonight? I have a few details I'd like to ask you." "Sure."

I nodded, trying not to smile.

"I'll send you the location of the restaurant, and then we'll meet up, okay?" "See you then."

She left, leaving a trail of her perfume behind, leaving me dizzy with passion. As I was daydreaming, my heart racing, thinking that we could get closer tonight, I was jolted back to reality when my boss lightly placed his hand on my shoulder.

"Hey! That’s intrusive."

Even in a professional setting, my boss still acted unprofessionally, completely different from the serious person he had just been. I glared at my college friend, who was both a friend and a boss.

"What?"

"Where are you going? I’m going too." "Make a choice."

"This is your boss speaking." "So why do you want to go?"

"Because I want to go with you!"

He stamped his foot like a petulant child. "I want to meet Khun Rattikarn."

"Why do you want to meet her?" "Because I like her and I want to." "It’s not going to happen." "What?"

"I won’t let you go. Professionals need to talk."

I declined with a hint of annoyance, but my friend didn’t seem to notice, still nagging me like a child despite being two years older and my boss.

"Why are you being so possessive? Just go with me."

I pretended not to hear his crying and went back to work, trying to finish my pending tasks quickly. As soon as work was over, I got up, gathered my packed belongings, and left immediately.

## Rungtiwa:

Where are we meeting? You didn’t send me the location.

While I was in the elevator, I quickly texted her asking where we should meet, worried for a moment that she might change her mind and cancel the meeting. But I figured she wouldn’t back out; otherwise, she would have given me plenty of notice.

A message rang as soon as the elevator doors opened. Non, who I had completely forgotten about, was waiting downstairs, and it made my heart drop.

"Why didn’t you tell me you were coming?"

I quickly walked towards him, determined to keep things short to avoid making Rattikarn wait, but I encountered a significant obstacle that wouldn’t let me go.

"I thought if I told you, you wouldn’t agree to meet. Let’s go to dinner." "Non… I already told you. I’m being blunt. Why would you…"

Just as I was about to dodge away when my ex reached out to grab my arm, I caught sight of Rattikarn watching us, seemingly reading our body language. I had to signal to her to show her that I saw her and that this was important.

"Rattikarn, it’s not what you think."

The beautiful girl looked at the two of us, raising an eyebrow and tilting her head with a smile.

"It’s okay, you finish your business first. We can cancel our meeting today." "Don’t go!"

I yelled, half begging her to stop, but she didn’t even turn to look as she walked away. I was running after her when Non

grabbed my wrist, looking like he was going to cry, not unlike how I felt when I begged Rattikarn to stay.

"Don't go!"

“...”

"Please don't go."

Understanding how much she was hurting, I realized that holding on to someone when she didn't want to stay only made things worse. So I stopped calling out to her and turned my attention back to what was still there, feeling a pang of guilt in my heart.

"Okay, I will."

“...”

"But this will be the last time for us, Non."

□□□□□□

**Footnote**

***1- Chanel No. 5 perfume was created in 1921 by perfumer Ernest Beaux, under the direction of Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel. Beaux developed a unique fragrance using aldehydes, an innovation at the time, which gave the perfume a clean, modern quality. Coco Chanel chose the fifth sample Beaux presented, and hence the name "No. 5".***

# Chapter 06: Her Logic

Even though I chose to stay and talk to Non, I couldn't stop thinking about the other person who had left. Sometimes, I would get distracted, unable to focus on the person in front of me who I should be paying serious attention to.

"Same as always, right?" "Yes."

Non, who had been with me for a long time, knew everything I liked and disliked when it came to food. He could order without asking me what I wanted, always asking for more in case I wasn't satisfied.

Sometimes, he would joke, saying,

"I need to fatten you up so no one else will come after you."

Even though it sounded like a joke, I could feel the jealousy behind his words.

"That girl, right?" "Huh?"

"That girl, right?"

He didn't need to add anything else; it was clear that "that girl" was the one I had feelings for. I nodded, feeling guilty, but telling the truth was better than staying silent or disappearing without giving a reason.

"From now on, Non will take better care of you."

"Non..."

"Non will pay more attention. In the past, Non may have neglected you a little, making you feel confused. Anyone can falter. I understand. Even I sometimes sneak glances at the girls in the office. It's normal. I can accept that."

He was trying to deny the truth, no, he was distorting the reality he faced to make it easier to accept, finding excuses so I wouldn't leave. He wanted to forget what I had said, as if I had never mentioned it. I never said I was breaking up with him.

"I never cheated on him..."

"It's not your fault, Non. Listen, it's not your fault... I'm the one who has feelings for someone else."

"People do things for a reason. If we're still in love, how can you have feelings for someone else?"

"Non, you don’t have to conclude that you neglected me or maybe rushed into marriage too soon. I might not be ready."

"Yes… that’s definitely it. It’s okay. We don’t have to get married yet. We can just date like this."

"Non!"

"Ah, the food has arrived."

"I don’t love you anymore, Non."

"Just tell me we can continue dating like this!" Bang!

My ex raised his fist and slammed it hard on the table, causing the glass of water that had just been served to fall. The waiter, who was about to serve

our food, jumped in surprise, almost knocking over the plates. Seeing me jump in shock, Non quickly waved his hands and tried to apologize.

"I’m sorry! Just put the food on the table… You were really scared, right? Sorry, I just…"

"It’s okay, Non, you can hit me if you want."

I even suggested that he could hurt me, although I hated violence. He was too good a person to face that kind of situation. Not reciprocating anything made me feel bad.

"You say that because you know I would never do that."

'"I know you’re not a violent person, but if it helps you feel less angry… you can do it if you want."

"Why are you being so cruel to me like this?” He sounded defeated, like he’d hit a wall.

“You don’t even give me a chance to do something to bring our good relationship back?"

"It’s not that I don’t have feelings for you, but I’m starting to realize that… I really like women."

"You just got a little carried away. She’s really pretty, and anyone would like her. But to generalize that you like women… that doesn’t make sense."

"That kind of thing doesn’t change overnight, Non. I’ve felt this way for a long time; it only became clear when I met you."

"What about me? After all this time together, are you saying you don’t have any good feelings or love for me?"

"It might just be habit. Having you around makes me feel safe. All this time, being with you has been like having a trusted friend. It's better to have one than not to have one."

"A friend? What kind of friend sleeps with you?"

Non almost shouted this sentence, causing everyone in the restaurant to turn and look at us. I closed my eyes, accepting his every reaction without wanting to argue. I was even willing to let him hit me; this was all just a small matter.

"I'm sorry... It's my fault."

I accepted all the blame. Non, seeing me silent and biting his lip to suppress the emotions that were swirling inside me like fireworks, took a bottle of water that had been served and poured it into his glass, gulping it down.

Some of it spilled and stained his clothes, but it seemed like he was more focused on the act. If he had a choice, he would probably want to throw the water on himself.

"Well, as a final goodbye..."

Non looked at me with burning eyes. "You'll do anything, right?"

"Yes."

"Then stay with me tonight."

.

.

Since I had said I would agree to do anything, he chose to torment me instead of physically assaulting me as a form of revenge. We ended up in his car, as usual. When it wasn’t convenient to go to a bedroom, the car became another place that was quick and exciting enough for this kind of thing.

But today was different from the past. I felt too disgusted with him to enjoy the intimacy. When he unzipped his pants and tried to push my head down

to help him relieve his arousal, I simply refused, even though I had agreed initially.

"Didn’t you say you would make everything okay?" "Non you are getting mad."

"If you fix it, will I stop getting mad?"

"Is it really like that, even you can’t get hard on?” I pushed him away and sat down, arms crossed.

“You don't wants to be with me, even you don’t feel like it. To be honest, you just want to win, you want to prove that men are better. Isn’t that right?"

"Yes!"

After I said that, Non clenched his fists and hit the steering wheel hard, accidentally honking the horn with a loud “beep.” The thud against the steering wheel echoed his pain loudly. I could only look at my ex-boyfriend guiltily, but showing too much sympathy would only cause him more pain, because I felt sorry for him instead of love.

"Non doesn’t understand. Why did you suddenly change? We used to love each other, and now you tell me that you like women. You were happy with me, a man, all this time. Why did that change?"

"I think I’ve liked women for a long time. I just never recognized it until I met you."

"What is it about that woman that made you feel this way? What does she have that I don’t?"

"You don’t have breasts." "Huh? What?"

"I like the shape of women’s bodies. When I watch dramas, I pay more attention to the female lead than the male lead.”

I explained my feelings to my ex so he could understand.

“I like long hair. When the wind blows, I can smell the perfume mixed with sweat. It’s like when you look at a beautiful woman and feel good, something like that."

"Are you a tomboy?" "No, not at all."

I almost laughed when he looked like he saw a ghost.

"Even though I like women, I still like to dress like a woman. Sometimes I think that if I could do things like that with a woman, there would be so much to explore with their bodies."

"And will these women fulfill your dreams just like I did?"

I looked at him, who was full of confidence, and smiled back. Even though I felt sorry for him, I couldn’t let him feel so confident.

### "From now on I'm broke up with you, Non."

.

.

Being direct today made Non accept the truth, and he seemed to lose confidence when I confessed that all these years, I had been faking my pleasure. I never knew what it was like to truly break up, and that made him stop pressuring me any further.

The truth often hurts, but if I don’t say it, it won’t work out. I wished good luck to the next woman Non was with; He would probably improve himself for her. But how he would do that, I couldn’t say.

Now I was back in my room, stressing about another matter: the other woman who had suddenly gone silent. I tried to text her, letting her know I was back in my room, but she hadn’t opened it yet. Or maybe… I had been blocked.

## Rattikarn:

Liar.

Just as I was about to give up, slumped over and staring out the window, a text from the pretty face arrived just as I put my phone away. At least she was still responding, not cutting me off completely.

## Rungtiwa:

I can explain it. It’s over.

## Rattikarn:

What’s over?

## Rungtiwa:

Me and that guy. It's over.

## Rattikarn:

Everyone says that.

## Rattikarn:

You make me want something and then leave. I couldn't even eat with you.

## Rungtiwa:

Can I make it up to you? I want it too.

## Rattikarn:

What do you want?

## Rungtiwa:

Want to eat together.

Although the conversation was full of double meanings, I found a nice way out. Of course, the other side wasn't oblivious. She was silent for a moment before replying.

## Rattikarn:

Okay, then I give you five minutes. Right now, I'm downstairs in your apartment. If not I have to go back now...

## Rungtiwa:

Don't tease me.

## Rattikarn:

I'm counting the minutes. There are four minutes left.

I didn't know if she was serious or joking, but I jumped up to grab a robe, as I had just taken a shower and was ready to sleep.

I ran to the elevator. Rattikarn, who said she was waiting downstairs, was indeed sitting there, looking at her phone. When she saw me come down, she gave a small smile, like someone who felt victorious.

"How badly did you want to come down so fast?" "Very much!"

I said, and Rattikarn shrugged.

"Let's find something to eat around here." "Aren't we going to eat in my room?"

I kept inviting her, trying to find a good opportunity. Rattikarn pretended not to know and kept her poker face.

"Okay, I guess." Yes!

.

.

We bought beer and snacks at a nearby convenience store and clinked our drinks, eating like we usually did. Strangely, she didn't ask about what happened today, which made me anxious and ready to explain. My fidgeting caught the attention of the pretty girl sitting watching a broadcast on TV.

"Is something wrong?" "My panties are riding up."

"I thought you weren't wearing anything underneath." "How do you know that?"

"I can see your nipples."

I looked down at my nightgown and quickly crossed my arms. I wasn't really embarrassed, but when she pointed it out, I felt shy, even though she was a woman too.

"Crazy."

She laughed, making me smile, and finally, I couldn't hold it in anymore and asked what I wanted to know.

"Why didn't you ask about today?" "Hmm?"

"About what... Oh, about you and that guy? There's nothing to ask." "Why not? You can ask me."

"If you want to tell me, tell me yourself." "I thought you would be mad."

"Mad at you for what?"

"For the fact that..." "Oh, for lying?"

Rattikarn laughed happily.

"Who doesn't have lies? Everyone is born with secrets they don't want anyone to know."

"Why aren't you mad?"

"How can I be mad at you? We're nothing, right? Even if we were... I wouldn't be mad."

The pretty girl pulled her knees up to her chest and rested her chin on her hands, staring at the TV screen.

"I don't even care if you have someone else. If we like each other, let it be just us. Even if you get married and have a husband, if I like you, that's how it is."

"That's not right."

I shook my head, disagreeing with her opinions.

"If someone has a partner, we shouldn't interfere with them. It's a rule." "A rule from whom?"

"From whoever it is. They say it’s wrong, and it becomes right when you break up with someone who isn’t right for you."

"You’re wrong."

Rattikarn shake her head in disagreement, almost imitating me.

"You don’t have to break up with your old partner just to find a new one. You should ask them first."

"Why would you…"

"Go back and be good to your partner. If you stay with me and it doesn’t work out, you’ll feel bad and blame yourself."

"I don’t feel bad at all. I’ve already made the decision."

"But I don’t like your thinking. It implies that if I ever want to be with someone else, you’ll act possessive."

"It has to be this way. If you’re dating someone, it’s only that person." "It seems we disagree on this issue."

Rattikarn said, standing up and grabbing her shoulder bag to leave.

"I don’t believe in exclusivity. If you want to be in a relationship with freedom, you need to adjust your thinking."

"You need to adjust your thinking. If you love someone, you have to be loyal to that person."

"I can't do that." "..."

"True love doesn't exist. I'm sorry, but I have to go."

She cut the conversation and left, closing the door in my face as I stood there, shocked. This was the first time in my life that I heard such thoughts and logic. Can people like each other without having to be exclusive?

**What the hell is this!**

**00000**

# Chapter 07: Accept

I am someone who is very respectful of other people's opinions, whether it be regarding sexual attitudes, politics, education, religion, and more. This is because I work on a website where visitors come from all walks of life, as can be seen in the novels and discussion threads that indicate diverse opinions.

When I speak or listen, I try not to involve my emotions too much. However, the new idea that Rattikarn presented to me the night before made it impossible for me to agree. She told me to go back to my old lover and we could continue our relationship as before. The idea of monogamy seems ridiculous; people don't have to be tied to just one person because everyone can change at any time.

I don't understand... I really can't get into this idea at all.

This is the third night that Rattikarn hasn't contacted me. We haven't even argued; our conversation was just an exchange of thoughts. When we didn't understand each other, we simply parted ways. However, that day she seemed tense, although it would make more sense that she was angry out of frustration. I just want to know what's going on!

"Nuai"

"Hey... Why are you calling me by my full name? It gives me the creeps."

Nuai is the name of my boss, who is both a friend and a supervisor. I usually call him "Boss" more often. When I call him by his name, like in college, he gets all goosebumps like he's about to face a complicated debtor.

"As a businessman..."

"Don't be serious."

Initially, I intended to update my boss on the progress, but I quickly changed the subject to get rid of that weird logic in my head. I ended up venting to this guy because we are the same age and he has seen a lot in the company.

"Can people really date while allowing the other person to have someone else?"

"Let's get back to that. Confusing, right?"

"To visualize... you and I feel a sudden thrill in our hearts and end up making out at work."

"Yuck."

"Moving on... But we do this while both parties allow the other to see other people at the same time. Or if you already have a girlfriend and you stay with me, that's fine too. We can just stay together like this. What kind of relationship is that?"

"A no-strings-attached relationship, I guess."

"So why would people agree to something like that?"

"Well, they don't want to commit. I like you, but I don't want to be with just you. It's like looking for someone else just in case to keep myself safe."

"Why do you seem to understand this so well? I really don't get it. Are there people who really think like that?"

"If someone isn't too selfish, they might be too afraid of being alone, so they don't want to get involved with anyone, right?

"Nuai thought for a moment.

"They think in two ways. If they aren't greedy, they might be afraid of relationships. When they like someone, they only give them half of their

heart. I like you, but I won't love you completely. I don't want to get hurt." "Why be so afraid?"

"Who knows? I'm the first example... I'm very greedy, I'm not afraid of relationships, but I just want to have fun. By the way, how is Rattikarn? How far have you gone as a matchmaker?"

"When did you put me as a matchmaker?"

"What the hell? Don't you think about helping a friend who doesn't have a partner?"

"The more I hear you say you're greedy, the less I want to introduce you."

"Oh, I didn't say that! Let's rephrase that. I never said that. It's just a case study. If I had Rattikarn as a girlfriend, I promise I would double her salary and give her twelve months bonus. She's the true love I've been looking for."

"Which part of that did you really mean? Did you mean any of those sentences?"

"None."

"Hmm."

"But I really like her. That's the true truth."

"Why are you coming to report something? Let's leave it for next time. I'm irritated!!"

"Wait, the thing you asked... Why are you asking?" "Just asking, isn't that allowed?"

"Then why ask like that all of a sudden? There must be a reason. Or is your older boyfriend offering you weird proposals, like if we get married, we can

both have other people? That kind of thing? Hey, no way! In theory, it's funny to talk about it, but if you're married, what's the point of it? Damn."

"Still! This guy is so ahead of this time. I just said I was asking for fun."

"Don't let me know if he's asking you something weird like that... break up with him. It's selfish. Disgusting. Crazy. Are you listening? If he really does that, you have to break up with him while you still can. Don't play with fire, okay?"

And my boss turned into a high school boy, cursing and talking passionately. I made a face and left the room. As I thought,

consulting Nuai was the right choice. Although it had some substance, it helped clarify things for me. I can't see this issue only from my own perspective; getting other people's opinions broadens my view.

If she's not greedy, it means she's very afraid of relationships. Am I playing with fire here...?

.

.

Love consists of two sides: the one who likes more and the one who likes less. It seems like the scales are tipping towards me, as I like her more than she likes me in equal measure. The three days of no contact ended when I couldn't contain myself any longer and texted her in a desperate attempt.

## Rungtiwa:

I'm sorry.

Even though it was just a short message, it meant I had completely given up. When I sent it, my heart raced and pounded because I was so afraid she would read it and act indifferent. Maybe she had already cut that thin thread between us. However, three seconds later, she replied immediately, making me smile.

## Rattikarn:

I'm back.

## Rungtiwa:

You're really in a bad mood, aren't you?

## Rattikarn:

No way. I'm just writing content for your company's training.

## Rungtiwa:

But you disappeared.

## Rattikarn:

I wanted to send you a message too, but I was afraid you wouldn't reply.

## Rattikarn:

I'm glad we got in touch.

## Rattikarn:

I'm almost crying with happiness.

## Rungtiwa:

You're exaggerating.

.

I don't know if she's really about to cry, but I can clearly see that my eyes are shining. She's like a source of energy; everything I send to her reflects back, doubling the effect. Three days of emotional drought have been soaked by her messages, filling my heart with warmth.

## Rungtiwa:

To make up for your tears of joy, how about we meet up today?

## Rattikarn:

That sounds great!

## Rattikarn:

I've been thinking about you.

.

.

We agreed to meet at a shopping mall downtown. She said it was halfway between her home and my workplace. I'll admit that while riding the Skytrain back, I checked Google Maps to see which area was closest to the definition of "halfway." It seemed like there were several districts.

When I arrived at the mall, a beautiful woman was standing at the perfume counter. I wasn't sure if the scent that hung in the air was from the perfume she had used earlier or from the brand itself, as it was the same fragrance: her signature perfume, Chanel No. 5.

"Hmm..."

I cleared my throat to get her attention. After a moment of sniffing, Rattikarn decided to buy the perfume, paid the clerk, and turned to me with a smile.

"You got here quickly! Doesn't it smell nice?"

She held out her wrist for me to smell. I almost opened my mouth to take a bite because I was so tempted, before pouting.

"It doesn't smell good."

"Why are you so contradictory? Last time, you said you liked me because of this perfume. Now I bought it for no reason? I planned to spray it on you until you got tired of it."

"Are you saying you bought this perfume to please me?" "You said you liked it!"

"Thank you."

"We are the same. If I like the perfume, it's because I like you." "Thank you! This is the product. Thank you for your support!"

The clerk approached with the perfume bag, smiling at both of us. I was a little embarrassed thinking that the clerk had heard our conversation, so I turned my face away to avoid eye contact.

"It seems that the clerk heard us talking. What do you think they're thinking?"

Rattikarn asked jokingly, noticing my embarrassment. I shrugged and smiled awkwardly.

"They probably don't think about anything... right?"

"If someone said they liked you and you heard it, wouldn't you think anything of it?"

"Are you mad?" "Mad about what?"

"About me acting weird and being shy like this all the time." "People have no experience; it's understandable."

"You seem so normal."

I questioned her as Rattikarn strolled leisurely through the cool mall, one hand holding the shopping bag.

"Maybe it's because I don't care about anyone's opinion, so I don't feel anything. I'm thick-skinned."

She laughed lightly.

"I've been living without caring about anyone for a long time." "And you didn't realize that a lot of people are interested in you."

"Really? I never knew. I think it's because I don't care about anyone much. When I focus on something, I only focus on one thing."

She looked at me and winked playfully as if to say,

*'I'm interested in you.'*

I pouted and couldn't help but tease her.

"If you only focus on one thing, then why not just accept having a husband or a wife?"

"I was wondering when you would bring that up."

She smiled sweetly at me, reached into her pocket and replied casually.

"People change every day. Today you say you like someone; tomorrow you may not like them anymore. So it's more comfortable to keep your heart open, thinking that you are not theirs. If one day you leave, it's because you have someone new, and that person got what they wanted, so you break up and become friends."

"Have you ever had a serious boyfriend before?" "I won't tell you."

She laughed lightly, but that only made me more frustrated that I wasn't getting an answer.

"I don't like the term 'serious' in relationships. It's full of pressure. You're mine; you have to do this, you have to do that."

"If we love someone, but they're not just ours, how can we call them our partner?"

"There are many people who are like siblings." "I don't want to be sisters with you."

"We haven't even done anything together yet; it's too early to decide if we'll be sisters or not until we try."

She said half-jokingly before stopping and turning to look at me. "Is something wrong? Why are you so quiet?"

"Then why haven't we done anything yet?" "Wow... that's pretty straightforward."

Rattikarn laughed, but when she saw that I wasn't smiling, she sighed.

"But if we do something and it doesn't feel right, what will happen? Have you thought about that?"

"..."

"It would be really hard for us to go back to being friends. On one hand... I'm really interested in you, but I also like being like this with you."

"..."

## "I like you, Rung." "I like you too."

"But I can't carry the weight of your feelings like this."

She was so direct that I was speechless. In general, she seemed afraid of relationships, afraid of her feelings. If there was nothing else to explore, she would get bored and leave.

"You're too serious. You would break up with your boyfriend just to focus entirely on me, and that scares me. I like you... but I can't take responsibility for your feelings. I don't want to see you disappointed. At least we were friends first."

"What if I agree to your terms, give you freedom and don't make you carry this responsibility? Would you reconsider our relationship?"

## Am I... really that into her?

□□□□□

# Chapter 08: New World

The pretty-faced girl looked at me in shock before she started to smile and then burst out laughing in the middle of the mall, drawing strange looks from the people passing by. Her open, shameless, and carefree laughter was a charm I had just witnessed.

She was just like that, doing whatever she wanted. Sometimes she wouldn’t say a word, and other times, she would speak freely, laughing her heart out. But it was frustrating because I was being serious, and she acted like it was all a joke.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I’m laughing at your face! When you spoke, you looked so serious that it gave me goosebumps."

She showed me her arm. It wasn’t really goosebumps like she said; it was more of a metaphor to express her feelings upon hearing me.

"I’m serious."

"Don’t joke around. You can’t do that; I can see it." Rattikarn changed from laughing to smiling and sighed. "You must really like me."

"Yes, I like you a lot." "Thank you." She shrugged.

"But probably not as much as you. Seeing you like this makes me want to avoid disappointing you even more. You should go back to your partner; you're a very good person, Rung."

"What do I have to do?"

I almost shouted, causing everyone around to turn and look at us.

"What do I have to do to please you? I've already lowered myself for you." "Like myself less."

"..."

"And then I come back to play with you."

.

.

I felt like I was being toyed with. She said she liked me, but she was trying to push me away just because she didn't want to bear the weight of my overwhelming feelings.

*Isn't it a good thing when someone loves you?*

Why does she run away when she sees me chasing after her? It's like she's willing to let me catch her, but then lets go halfway, causing her pain.

This pain made me look for something to hold on to, so I asked Non to come sit and drink beer with me for company.

"Did she hurt you?"

My ex's question almost made me choke. I nodded, accepting the truth.

"Yes, I'm sorry for asking Non out. When I thought I wanted to talk to someone, I couldn't think of anyone else but Non."

"We're both friends and ex-lovers, you know?" "Yes, that's true."

"What did she do? Can you tell me?" "She asked me to like her less."

I smiled at my ex-lover and asked for his opinion. "What should I do?"

"If Non knew, I probably wouldn't have gone out for beers with you. That's how people are; the more you forbid something, the more attractive it becomes. If you want me to like you less, I'll like you even more. When someone breaks up with you, you want them back even more. The only way I'll stop liking you is if one of us dies."

"Am I really going to die?"

I was a little scared to hear that thought. There are many news stories about people who can't let go and go to the point of killing their ex lovers so that the other person doesn't find someone else. When Non noticed that I was silently watching, he laughed for the first time since we met.

"Non wouldn't kill you, come on. After all this time together, how can you still see me like that?"

"I wasn't thinking about anything like that." "Whenever you lie, you blink rapidly."

"Is that how it is with me?"

I raised my hand to my cheek and smiled shyly.

"Non really knows me better than anyone. How could I hurt your feelings?" "Well, love isn't measured by kindness; it's all about feelings."

I looked at Non and reached out to rub his arm, as if to comfort him. I wasn't sure if what I was doing was right, but it was better than not showing any feelings at all.

"But I really did love you all along. It was a real feeling, not just pretend."

"That's good to hear. I think you really loved me... Otherwise, during our times together, you would have told me that I wasn't enough. You didn't say anything because you were afraid it would hurt my trust."

When he brought it up, I had to grab the beer and gulp it down, then turn my face away. He was still stuck on it, after all. It was a matter of pride, I guess. I wanted to go back in time and erase that incident.

"So, did you fight with that girl? Is that why you're drinking beer like that?"

Non changed the subject, making it easier for me to breathe and return to our normal conversation.

"It wasn’t a fight; it’s just that we don’t agree on a few things. We haven’t even started anything yet, and there’s already a huge obstacle. I don’t think it’s going to work out."

"Well, think of her as dead."

I looking at my ex and then asking, “Do you think I’m dead to you?” "After today, you’ll be dead to me.” He looked at me with determination.

“This will be the last time I see you like this.”

He leaned in and kissed me softly. I knew every rhythm of his kisses, having become familiar with them over the years. I kissed him back, but gently pushed him away to signal that I wouldn’t go any further. Besides, my heart wasn’t in it anymore.

"This is a goodbye kiss; you have to make it happen with that girl. If you don’t start anything, it will hurt less.”

Non leaned in to kiss my cheek lightly again.

"One thing is for sure, it will definitely hurt less than what you feel now."

.

.

In romance novels, men often turn into villains in love stories, whether it’s a woman-woman relationship or a boy-love story where a woman becomes the antagonist, preventing both men from being happy. But Non is not like that. He is a friend, a brother, and a family. He is willing to walk away and let me live my life as I want, even if it causes him pain. I’m not sure if there will ever be anyone who loves and cares for me as much as he does or if anyone can understand me as well as he does, but I wish him all the best.

Since I died for Non today, Rattikarn… you should die for me too. If loving less is the answer, then it’s better not to love at all.

.

.

"What’s with this sudden medical leave? Since we’ve worked together, you’ve never been sick, never been hurt, never died! You’ve survived a car accident and a plane crash. What’s wrong with you?"

I pouted after listening to my boss’s barrage of questions. Was taking three days off really such a catastrophe?

"I just have menstrual cramps." "Do you have a uterus?"

"Shut up."

"What about the project with Rattikarn? Who’s going to take over?"

"I’ve assigned someone to coordinate in my place. Do you think I wouldn’t have considered this before?"

"Having someone else do it won’t be as convenient as you doing it yourself."

"The work isn’t that hard. Rattikarn has already prepared his part. We just need to organize the venue for the script workshop, and that’s someone else’s job. I have nothing else to do."

"This is so irresponsible. Okay… just get enough rest. We can wait here." "Thank you."

"We really can wait." "Thank you again." "Seriously, we can wait."

"Ugh, are you going to make me stop?" "Only three days."

"I’m leaving."

"Okay, three days. Bye."

And then, my leave was successfully approved. For years, I hadn’t had a proper break. I could only rest when I took vacations, which I spent traveling out of town while still working. But this time, I was going to take three days off to stay home and organize my thoughts and my life.

Although I could think of many reasons for this, the main one was that I wanted to avoid facing Rattikarn, who had been coming to the office for a lot of meetings lately. I needed to clear my mind first; if I kept seeing her every day, there was no way I would like her any less.

*Stop liking her? That seemed impossible.*

However, when I was no longer working, I was getting bored. Going from someone who used her brain all day until it was time to go home to someone who didn’t have to think about anything was incredibly boring. So, I started surfing the internet and searching for topics that interested me at the moment.

*Lesbian.*

I pressed my lips together tightly as I typed in the search term before hitting Enter. Google started feeding me related content, sorting it out for me like feeding a pig. There was everything from women’s novels to the meaning of the term, as well as how to tell if someone is or isn’t.

It was strange that these things could be quantified in statistics and articles to read. People who knew what they liked from the start must be very lucky; they wouldn’t have to waste time or go through experiences that weren’t right for them, unlike me. In addition to the definition of “lesbian,” there were also terms like “trans,” “non-binary,” and many others, which made me feel like I was expanding my horizons. After spending about an hour on this, the next topic I stumbled upon was… lesbian clubs.

There were communities, hangouts, and bars that only women were allowed to enter. I stopped and looked at the names of the places, my heart racing.

Maybe if I wanted to get my feelings straight, I should start talking to or mingling with them first. I might just be going through a phase; maybe I wasn’t a lesbian after all.

Suddenly, a Facebook Messenger notification sound interrupted me, pulling me away from the screen. I checked who had messaged me and found it was Rattikarn. Just seeing her name made my heart race, as if I was waiting for someone I was in love with to see my story or like my status, filling me with joy.

## Rattikarn:

Are you sick? Is it something serious?

I stared at her message, feeling like melted wax meeting a flame. My heart, which had been trying to cut ties, felt like it was being ignited by her concern. How could I cut ties when she was still showing so much care?

But unfriending her would be child’s play, especially since we had to work together again.

In the end, all I could do was open her message and then go back to looking at the clubs I was considering. Maybe I should do something new to help the old feelings fade, like going to one of those clubs…

.

.

I had been thinking, but I didn’t think I would actually do it, especially by myself. A women-only club is not that different from a men-only club, except that only women can enter. There is live music, and they sell alcohol and beer like any other place. I chose to sit at the bar and ordered a beer, then looked around, feeling a little empty being here alone.

"Is this your first time here?"

A girl with short hair who looked more like a tomboy greeted me. I smiled and nodded a little awkwardly.

"Yeah, I wanted to open my mind a little."

"If you ever get lonely, just let me know and I'll keep you company."

I laughed, pleased with her offer. She seemed to be trying to make me feel comfortable and at ease. Everyone else was in groups, claiming tables and swaying to the music, since they hadn't gotten drunk yet. Going out at night like this wasn't my normal life, and being here alone seemed even more impossible.

As it got later, the music got more lively, and more people crowded into the club, clinking bottles in camaraderie. Most of the couples I saw were

tomboy-girl pairs, while others were groups of friends, or maybe they were dating, but I couldn’t tell.

I had to admit that being in that crowd was pretty awkward; no one was openly displaying their identity like the short-haired tomboy, who I could easily tell was a lesbian. I tried to act cool about it, but it felt unnecessary. Rattikarn herself seemed like an ultra-feminine woman, but she still managed to attract me, even though I had a boyfriend.

It seemed like I wasn’t having much fun tonight. Listening to the live music, I felt a little tipsy from the beer, but I didn’t really get anything out of it. Before I got up to leave, I was stopped again by the tomboy.

"Are you leaving already?" "Yeah, I’m getting sleepy."

"What? The music is so fun! How can you be tired? Are you bored?"

"It’s not that; it’s fun, but I’m alone and I don’t know how to have fun alone. I’ll bring friends next time."

"You have to come again! Don't let this place make you feel bad when you leave.

"You're so sweet."

I complimented the bartender and gave her a small tip before leaving. Out of habit, I picked up my phone to check for updates, but my eyes inadvertently glanced at my inbox. Rattikarn had only sent me one message, asking how I was doing, and hadn’t asked anything else.

Whether it was because I was drunk or just indifferent, it stung a little. While I was thinking about her nonstop, she only sent me that one message as if she was just checking in. Couldn’t she send one more message?

Ugh!

*Beep beep.*

The sound of a car horn made me turn around and see a white BMW convertible. The driver, a stunning woman with long hair, smiled at me and started a conversation.

"Are you going home?"

Just to be sure, I looked around again to confirm that she was talking to me, which made her laugh.

"I’m talking to you. Are you leaving?" "Yes, I’m about to go home."

"Where do you live? Is it far?" "Hm…”

I hesitated on how to answer. "It’s a little far."

"Do you want to sleep at my place?"

A silence fell between us as the convertible flashed its lights and she smiled at me. I stared at her, thinking deeply. I had never done anything out of the ordinary, except for that one time with Non before I turned sixteen, and I felt guilty about it for a while.

Now, I realized that I was old enough to be responsible for myself. This situation was no different.

"If there’s air conditioning, I can sleep anywhere." "So get in!"

I opened the car door and climbed into the passenger seat. The driver turned to fasten her seatbelt, and the smell of her perfume made me think of someone else, almost making my heart jump out of my chest.

*Chanel No. 5.*

"What’s up?"

"Your perfume… it smells wonderful."

I answered honestly, as the driver smiled and leaned in, her nose almost touching mine.

"The one you’re wearing is even better." "Are you bragging?"

"Why don't you find out for yourself?"

□□□□□

# Chapter 09: Exercise

"Has anything changed after three days away? Why does today look so bright and different from all the other days?"

"Really? Did you cut your bangs?" "You're right! Hey, it looks cute!"

Ever since I joined the company, I've been teased by seniors and newbies alike. I just smiled at everyone and shrugged, not denying anything, because being overly humble seems more like a lack of confidence.

So I accepted the compliments, even striking a playful pose to make everyone jealous, until I got to my own desk. My boss and a newbie were standing there discussing work when they looked at me with wide eyes.

"Have you had plastic surgery?"

My direct friend, who couldn’t give a compliment without sarcasm, made me smile and flip my hair like I was in a shampoo commercial.

"If I’m pretty, tell me I’m pretty. No need to throw shade." "It’s okay."

"Then you don’t have to talk. Today, I’ll only accept compliments!" "What did you do?"

"I had sex." "What the hell!"

Responding to my direct friend with such a direct answer might embarrass him enough to blush. Even though he’s a rude guy, he gets nervous talking about intimate matters, which I know well. After my boss left, the junior slid her chair closer to me, curious.

"That must have been some wild sex!"

"It’s surprising that I’m the naughty one, not the boss."

I laughed, not responding. For the past two days, my mind had been clear, as if I hadn’t felt any stress. To be more precise, I had released all my feelings through moaning sounds that I never thought I would make so loud.

My gaze was focused on the computer screen, but I couldn’t help but think about my own intimate night, the night I ended up at the apartment of the BMW owner who introduced herself as “Ploy.” I was awkward and overwhelmed because it was the first time I had fully followed my desires, ending up in bed with a stranger I had just met on the street.

"*Just to clarify, I had never done anything like this before…"*

*"That’s a good thing because those who have done this tend to brag too much."*

It was the first time I had slept with a woman, and everything was so different from my previous experiences that I was confused about where to start. The forms were different; some parts were similar, and I didn’t know whether I should make the first move or let her approach me. In the end, I just stood there stiff as a log, closing my eyes because I was so excited.

*"I believe you’ve never done this before." "Never with a woman..."*

*"It's good to be the first woman. Think of it as a sparring partner; if you want me to do something, just tell me. No need to hold back... I'm not*

*someone who has to be shy because we don't know each other. Remember that."*

What a different perspective!

Normally, I would be so attentive to my partner that I wouldn't dare express my desires. If I wasn't satisfied, I would say so, and if it was too painful, I would pretend to be asleep because I didn't want to go for round two.

But this time it was different. It was like a workout; I could express my own desires. I never realized that fingers could do more than type on a keyboard, open a bottle, strum a guitar or carry things. I always ignored it because I didn't know it could be so much more.

.

.

"Was it with your previous boyfriend?" "I won't tell."

I replied the junior with a smile, pushing her face away slightly. "Get back to work, you little one."

"What little one? Look, I've had three boyfriends!" "Oh my God!"

But even if she said that, I still wouldn’t tell her. I continued working when a thought came to mind.

"By the way, how was work while I was away?"

"The work was good, but it would have been better if you were here." "What about Miss Rattikarn? How was the arrangement?"

"Since I had assigned the task directly to her, she shrugged it off as if it was no big deal."

"I don’t know either." "Oh?"

I turned my chair around to scold her for not doing her assigned tasks, but she seemed to know better and quickly explained before I could scold her.

"Well, the boss offered to take over everything, so I didn’t have to do anything."

"Everything?"

"The boss coordinated directly with Miss Rattikarn. I heard they went out to dinner together the past three days. They must be quite close.”

She said, her tone dripping with sarcasm as she gossiped about the boss.

“The boss seems excited; He usually comes to work looking grumpy, but for the past three days he’s been smiling brightly, radiating kindness. He might actually have a girlfriend now.

"Oh, so that’s it."

Even though I said I’d moved on, hearing that still irritated me, but I kept it to myself. If people really don’t want to feel anything, they can’t feel anything, even if the person is dating someone else.

"Can you help me tease Ball? Go take care of Miss Rattikarn instead; he came back looking grumpy again. I feel nauseous every time Ball smiles."

"What’s wrong? The boss is in a good mood, and instead of being happy…"

"The boss’s smile is annoying! He acts like he’s above everyone in this world. He should be grumpy instead of happy."

I shook my head and went back to work with a smile, trying to push the thoughts of Miss Rattikarn out of my mind and pretend I didn’t feel anything. No, I had to feel nothing. I had spent the last three days without her in my head. Once I was back in reality, I knew I had to deal with it the same way and that I would get through it.

And it seems that this world wants to test my patience, out of curiosity. Today is another day when Rattikarn came to the office to summarize the content of the scriptwriting training course, which the website team needs to be aware of. But even if she didn’t tell us, we wouldn’t think of interfering; it’s just that she needs to inform us for awareness.

As she entered the meeting room, she, still wearing her shiny black jacket and tight jeans, glanced at me briefly before sitting in her usual seat, showing no sign of greeting me or teasing me like her colleagues do. She waved to everyone and started the meeting.

I listened to the general summary and pretended to take notes, although in reality I didn’t need to do anything; I was just doing it to save face.

"The raw content is as follows. Is there anything you'd like me to adjust?" "No way. Just do what you think is best, Night."

“Night,”

The short form of the boss’s mouth made me look up slightly. Are we on a first-name basis now? Even though I’ve known her for a long time, I still call her Rattikarn.

"Well, that should be it. I’ll email you the PDF file later."

"Thank you for taking the trouble to come and summarize the content. You really didn’t need to go through all that effort."

"It’s better to take things step by step. In that case, let’s meet again on the day of the training around next month, okay?"

She turned to me as if to confirm the date. I nodded slightly and smiled at her.

"Yes, on the 12th in the afternoon."

"I see. Then, I guess that’s it. Thank you very much, everyone."

Everyone in the meeting stand up, with the boss leading the way to the door, opening it for Rattikarn as if they are family. After they both left, everyone in the room begin to whisper about the boss. The colleague sitting next to me elbowed me lightly and grimaced.

"Did you see the boss's excitement?" "Yes, I did."

"I hope Rattikarn isn't blind. Poor thing." "I'm not sure who we should feel sorry for." "What do you mean?"

"It's nothing. Come on, let's get back to work. If we gossip about the boss in front of his people, he might get us in trouble."

I pretended to scold everyone in the meeting room and left just as the two of them were standing around talking about something, not having left the office yet.

"Rung."

Rattikarn called me because she could see me too. I stopped and raised an eyebrow, smiling as if I was full of curiosity about why she was calling me.

"What's wrong?"

"Khun Nui invited us to dinner tonight."

She said it in a clear voice, and of course, everyone in the office heard it. The boss, clueless about this, looked nervous and scratched his head in embarrassment, while the employees pretended not to hear and continued working.

"Are you really inviting him to join us?"

I pretended to tease, while my friend stood there looking like she was holding a small dog turd in her mouth, looking pitiful. Sure, this was an invitation to a date. But weren't they already together? Why the need to invite each other?

"Yes, I'm inviting him too. It seems that Khun Nui wants to invite us to Khet."

"Well, then go ahead. Haven't you guys been together already?" Rattikarn smirked, and I quickly explained what I had heard.

"I heard people in the office gossiping that you and the boss are close." "Well, we are close... to a certain extent."

She said it with a slight hint, almost as if she was teasing Nui. But if you look closely, it seems like she wanted to tease me more than anything else, which I had to admit worked. I could only nod in response.

"Then go."

"But I want Rung to go too. If Rung If not… I won’t go."

This was a firm statement, and no one could force someone like Rattikarn. Nui looked like her heart had broken before she nodded and invited me nonchalantly, without a choice.

"You’re being difficult even after an invitation like that. Let’s go together; the more the merrier."

"No, thank you. It’s a date, so why should I be the third wheel?"

"Well, if you won’t go, then I won’t go."

Rattikarn looked at Nui and smiled lightly, causing Nui to encourage me again.

"You have to go. This is an order." "What order? After work, I'm free." "This is work. I'll pay you overtime." "I..."

I was about to say something rude to my friend, using familiar language, but since we were in front of many employees, I could only bare my teeth.

"I'm not going." "You have to go." "I'm not going." "Please."

Rattikarn's voice echoed between us, making me stop. Her smile and inviting demeanor softened my resolve.

"Please..."

“...”

"I want you to come..." "Hmm..."

With a trick like that, who could refuse?

.

.

I became a student sitting in the front row of the ring. If this were a show, I would have had VIP tickets to watch the two of them flirt with each other. In truth, the conversation wasn't exactly flirting; it was much more awkward than that because Rattikarn wasn't the type to use small talk, and Nui wasn't particularly good at charming women either.

Even though he was a CEO with a broad perspective and a talented programmer, when it came to socializing and flirting, I would only give him a two out of ten. He was straightforward, and women often shied away from him. It seemed like he knew this too; after all, he had never been able to flirt with anyone, so he adjusted his strategy to speak less and tried to present himself well in front of Rattikarn.

But still, he sounded too artificial, making it hard to believe that the words were coming from a real person.

"I really don’t like the government’s attitude, do you?" He said. "The process of thinking about…"

"The balance of power…"

"Does it really have to be so serious? This is flirting, not a political debate! Is that really how you normally talk?" I interrupted.

Rattikarn, who usually didn’t express much emotion, gave me a grateful look for helping to end this boring conversation.

"That’s how it is." He replied.

"Do you really have to force it so much? You’re being very unnatural,”

I said. I didn’t want to put my friend in trouble, but seeing Nui like this was too much for me to bear. My friend, trying to act dignified, gave me an irritated look.

“That’s just my nature.”

The scathing tone, now relaxed, made me snap my fingers with a snap.

“That’s your real voice! You don’t have to pretend. Rattikarn isn’t someone who’ll sit around in boring discussions. Change the topic from politics and economics to something else!"

"What should we talk about?”

Since Nui wasn’t much of a talker and the friend I was trying to talk to wasn’t very diverse in topics either, I sighed and pointed at the girl in the printed shirt who had been sitting silently for a while.

“Come on, ‘Night,’ say whatever you want,”

I imitated Nui, who kept calling her Night over and over. The pretty-faced girl pouted cutely and followed my suggestion, asking me to come back.

“Well then… where have you been for the past three days? I heard you were sick and didn’t come to work."

Now the conversation turned to me. Nui pretended to agree and started pushing me like a friend seeking revenge for the

embarrassment.

"I just stayed home, you know? I went here and there, and when my mind calmed down, my body felt better."

"You cut your hair too, huh?"

Nui, now more himself, couldn’t help but poke me immediately, so I snapped back.

"You’re taking advantage of this opportunity, huh? I just wanted to change some things in my life."

"They say cutting your hair means a new beginning. So you made up with your boyfriend?"

Rattikarn asked with a blank face, but it was Nui who seemed more interested.

"Wait, did you fight with Non? Oh... that day you asked, I knew there had to be something. Great! A guy that terrible isn’t right for you. A person who doesn’t want to be with just you is selfish. Break up and get it over with."

Rattikarn looked at Nui, then at me, piecing together the situation before smiling and asking again.

"What did Rung say?" "Nui."

I said in a firm voice, but my mischievous friend couldn’t keep quiet because it was too much fun, feeling like he was exposing me and getting revenge.

"Well, she casually asked what someone in a no-strings-attached relationship thinks. She came to ask for an analysis or something. I just gave her some straightforward advice."

"What kind of advice did you give her?"

"I just told her to break up. How can you be in a relationship but have to be open enough to date other people? So I told her that a person like that, if they’re not selfish or greedy, is probably afraid of love, too afraid to deal with feelings. So I advised her to break up."

"I see,”

Rattikarn shrugged and lifted her chin, looking at me with a smile.

“So, after being away for three days, what did you think? Share it with me.”

I looked into her jet-black eyes, thinking about how to respond. She was so incredibly beautiful that it was annoying, full of confidence and pride. She probably thought she was above me now.

"Well, I realized that if someone isn’t right for you, then they simply aren’t. In the end, I decided to break up with Non,”

I told Nui, taking a sip of water.

“And I also got to do new things that I’ve never done before. It opened my world up completely.”

"What kind of new things? Does cutting your hair count as opening up your world?"

"Well,”

I laughed as meaningfully as I could,

“Since we’re close, I thought I’d share it with you all. We’re all friends here.”

I emphasized the word “friends” right in Rattikarn’s face. Since she wanted to draw a line with me so badly, I’d be happy to give her the friendship she craved.

"So what did you go and do?" "I went to a stand-up show."

My answer almost made Nui choke on his food. Thankfully, he didn’t take another bite. Rattikarn looked at me with interest, her gaze directly on me, leaving Nui out of the conversation.

"Wow, that must have been fun!"

"It was so much fun! I got to do something I never thought I would do, and it opened my perspective to discover that I actually like women. It’s not just a whim or a phase."

"Women? Hey…”

Nui made a face like she’d seen a ghost.

“What the hell? Who have you become in just three days?”

"Nui, I’m single now, so I’ve decided to try to live the single life to the fullest. It’s… nice,”

I chuckled lightly, as Rattikarn continued to examine me, trying to figure out if I was serious.

“There are no strings attached; we only know each other by our nicknames. I can say whatever I want without holding back. Even though I’m a total beginner, it’s not so bad."

"Woman?”

She asked directly, and seeing that look in her eyes made me happy. "Yes."

"How did you two meet?"

"Well, I went to a nightclub, a place that caters to a specific crowd. We both knew what we were getting into without having to guess. To be honest, it was a bit difficult; she came to talk first, and we ended up together. I used to think that love and sex were the same thing, but after that day, I had a new perspective."

"Ugh, let's change the subject."

Nui, embarrassed and blushing, covered his cheeks with his hands, but Rattikarn didn't let it go.

"What's this new perspective?"

"Sex with a stranger is like having a workout buddy. You can go all out without any reservations. I don't know... maybe you'll find a good partner. You can ask for whatever you want, and they'll do it, repeating until you're satisfied. It feels good."

"You're going to give me a heart attack! Change the subject, please!"

Nui raised his hands to cover his ears in disbelief, waving at Rattikarn. "Don’t talk to her about it, Nigth. She’s crazy."

"That’s a good comparison: a training partner."

Rattikarn seemed unfazed by Nui’s antics and took a sip of his drink as if he was thinking about something before swallowing.

"You’ve really changed. You’re not the same Rungtiwa anymore." "In what ways have I changed for you? Good or bad?"

"I’m not sure… let’s keep talking for now. I need to go out for a smoke."

The pretty-faced girl stood up and smiled at Nui, but I grabbed her fingertips before she could leave, holding her tightly, and turned to say half- jokingly, half-seriously.

“If you get restless, you can always ask me to work out together.”

But Rattikarn pulled her hand away and walked away. Even though she didn’t show any emotion, I could feel it… she was jealous.

□□□□□

# Chapter 10: Whoever loves the most will loses

Since I noticed that Rattikan had been outside for a while, I decided to go after her, leaving Nui waiting at the table. When I found her, she was still holding her vape in her hand, but hadn't actually taken a drag. I had to clear my throat to bring her back to the present.

"Why are you distracted? I noticed that you left a while ago, so I came to find you."

"I was lost in thoughts about many things." "You look irritated."

I got straight to the point. To be honest, I felt strangely happy seeing her slightly irritated expression, which made Rattikan look at me, tilt her head, and raise an eyebrow.

"Do you think I'm irritated because of you?" "I wouldn't be so full of myself."

"Good."

Her "Good" seemed to affirm my "I wouldn't be so full of myself" as truth. I imagined reaching out to playfully pull her hair, but that vision shattered with a ping! when Rattikan spoke again.

“Well, let’s go back inside together.

"If you really don’t like Nui, don’t play with his feelings.”

"Hm?”

She smiled with a mischievous glint.

“And what makes you think I’m playing with your friend’s feelings? "Or are you going to tell me you like Nui?"

"Well, I don’t hate him. He’s kind of cute."

"Does he know you have a… unique perspective on relationships?"

"He doesn’t know yet. But I plan on telling him. If he’s willing, maybe we can try dating, just casually. He seems like the kind of guy who knows how to woo a woman."

"I thought you only liked women."

"I’m thinking of dating him as my first boyfriend… if he agrees to my terms. You don’t have a problem with that, do you?”

“…”

"Silence means you’re okay with it. So, that’s it."

My initial joy has completely turned to irritation. Rattikan was playing the game, and I wasn’t going to let her drag anyone into her world of hurt. Even if, in her eyes, love was simple and open, with no one belonging to anyone else.

"Stay away from Nui."

I grabbed Rattikan’s wrist, squeezing tightly.

"You’re funny, you know? You rejected me when I offered myself, but now with Nui, you’re suddenly willing to go along. What exactly do you want?"

"I just do what I want. Nothing complicated. Unlike you, your once simple life has become unnecessarily complicated. A one-night stand? A training

partner?"

She laughed sarcastically.

"You stopped talking to me for three days out of pure pettiness, thinking I wouldn’t notice?"

"Petty about what?"

"Your haircut, that ridiculous and unconvincing story…" "Unconvincing story? So you think I lied?"

My expression reflected shock and insult at this. Rattikan shook my hand off and raised her hands in surrender.

"I don’t want to fight with you. I don’t want to get too emotional about your story, but I’ll tell you one thing… your lying is annoying. I didn’t come into your life to change anything about you. You don’t have to hold back, you don’t have to lie to look sexy."

I almost screamed in frustration at the idea that she thought I was lying to impress her. Did she really think she was that important?

"At the very least, you admit that I'm sexy."

"It would be sexy if someone else did it. But you? It’s pathetic." "Rattikarn!"

I raised my voice, ready to argue. She turned and went back inside, sitting down as if nothing had happened, while Nui was completely oblivious.

Dinner that night ended with my frustration simmering and the urge to slap her just to end it all. Did she think I was a character in a romance novel, making up ridiculous stories to make myself seem cool?

A one-night stand isn’t cool or sexy. It’s just…sharing stories. Damn it! I lost to her again. I ended up being the only one left, seething with anger.

.

.

Time passed, and Rattikan didn’t come back to the office for meetings, because everything was already taken care of. The only task left was a training session she was going to attend on the 12th of the following month. Even though we had a fight, I didn’t act childishly like the last time and I stopped being her friend. I kept her as a friend, although we never exchanged messages.

We occasionally liked each other’s posts, but it felt more like a silent mind game than anything else.

I’m watching her, but I’m not going to talk to her. Want to talk? Make the first move.

This is our message to each other, sent via Mark Zuckerberg’s “like” button. No words exchanged, not even a greeting in the comments. But it feels like we’re communicating telepathically:

“I’m following you, whoever speaks first loses.”

Our cold war continues endlessly, until something happens that makes me want to rip Rattikan’s hair out. I see Nui looking like he’s been bewitched, irritated by everyone in his path, unable to concentrate in meetings, and acting like he’s losing his mind when he’s alone in his office, visible through the glass wall.

### Knock, knock.

I immediately knock on his door. Many a team member has walked in only to be smacked and told to leave, but his tone doesn’t faze me; I’ve faced worse, and if it got to be too much, I’d just give up.

"Why are you here?" "What’s wrong with you?"

My bluntness makes him glare, but since he knows he can’t get rid of me, he orders me to close the door before we sit down across from each other.

"Did she break your heart?'

My bluntness makes him flinch a little, and he stares at me intently. "What do you know?"

"I don't know anything."

I almost laugh, feeling a little glad that

Rattikan wasn't treating Nui like a toy. But Nui straightens up and lazily leans back against his chair, drained of energy.

"She didn't exactly break my heart. She just...gave me a choice." "A choice?"

"If I want to date her, I can only be number two." "Mean?"

"She'll have other people too."

Rattikan struck again. I don't know if she made this offer to scare him or for some other reason, but it's torturing someone who doesn't deserve it.

It might be okay if the other person was a playboy, not taking relationships seriously, but Nui isn't like that. I just sigh, showing my teeth.

"So, what did you decide?"

"I don't know. I've never seen anything like this before. Who speaks so bluntly?"

"She might be saying this to push you away."

"If that's the case, it would have been easier to tell me to give up. You're her friend, has she ever talked to you about me?"

I put my hand on my face, feeling really frustrated now. Rattikan really is a master manipulator, messing with everyone's minds and giving me a headache.

Or maybe... she just wants to mess with me, so she made this offer to Nui, even though she doesn't even like men! Ah, that little devil, our cold war on Facebook wasn't enough for her, so now she's resorted to this tactic!

"We're not friends."

"How can you say that? You and her were in the same class in high school."

*"I had an affair with Rattikarn."*

"What?"

"You heard me. Why are you acting like you didn't hear? The reason you're number two is because I'm number one. Rattikan and I had an affair!"

That was the most direct way to get Nui out of this madness. But instead, he looked like he'd just seen a ghost, his mouth opening and closing as if he hadn't heard me properly or wanted more of an explanation. What's unclear here? "Affair" is as direct as it gets.

"Do you remember when I told you about an open relationship? The kind where you can date but still have other people? You analyzed it, saying that people like that were selfish and greedy or afraid of commitment."

"You're saying..."

"Yes, that person was Rattikan. I left my ex because I fell in love with her. She was the one who opened my eyes and made me realize that I'm gay!"

"Are you gay? I had no idea. But wait... isn't 'gay' for men? Are you a man who became a woman or something? I'm confused."

"It's a universal term, you know, lesbian, butch, femme... they all go under 'gay'. I told you once, but maybe you didn't take it seriously or thought I

was lying. Either way, stay away from it. Rattikan doesn't want to mess with you. She's messing with me."

"So you're just telling me to back off? Just like that? Is it that easy?" He's right... it's not easy.

"Look, just stay out of this."

"The more you tell me this, the more I feel like I have to get involved. You might be overestimating her intention to mess with you. Maybe she's just being herself. If I agree to her terms... there's no harm, right? After all, I'm a guy."

"You aren't usually like this. Do you love her and feel so attached that you can't let go?"

"It's not that easy. She's beautiful." "Oh, Nui!"

"A guy like me, how many beautiful women like her will I meet in my life? I would regret it. I want her. I really like her. Even for you, I wouldn't walk away."

"Are you just in love with her looks?"

"If she wasn't beautiful, why would you have left your boyfriend for her? You were in love with her too! But it's not just her looks. Ms. Rattikarn has this unique charm that I can't explain. She's too interesting... maybe I could change her."

"Keep up the programming, something you’re good at, and stop dreaming. No one can change anyone."

"And I won’t back down for you either."

Now we’re facing each other, ready to fight. Initially, I came to see how he was doing and offer support. But here we are, competing over the same

woman. I don’t want the guy in this story to be the villain. If there’s anyone to blame, it’s Rattikan, the one who started all this!

*That troublemaker!*

## Rungtiwa:

Let’s talk today, you troublemaker.

I type, losing patience. Rattikarn reads the message, waits for about five minutes, each second passing like an eternity. I imagine all sorts of things she could be doing behind the screen.

She could be laughing, happy that I texted her first.

Or she could be feeling nothing, because she never cared in the first place.

Five minutes later, that beautiful face of hers responds with a cheeky message. I can practically hear her laughing, the kind where she smiles as she types.

## Rattikarn:

Well, well, you lose.

I frown and start typing furiously, so much so that the person at the next table looks at me curiously.

## Rungtiwa:

Yeah, right. Just tell me what you want. Where do you want to meet?

## Rattikarn:

I don't know yet. Let me think about it and I'll let you know.

## Rungtiwa:

Stop the drama.

## Rattikan:

I can't help it; I'm the star of this show.

## Rungtiwa:

Smartass.

## Rattikarn:

So rude.

Now I'm like a child who can't control my temper. I even sent her a rude message, which I never do, before hanging up my phone in frustration. I don't know if she realizes that I'm going crazy all alone here.

My mood this morning was calm, but after talking to Nui and finishing this conversation with Rattikan, I turned into a demon. The atmosphere in the office between my boss and me became so intense that no one dares to approach us.

When work ends, Nui and I walk to the elevator together. We stare at each other, but immediately look away, as if avoiding eye contact. We've been close friends for years, but today we're distant because of a woman.

*Because of Rattikan!*

*.*

*.*

"Did you miss me?"

But when I return to my apartment, the same person who caused all the tension in the office is waiting for me in the lobby. I stare at her, feeling like a fish out of water. I can’t even explain how I feel when she smiles sweetly and says, “Did you miss me?”

"What are you doing here?" “...”

"Let’s sing along, my dear!"

I break down, singing a familiar folk song when I see her looking confused. Rattikarn looks surprised at first, then bursts out laughing.

"What’s going on? Are you going for the happy side or the angry side?"

"What about you? What exactly do you want? I’m at the end of my patience!"

I yell, causing the receptionist to look at me curiously.

“This is ridiculous; I can’t even yell at you here. You’re so annoying."

"Why are you cursing so much today? It’s cute, though. But are we really going to argue here?"

"Follow me.”

I nod towards the elevator, walking ahead without looking at her. The most frustrating thing is that I planned on being angry. But when I saw her waiting for me downstairs, smiling sweetly, all that anger I felt before instantly disappeared.

It was like grabbing an opportunity to keep her around. It turns out that cutting my hair, going out with one-night stands, and acting tough didn't get her out of my head at all.

As soon as we arrived, Rattikarn went straight to the balcony and grabbed her e-cigarette, taking a drag immediately.

Let me blow some smoke before we start talking.

"It seems like everything always has to go your way. You come over when you want, smoke when you want, and even set the rules for when we can talk."

"Am I really like that? Sorry, I didn't realize...Oh!"

The moment Rattikarn turned to me, I grabbed her hair and pulled, pulling her close until her pale neck was right in front of me.

"You little troublemaker." "You're being quite rude today."

"Maybe I should push you off this balcony and end this crazy game once and for all."

"Dying by your hands would be great, but wouldn't you regret it?" "Regret what?"

"We haven't even slept together yet. Ouch!"

I tightened my grip on her hair when she mentioned it like it was a joke. "Stop messing with my head. Just tell me: who do you want, me or Nui?"

"Why does there always have to be a choice? I hate it when people try to corner things... Now, are you going to let go of my hair?"

"You don't like being controlled, but you love manipulating everyone. If you wanted to mess with me, there was no need to use Nui as bait."

"Well, you kept liking my posts without ever reaching out to me."

Rattikarn took my hand, slowly loosening my grip on her hair, but I stubbornly held on, even tightening my grip.

"So you played with Nui's feelings just to make me text you?"

*"I missed you."*

That direct answer, I didn't know how genuine it was. But it was exactly what I wanted to hear, and it filled me with warmth every time. I guess it's the same feeling I get whenever she likes my posts, no matter how annoyed I pretend to be. I'm always secretly happy that she shows that she's watching and cares.

"I don’t want to fight with you anymore."

"If our relationship was the way you wanted, would you let Nui go?"

I asked. Rattikan looked at me, tucking a strand of hair behind my ear, even though she was the one being held.

"I never intended to pursue Nui in the first place. You know... I like women. And the woman I’m interested in right now is you."

"You little troublemaker!"

Rattikan quickly leaned in, pressing her lips to mine and pushing me into the room without giving me a chance to react.

I accepted her kiss without hesitation, as if I had been waiting for this moment all along.

No matter how angry I was, I eventually gave in to her.

### The one who loves more is always the one who loses.

□□□□□

# Chapter 11: Venus

My body was pressed against the mattress, covered by another layer of slippery bedding. Where it had once been stretched tightly at the corners of the bed, it was now limp due to the person lying on top engaging in various activities.

It had turned into just a meaningless piece of fabric at the foot of the bed. I could barely feel any soft comfort because I was focused on the person on top of me, who was taking off my clothes with a myriad of emotions. But not wanting her to feel like she was the only one doing something, I turned so that Rattikarn could lie beneath me, pulling the hair tie from my head to make everything more comfortable.

Even though she was beneath me, her hands were still busy unbuttoning every button on my shirt, including the buttons on my jeans that protected my important barriers. We were feeling like clothes were so unimportant and annoying that we beginning to wonder why we had chosen this outfit.

Now, she and I were left in just our underwear, our tops contrasting between black, symbolizing her in the night, and my white, representing dawn or morning.

"We’ve come this far.”

The beautiful person below me said as she rise to sit up, using her hands to massage my chest before leaning down to kiss me softly.

“You’re wearing the same perfume as me." "I used to think about you."

"Only thinking about me?"

"Or I miss you.”

She tossed me aside and climbed on top before removing her bra as an offensive move. I stared at her breasts, feeling captivated. The smell of sweat mixed with perfume blended so well that I felt inflamed, and I had to sit up quickly and open my mouth to play with her nipples, fearing I might lose them.

"Greed."

Rattikarn didn’t stop me; instead, she pressed my face harder against hers as she arched her body to respond. Was this a form of seduction? And even though I was hesitant, I had to admit it was working.

"You really are beautiful."

Now I looked like someone in a daze, my mouth leaning in to kiss, but still unable to stop myself from admiring her passionately. My hands began to roam over her firm, toned skin, and before long, I was pulling her jeans down with all the strength I could muster, gasping for air.

Rattikarn chuckled at my breathless state, unable to resist touching my cheek and looking me in the eyes.

"You're really trying. But can you really do it?"

"You still don't believe me about the time I was with that girl? Ouch."

The person above bit my lip to silence me, making me cry out in real pain. "Are you a sadist?"

"And the sadism I provide you will become fun enough to surprise you."

She pressed me back onto the bed once more and began to remove the few clothes I had on. Not that I hadn't been through this before, but because it was her, I was a little worried that my body wasn't as beautiful as hers, which she took such good care of that I had to cover my breasts with my hands.

The beautiful one made a "tut" sound and pushed my hands away before opening her mouth to nibble gently, using her tongue to tease, making me arch my back in response since it was a sensitive spot. We teased each other for a while and finally the one on top couldn't hold back any longer and dragged her tongue from my chest to my navel, so I spread my legs before slowly inserting her fingers into my center. I lifted my hips to gradually accommodate her touch before glaring when I saw her pull her fingers out and lick them.

"You..."

"This is just the beginning. Are you scared?"

She was already sexy, and doing this made her seem even more like a seductive tigress, making it impossible for me to resist her charm. Even though I had been through this with other women, with her still new, exciting, and intriguing.

"I'm not scared."

"If you keep being shy, you won't have any fun."

Was that a form of mockery? She was proving that I had been through this before, but why did I still seem superficial about it? I pressed my lips together tightly before sitting up and running my five fingers through her hair, pressing down.

"Don't just talk. Why are you hiding when you can do it here... make it happen."

As I pressed her head down, Rattikarn seemed slightly surprised by my boldness. I spread my legs and bent my knees so I could watch her comfortably. When she received five fingers, she wasted no time opening her mouth, tasting and licking them

like she was a delicacy. I curled my toes, arching my neck and moaning loudly, my body shaking and writhing as I reached the edge of ecstasy.

To be honest, I was a little disappointed in myself for finishing so quickly.

"Your body is truly delicious." "It's my turn to taste you now."

I pushed Rattikarn down onto the bed and immediately straddled her. The beautiful girl spread her arms against the mattress, as if in surrender, ready for me to do anything to her.

"Show me your skills."

Her body was now glistening like honey from a jar. The scent of her skin mixed with her perfume intoxicated me more than any alcohol on this planet. Even though we were in an air-conditioned room, the activities we were doing were physically demanding, and small beads of sweat appeared on the pulse points in the center of her chest, making me lean in to lick them before looking back into her eyes.

"It tastes good."

"You're a little pervert too."

I hadn’t decided to intrude on the area below that could make her climax too quickly. Foreplay was one of the pleasures of making love. I chose to slide my lips upward, nibbling softly on her ear, licking teasingly with my tongue as if to seduce her, which seemed to be working as Rattikarn let out soft moans and writhed in pleasure, making me smile.

"You’re not as strong as you look, are you?"

I slid my fingers down to the center of her body and caressed her playfully. The warmth and softness I felt on my fingertips made me think I could stay like this, caressing her all day.

“How badly does your body want this?" "Stop talking and do something already.”

Her voice, half command and half plea, prompted me to slowly insert a finger inside her, searching for the spot I thought would be just right. Her

body responded immediately, showing me where it was, and I took the opportunity to tease her with varying rhythms, short and long, causing the beautiful girl to cover her mouth in shock.

"Is this the point?" "You..."

She looked at me, startled, but cried out as I moved faster, changing my rhythm.

"Don't tease."

"Just tell me what you want me to do." "Faster."

Rattikarn lifted her hips, as if inviting me to go deeper, and it seemed like she was starting to move to create her own rhythm. Her moans sounded like music, quickening as I continued my movements. I thrust my fingers harder, unable to stop because I wanted to see her suffer from pleasure even more.

Finally, her insides clenched around my fingers before she trembled, a sign that made my heart race as I watched her collapse onto the bed, curling up in ecstasy. However, I felt inflamed once more, forcing her to lie on her back.

"You may be out of energy now, but if possible..."

I climbed back on top of her, positioning myself above her face. The embarrassment I had felt earlier was gone, replaced only by a primal desire to make this as raw as I had ever thought it could be.

"I want you to drink it all."

.

.

It all came to an end...

The vapor from the e-cigarette wafted throughout the room. The smell was reminiscent of a sweet drink, not unpleasant like the smoke from a typical restaurant. When she held it in her hand, I reached for it and tried to inhale, only to cough loudly because I had never done that before.

"Don’t do that."

"I just realized that cigarettes have a taste. It smells like Sprite." "It the smells of Sprite."

"Does it really taste like cigarettes?"

"It doesn’t taste the same. I smoke because it has smoke... Honestly, I could quit smoking.”

She said, taking the cigarette back in her hand. "Don’t try if you’ve never done it."

"But you look cool when you smoke."

"But you don’t look good when you smoke."

Rattikarn stuck her tongue out playfully. I smiled at her unusual behavior before returning to the topic at hand.

"How was it earlier?" "Earlier?"

Rattikarn glances at me slightly before understanding and wrinkling her nose.

"You’re like those guys, when they're done, ask for satisfied measure." "Have you ever slept with a guy before? Acting like you know everything."

"This is shown in dramas. Don’t forget, my job is to narrate life to others. Some things, even if you don’t experience them, you can ask or study."

"Let’s say I want to know. How would you rate it?" "Five."

"Only five?" I wrinkled my nose. "But you looked like a ten just now."

"Presumptuous. Where did you learn that from… oh, I don’t want to know anymore."

She raises her hand in a “stop” gesture. "I don’t want to hear you brag."

"What makes you think I’m bragging? Tell me honestly." "Maybe because you’re not that perceptive or bold." "You don’t know me well enough."

"Well, I’m just getting to know you now."

She said casually, almost forgetting herself. I raised an eyebrow slightly and smiled at her words.

"Does this mean you and I are in a relationship now?"

"Let’s just say we’re learning about each other, but still under the same agreement."

She hesitated to bring up the same topic again, fearing that if she elaborated, it would lead to another argument. As for me, knowing that I had already agreed to give in what she wanted, I nodded in understanding before speaking my piece as well.

"You're the same. You need to stop messing with me. That was part of our agreement when we were on the balcony, and now we ended up in bed like this."

"I get it. I'm someone who can be reasoned with, right, Rung?" "Actually, my nickname is 'Yung'."

"Nui said the same thing that yourvname is Yung, but I prefer to call you 'Rung'."

"It sounds like a high school friend calling you a nickname because we weren't that close."

"I call you Rung because I think I'm the only one who calls you that. No one else does."

Her depth made me accept it. Because I was curious about wanting her to call me by my nickname out of familiarity, after hearing her reason, I thought calling me 'Rung' would be fine too. She was the only one who called me that and it made it special.

"What should I call you then? I've never dared to call you anything other than Rattikarn... but saying her full name seems long. When I shout your name, it sounds like it came straight out of a Thai drama like Wanida Hathayachon Kanokmalie Phra Si Rattanatray..."

"Phra Si Rattanatray is definitely not the name of a heroine in a drama, I'm sure of that."

"That's exactly it. Nui calls you Nigth. You're so close." "You're such a thoughtful person, overthinking everything." "Well, I'm a woman, you know."

"And because you're a woman, I like it."

She finally said the word "like" out loud. Even if it wasn't as deep as "love", it was still a great first step for us. If we didn't like each other, we wouldn't have ended up in bed like this.

"My name is Dao." "Really?" "Surprised?"

"Your name is pretty common."

"Actually, my full name is Dao Phra Suk." "Really?"

I laughed when I saw that she wanted a name as unique as the heroines in romantic novels who usually have names with more than two syllables.

"I'm not kidding. That's actually my nickname." Pfft!

I burst out laughing and quickly covered my mouth when she looked at me, her face flushed. The beauty wasn't someone who blushed easily. If you remember the fierce woman who was between my legs, it was hard to believe that she could be embarrassed.

"That's why I've never told anyone my nickname. Whoever wants to call me by my real name can do so. And when I say my nickname, it's like you... so common. When I say my full name, they just tease me."

Her grumpy behavior made me reach out to scratch her shoulder to appease her.

"I was just surprised. Your name is interesting, from your real name to your nickname."

"No one can compare to you. Both my real name and my nickname are common."

"Actually, my name is Yung." "This isn’t interesting at all." "Please be a little interested."

I continued to tease her when I see her turn her face away. The normally composed person who never showed any emotion now in a bad mood over something like this, making it hard not to smile.

"Dao Phra Suk." "Don’t tease me."

"Let’s be friends again." "No."

"Let’s be friends again." “...”

"I’ve done so much."

I slid my hand under the blanket and did something a little naughty, knowing full well that I could. At first, the cutie resisted, closing her legs tightly, but eventually, she gave in and opened up, covering her face with her hands.

"Mmm... taking advantage of me, huh?" "Actually, I want to do this many more times."

□□□□□

# Chapter 12: Second Person

"The troublemaker... is that you?"

Nui's loud voice made me look up and raise an eyebrow. I was still a bit dazed and confused, wondering why the boss was suddenly yelling, especially using a nickname that sounded so casual and unprofessional.

"What are you talking about?"

"Khun Night said she's going to stop contacting me." "Oh..."

I almost smiled, but seeing my friend's face turn red, I decided to act nonchalant.

"What did she say?" "She... she..."

Nui looked around nervously, as if something was stuck in his throat, before gesturing for me to follow him to his office. He flipped on the switch that made all the windows opaque, technology that really impressed me, although Nui rarely used it, as he preferred transparent glass to keep pressure on his subordinates.

"Really? You had to drag me here for this? You usually sound so proud when you talk about Rattikarn."

"What did you talk to her about? What have you been doing behind my back?"

"I didn't do anything behind your back. Do you usually shout and parade around when you talk to someone? It’s not like I’m having an affair with your partner."

"You’re having an affair!"

"Rattikarn is not your partner, and I’m not having an affair."

"There you are, admitting it, you actually did this behind my back! Usually, when Khun Night talks to me, she speaks in a calm and gentle tone with respect. But this morning, when I called... she sounded irritated."

"Did you call her in the morning? She was probably still asleep."

There’s no way she would be awake; she spent the whole night with me. She was still asleep when I left her alone in my room to come to work. She’s a night owl, she’s lively at night, but practically dead to the world in the morning.

"She didn’t answer my calls last night." "Oh..."

"Oh, what?"

"Just acknowledging. What’s with you, criticizing every word and move I make? So, what exactly did Rattikarn say to make you so upset?"

"She said she’s bored, and it seems like… I’m just not ‘the one’ for her."

"That’s not cruel at all. Anyway, do you like someone who beats around the bush? Be grateful that she’s straightforward; it’ll help you move on more easily."

"Don’t lecture me. If it’s so easy, why don’t you just move on? Why are you taking her away from me… even after I agreed to all the terms. She still rejected me, saying…"

"Saying what?"

“…”

Nui paused, wanting to make sure he had my attention, which worked. I turned to look at him, waiting for an answer.

"She said she’d rather have someone with *‘a pussy than a dick.’* If I want to date her, I need to have a pussy!”

I nearly choked, coughing in sheer embarrassment. Even if I hadn’t choked, I would have done something to hide how nervous I was. Rattikarn, she’s so blunt, so direct that even I, normally shameless, couldn’t help but blush.

"If… if she said that much…"

"Don’t tell me to give up. She was the one who made the first offer, and now she’s rejecting it. That means someone gave her a better deal. This is just business, it’s a bargain."

"Despite his cluelessness about love, his analytical skills were as impressive as ever. I crossed my arms and looked away, shrugging.

"I didn’t get it."

"Out of nowhere, she talks about pussy and dick. Someone must have offered her pussy, so she’s rejecting dick. You’re a terrible friend, doing this to me."

"So, are you going to fire me?"

"This has nothing to do with work. Get out of here!"

As angry as Nui is, he still managed to separate work from personal matters. Normally, having a problem with your boss or the owner of the company might mean you’d be kicked out in no time, but not with this boss. I'd probably get a mountain of work as revenge for punishment.

That's okay. It's worth it. I guess... that's what they call a mixed blessing.

## Rungtiwa:

Your reasoning left him speechless. You didn't have to be so direct.

## Rattikarn:

To make someone leave, you have to take strong medicine.

## Rattikarn:

And I wasn't lying. I really prefer 'pussy'.

## Rungtiwa:

How can you type that without feeling embarrassed?

## Rattikarn:

Should I be embarrassed? Last night, you were much more expressive than anything I could type.

## Rattikarn:

It's surprising, really. Seeing you like this, I would never have imagined that you could be so passionate.

## Rungtiwa:

Stop talking about it. You're making me feel weird.

## Rungtiwa:

Are you still in the room?

## Rattikarn:

I just took a shower. I was about to go back to my place too.

## Rungtiwa:

Really...

.

I typed with a slight pang in my chest. She only stayed one night, and I already feel attached to it. I really need to work on this habit of mine.

## Rattikarn:

I’ll come by and see you again. I just need to go back and change first. I left

my idea notebook at home. If I don’t have it on hand when I’m not typing, I get frustrated.

## Rattikarn:

I’ll hurry up and go.

.

Seeing her face made me purse my lips into a small, amused smile. Maybe I’m not the only one who feels a little attached.

.

## Rungtiwa:

You’re missing me, aren’t you?

## Rattikarn:

Full, then I guess I am.

.

I thought she would give a more evasive answer. But when she answered like that, I couldn’t help but cough a little in embarrassment, even though I knew she couldn’t see me. It was probably for the best, otherwise she would give me that triumphant smile and I would lose my composure.

## Rungtiwa:

What a coincidence.

## Rattikarn:

What do you mean?

## Rungtiwa:

I miss you too.

.

She said she would go back to change and then come and she really did.

I started to wonder if her apartment was close to mine, given how easy it is for her to get there and back. It seems she doesn’t have a car of her own either, as I usually see her taking the train.

"Bangkok traffic is terrible, so I thought it best not to buy a car. Oh, but I have a motorbike."

"Oh... it looks so cool."

Now we’re walking along the river because we suddenly decided to go on a date to enjoy the lights. This was Rattikarn’s idea, which was a bit surprising, I thought she was a more laid-back person who didn’t want to do much.

"But I only take the train when I have to rush somewhere or during rush hour. I’m not the best rider, so I usually take the train. It’s convenient that your place is close to the train station."

Rattikarn explained when I jokingly asked how she got here. It seems like she’s gradually opening up about herself, which I see as progress.

"What about you? Do you have a car?"

"I’m still paying off my apartment, so I can’t afford that burden. But I want one someday. I would love to take trips out of town, just to enjoy the view."

"So, how did you get around before?" "My boyfriend’s car."

"I see."

She nodded in understanding, although it made me a little anxious. "Are you mad?"

"Mad that you have a boyfriend? Otherwise, wouldn’t that make me a prude?"

"A prude?"

I exclaimed in shock, both at how frankly she spoke about herself and at how casually she used the word “prude.” She seemed so elegant and

confident, but when she wanted to be direct, she did so without hesitation. "Everyone has had a boyfriend or girlfriend. That’s the reality."

"But in dramas or romances, the heroine always has to be pure and innocent."

"That’s because the heroine represents the readers. There’s still a cultural pattern here that treats sex as taboo, while it’s seen as okay if a male protagonist has been with a lot of women. But when the heroine does, it’s unacceptable. Why is that? We expect heroines to be like angels, even if they come from nowhere, like in From the Slum."

"My God, who’s giving examples now?"

"I probably shouldn’t have used that as an example."

I reached out and put my arm around hers. She seemed to understand emotions and how to describe real life in a relatable way.

"Hearing you talk like that is enlightening. You’re right, heroines should be pure. Even if they come from nowhere, they survive unscathed and only give themselves to the hero."

"They try to write heroines as experienced, so that people can see them as real human beings. There’s no need to feel guilty about sex. When we have someone we love, a partner, we really care about them and might even consider marrying them. Being intimate doesn’t mean it’s wrong; it’s a way of sharing love."

"What about when people are together without even thinking about marriage?"

I thought about my own life and felt a little guilty for not following these norms. Everything for me happened based on emotions. Non was the person closest to me. My body yearned for him, the

atmosphere was right, and then it happened, just like that.

"There’s nothing wrong with that, like you once said, fellow exercisers."

"Did you remember that?"

I looked at her, feeling a little pleased.

"So you thought about it, even though you said you didn’t believe it."

"I just found your perspective interesting. It would be nice to put that line in a main character’s mouth. Don’t overthink it."

Rattikarn poked my face lightly when she saw me smiling proudly. "So, you don’t mind that I’ve had a boyfriend before?"

"What kind of person do you think I am?"

"Tell me more about yourself. You often say vaguely that you’ve had many partners, but how many have you actually had?"

"I’ve only had one boyfriend." She actually answered!

"But it didn’t feel right, so we broke up." "So, you realized that you preferred women?" "That’s a direct reason."

"I thought you knew you were gay from the beginning."

"Honestly, I always knew I liked women, but I wanted to try dating a guy too. Maybe I would, I thought. But no, it just wasn’t right. The body, a certain... roughness."

I think I got what she meant, so I decided to change the subject. "What about girlfriends? How many of them?"

"Two."

"But I thought you had so many that you could be considered... promiscuous."

"The rest were just ‘exercise buddies'."

I winced a little when Rattikarn used my own words against me, then pretended to count on his fingers.

"I lost count. Too many."

"What does it take to become your girlfriend?"

"Good question... I've never thought about it that way. What makes someone a girlfriend?"

She seemed to really think about it. It was like she had never really considered someone as a true partner.

The fact that she said "two" meant that those two must be something special, probably involving more than just intimacy. Before I could ask more, she answered herself as if it suddenly made sense.

"We've probably kissed more than three times."

"Three kisses, and that counts? So I'm your girlfriend too!"

I playfully nudged her arm when she gave such a random answer, but Rattikarn simply tilted her head, looking at me as if nothing she said was wrong.

"You're the second person, actually. I'm already including you."

□□□□□

# Chapter 13: Whore

"Ah..."

My body shook in sync with Rattikarn's fingers, which pressed in at just the right pace, knowing exactly when to speed up or slow down as I neared my peak. I couldn't help but moan loudly, forgetting myself, and when I reached my climax, my body shook so much that I quickly closed my legs and pulled her close to hold her. But it seemed that she was even more tormented, as she straddled my legs and hugged me tightly.

"Let me take care of myself now."

I held her close, but let her do whatever she wanted. She moved her hips back and forth, warming herself against my thigh. Even though I had just finished, I couldn't resist holding her hips to help her go harder, faster, while nibbling playfully on her exposed breast, tempting me with every touch.

"It feels so good."

She moaned, nearing the edge. I loved her sounds and couldn't resist biting her chest, leaving a mark, which only made her moan louder.

"Harder, bite harder."

She's not only encouraged me, but dug her nails into my shoulders, which hurt but increased the raw excitement.

"You're so wild." "Oh..."

She pressed my head against her chest, her body writhing in pleasure. That was another thing I learned, she liked it a little rough, sometimes asking me to dig my nails into her back when she thrust her hips quickly as she neared climax. We were both drenched in sweat after that intense session, completely forgetting to shower, which was a little funny at our age.

"You're drenched in sweat," I commented. "You're bleeding on your shoulder."

Rattikarn said, running her fingers over it before leaning in to lightly lick the spot, like a cat cleaning itself. Even though we had just had our moment, this gesture turned me on again, though not enough for round two, it just made me a little nervous.

"Crazy, you're making me bleed. What if I had AIDS?" "I didn't even think about it. Want me to get a condom?" "Where would you put it?"

"On my index finger, I think,"

She replied nonchalantly, letting her head fall onto my shoulder, exhausted. "I burned a lot of calories."

"You said you were my girlfriend; now you're treating me like a sparring partner. Changing after the fact."

I pushed her away a little before gently pushing her onto her back and planting soft kisses all over her face. It was a sign of affection more than seduction.

"Come to think of it, you could be a lot of things. But I'm curious; we've only slept together twice, but you seem so skilled. It's like you've done this to a woman before."

"You wouldn't believe me if I said I had."

"Okay, I believe you."

"That didn't sound convincing." "I'm sleepy,"

She said, closing her eyes as if to avoid the conversation, making me roll my eyes and mumble playfully.

"You pervert."

Rattikarn opened her eyes, smiling slightly. She wasn't mad; instead, she pulled me into a deep kiss without a word.

"You really like being teased." "Guilty as charged."

She said, raising her hand in surrender.

"I told you, I'm a lot more twisted than you think."

"But the first time we were together, you didn't show any of that."

"I didn't mean to scare you. But it seems like you're not scared or discouraged, even when I bite you like that..."

She gently pressed her thumb against my shoulder. "Does it hurt?"

"I already bit you back, so we're even. Thank you for not being scared."

"And I think I kind of like it,"

I admitted, propping myself up on one elbow to get a clear view of her face, my other hand lightly playing with her chest until it proudly displayed its pink color.

"As your girlfriend, and wanting to be with you for a long time, if there's anything you want me to do, just let me know. Just don't bring chains or candles. That's fine with me."

Rattikan laughed, squeezing my chest in return, eager to see my reaction.

"What you did before is more than enough. Sometimes I feel guilty because it's so intense. But you seem to really like it."

"I do; it's probably just the thrill of the moment. I could do it again if you want."

I straddled her, lightly tugging her hair before cursing teasingly, "You little slut."

"There's not much conviction in that." "You whore, winking at every guy,"

I said, gently pulling her hair, afraid to hurt her too much. Rattikarn sit up slowly, smiling.

"I like it, it's fun to see someone get jealous."

Seeing her tease me like that, I couldn't help but feel a little irritated. She really did flirt with Nui just to tease me.

"If you like treating others like toys, I'll make you my toy... I'll make you beg for me, but I'll stop you from cumming."

"Do you think you can do it? Just sticking your fingers in doesn't mean you're skilled."

I smiled, raising an eyebrow at her. "I'll show you."

.

.

This is the second night I've barely slept. Plus, it was a night full of challenges after being tasked with finding a way to make Rattikarn pay, just like I said I would. I have many ways to tease, and Rattikarn isn't the first person I've played with. Even Non couldn't resist when I felt desire, but I didn't let him touch me, not even a little.

The performance I mentioned was about controlling myself while letting her watch. It was a display that required courage and a certain level of closeness with a partner, where there is no shyness. It becomes seductive when the other person feels desire too. I lured her in by teasing her with my mouth until she was heated, touching and caressing her as if I was going to finish, with just enough vulgar language to make her come. But in the end, I left her waiting while I finished myself.

"Is that it?"

Rattikarn looked dazed as I lay next to her with a mischievous smile and said.

"Good night." "Are you done?" "Yes."

"But I'm not done." "That's your problem." "Rungtiwa!"

Rattikarn's tone was irritated, frustrated, as I turned to my side and pretended to sleep. To keep me awake, she slapped my arm hard, biting my lip.

"You're being so harsh."

"Wouldn't you be too? You've finished and left me hanging; why tease me like that?"

"I told you I'd make you scream for beg." "That's cheating!"

"Exactly, and that's why there are no rules. Just beg if you want help. Otherwise...you're on your own."

I smiled.

"You know how, right?"

"Why would I do that with a partner here? I might as well not have a girlfriend then."

"Just ask. It's no big deal. Try asking." "Why should I?"

"Then I won't do it." "Ugh!"

She grabbed a pillow and screamed into it before throwing it at me with all her strength.

"Get up, please!" "..."

"Please..."

Night turned from fierce to gentle, gently shaking my arm in a cooing voice.

"I can't take it anymore. Do something for me, please..."

"Just tell me what you want me to do."

I began to obey, pulling her closer. Night was on top of me and guided my hand to touch her belly, which was now wet and regrettably soaked.

"Please do this for me... Mmm..."

She shifted her body, forcing my hand to rub back and forth. Then, I slowly slid my fingers from the warm crease to the cozy warmth.

"That's great. You did it."

"You naughty girl, are you going to be stubborn again next time?" "I won't be stubborn anymore, huh..."

She sounded like she was crying, but it was actually a moan. "You're the best I've ever met."

"Lying bitch." "I'm not lying."

She keeps moving at the pace she wanted.

"You're good. You're so good. Ever since school... When the light from the window shines on your face, you looked the most beautiful."

What is she saying...? Is she talking about me in high school, when we were in the same class? I never knew she was watching.

"You slut, when are you going to stop lying?"

I sped up my fingers until there was a slap of impact between my palm and the warm liquid.

Night let out a muffled moan; she liked the fast pace and wanted the sensitive spot to rub against my hand.

"I like you so much... I like you." "..."

"I'm about to finish, huh... I'm about to finish." "..."

"Dear!"

The sound like a scream was the only signal her body sent. The warm liquid from her body splashed everywhere, soaking the bed. I didn't pull my hand away because I wanted to feel the accomplishment of what I had done.

The pretty-faced girl tensed up a bit before collapsing onto my chest, completely unconscious. She wasn't faking it; she really had passed out.

*Wow... that was the best sex I've ever had in my life.*

□□□□□

# Chapter 14: Surprise

I look at the beautiful person wearing clothes while I'm lying on the bed. Every muscle is firm and toned, which surprises me. Can a person really look that good? From a face that looks like it was created by her parents to her height, the length of her knees, arms and torso, everything combines to make her who she is.

Many men must regret that such a beautiful girl prefers other women, even I can't stand the idea that she might like someone other than me.

"Are you going to stare at me?"

Even though she's turned away, she must feel like someone is watching her, and that makes me smile.

"Good view."

"Looking in the mirror, your gaze is seriously scary." "That's how we get along so well."

I laugh, remembering the moments that just passed, remembering several things she let slip when her emotions were on the surface.

"Can you explain better when you said you used to secretly watch me in school?"

Her hand, which was buttoning her shirt, stopped. She freezes for a moment and then continued to button up her shirt, trying to act normal, but I could tell she's feeling shy.

"I don't remember. It was a long time ago."

"But you were talking nonstop a moment ago."

Rattikarn turned to face me, her face turning red enough that I found it adorable, and I rushed to hug her, even though I'm completely naked.

"You're so cute, my Venus."

"Stop pretending to be charming."

"Just tell me, I want to know. In the same class, we only talked a few times. You only made eye contact with me once, even after three years in the same class."

"Right, you slept in the back of the class every day. How would you know anything?"

"You actually looked at me... back then, I slept well. My family said that sleeping a lot would help me grow."

"You didn't need to sleep a lot to be as tall as you are."

She raises her hand to measure our heights, which useless since I'm sitting with my knees on the bed.

"You should go to sleep. You haven't had enough rest for two days. You'll end up sleeping at work."

"You didn't spend the night here. It's four in the morning now."

"I feel like staying out all night is a bad habit. It's okay to sleep out sometimes, but it shouldn't be one after the other. I always have to go back. It's a rule."

She shared a little more about herself, and I nodded in understanding, not pressuring her to stay, but trying to make her aware of my importance.

"Will you come see me again?"

"I have to work now. I haven't touched my work for the past two days because I've been too busy thinking about you."

Rattikarn said, gently pushing her finger against my forehead before grabbing her bag from beside her.

"As soon as I'm done with my work, I'll come see you."

Just as she's about to turn and walk away, I grabbed the hem of her blouse and pulled her back. She stepped back willingly, allowing me to kiss her hard on the lips. Although she frown and pretended to be displeases, I know she liked it.

"I'll be waiting."

.

.

The period of dating or being together in the beginning is the most exciting time for the heart. Although this is not my first experience, I can say that it is one of the happiest feelings of all. I can listen to love songs in a cheerful mood and feel sympathy for heartbroken people all over the country, including my friend in the glass room who always looks sullen and worried.

But I have to pretend not to care because if I care too much about others, it will take my own life. Rattikarn said she was going to disappear for work, and she really did disappear.

She was gone for so long that I started to think she might have died. My cheerful mood turned to annoyance. She was gone for two days, which seemed like a long time, and I couldn't help but text her.

## Rungtiwa:

Haven't you finished work yet?

.

About twenty minutes later, she replied.

## Rattikarn:

Not yet.

## Rungtiwa:

Right.

.

If I complain about wanting to see her, would that seem too childish? From what I can feel and observe from the outside, she seems very independent, highly reserved, loves to fly solo, and doesn't like any rules except her own.

Although I can feel that she likes me back, there is a thin line between us, as if one misstep on my part would make her disappear, and I would never see her again.

## Rattikarn:

Can you take a day off on Friday?

## Rungtiwa:

I don't think I have anything on Friday. Why?

## Rattikarn:

I want to invite you out of town. I heard that your office is closed on Saturday and Sunday, so I thought you could take Friday off to go on a long three-day trip.

.

I glanced at my boss's office with a knowing look. There is so much work to do right now; I can't take time off. But I will take time off because I have never been a rebellious person. I just used my days off to wallow in disgust over the very person who invited me on this trip.

## Rungtiwa:

I can take a day off.

## Rattikarn:

Then let's meet on Friday.

.

After reading that it would be on Friday, I wrinkled my nose at the computer screen in annoyance. Three more days? That means we won't see each other in the meantime. Doesn't she miss me?

## Rattikarn:

I miss you.

.

As soon as she typed that back, my heart melted like wax in the sun, and I couldn't help but feel a surge of joy. I wanted to be angry, but I was happier.

## Rungtiwa:

Me too.

When I'm absorbed in something, it's suddenly the weekend. But for me, who was eagerly waiting for Friday, planning to skip work step by step, three days felt like three months. It all seemed so long.

The feeling of a new relationship made me yearn for my partner more than anything else. The other side was so firm, asserting that Friday was really Friday. Even though I tried to flirt and suggested going out to eat or meeting up for a while, Rattikarn didn't come, insisting that she was busy with work.

*Is she really working...?*

Suddenly, I felt a twinge of suspicion. My thoughts were spinning because I had no one to trust. While I was feeling irritated, a small Japanese car pulled up and parked in front of the condominium where I was staying. This was the agreed-upon meeting place because Rattikarn had told me to get down with my suitcase.

"I miss you."

The person in the car rolled down the window, revealing her beautiful and striking features as always. While I was wandering in my own thoughts, seeing her face made me forget all my bad mood, replaced by surprise.

"You drove all the way here?" "Smile! I just bought it yesterday." "Did you just buy it?"

"That's why I invited you out of town."

Rattikarn said as she got out of the car and opened the trunk. Today she's wearing shorts that showed off her long legs with a white t-shirt that I rarely see her in. Her long hair cascading down her back made her look like a completely different woman from the one I met the first time.

"Why are you standing there in shock? Go get your things quickly." "You bought a car!"

"Ha... What's with that look? Your eyes are going to pop out. Why are you so surprised?"

I didn't move to get my things, so she had to help carry them and put them in the car. The term "new car" was accurate; the interior still had plastic in some corners that hadn't been completely removed, and it smelled like a factory.

"You didn't tell me you were going to buy one. Didn't you say it was inconvenient?"

"Well, someone mentioned wanting to get out of town." "So, you bought a car?"

"Yes."

"To get out of town? You can take a bus, train, or plane." "Don't you like it?"

Rattikarn's smile disappeared, and she made a sad puppy-dog face. Seeing that made me laugh back, although it was a laugh mixed with embarrassment.

"I like it, but... you surprised me."

"I didn't came to see you because I was taking care of work and the car. I wanted to surprise you once and for all. Get in the car quickly; let's go on a date in Hua Hin¹ today."

"A date... Wow!"

She's always a surprise, that beautiful woman. I thought to myself as we drove together. While she focused on driving and looking straight ahead, I couldn't help but sneak a glance at her profile, deeply captivated and not wanting to shake myself from that enchantment.

What did I do to deserve to be chosen by her? Just thinking about it made my heart fill with emotion.

"You're always amazing."

I said, looking at the view outside. "You keep making my heart race."

"Is it about the car? Hmm... Making someone impressed is nice, isn't it?"

She replied with a smile, looking like someone who felt satisfied with her conquest.

"Honestly, you don't have to do that. Even without a car, I like you."

"But if I had a car, wouldn't you like me even more? Your ex took you places. If a new partner can't do that, comparisons will arise."

She seemed like someone who didn't think much, but secretly paid attention to the little details. She said she didn't like attachments, but she was putting herself in a precarious position.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Quite a lot! And there are many things you wouldn't expect."

I looked at her, who was smiling mischievously, starting to understand her better. She was very cheeky, which made her even more adorable.

"Tonight, you'll be even more surprised." "You're very talkative."

"My tongue is also very good." "I believe that."

We laughed together as our conversation turned to more suggestive topics. After more than three hours of traveling, we arrived at our destination: Hua Hin. Rattikarn took me to a five-star hotel with a room that had its own pool.

Luckily, there weren't many guests right now, so we got a good rate. This is my first time staying in a room with a private pool. As a middle-class person, just having a pool makes me feel so touched.

Rattikarn sighed, and that made me nudge her side lightly with my elbow and smile.

"No need to act like we're so pitiful. I'll help pay for it." "No need. I invited you on this trip, so I should pay."

"When have I ever traveled alone? You and I both work to earn money. How can I take advantage of you?"

"I invited you on this trip for the same purpose as those guys who take their girlfriends out of town."

She replied casually.

"It's a plan to take you somewhere private to... you know, with a pool, a balcony, and a bed ready to get dirty."

Her words made me elbow her again and wrinkle my nose. "Is that all you think about?"

" In these past few days, you don't know how much I've wanted... with you."

"Really?"

I bit my lip and smiled at her.

"If you wanted it so much, why didn't you come see me? Why wait?"

"Because the work isn't done. I was too busy with you and I couldn't get anything done."

"Well, today I won't disappoint you because I want it just as much as you do."

.

.

Even though I said it so bluntly, we didn't do anything right away because we still had a lot of days to enjoy our honeymoon in our own way. So this trip focused on eating, sightseeing, and enjoying the atmosphere around the province.

It was a bit disheartening that almost no one was visiting right now. Whether it was due to the struggling economy or the pandemic, everything was affected everywhere. Shops were closing. It took a long time to find a seafood restaurant, and we had to walk a lot and then hope it would be delicious.

"I'm going to the bathroom."

"Okay."

Rattikarn excused herself from the table while I waited for our food to be ordered and enjoyed the view. The salty sea breeze made me plan ahead, thinking that I needed to rush back and take a shower so that I wouldn't have that salty smell on my skin. Then I thought about how I should tease her in bed or by the pool.

Can I be loud in this hotel...? So naughty. "Is that really you, Ploy?"

Someone called out loudly to Ploy. I didn't pay much attention until a hand touched my shoulder, startling me a little. When I turned to see who it was, I was almost knocked over in surprise. She was the same woman I had a one-night stand with, who ran off and left a fake name... *"Ploy."*

"Miss BM!" "Surprise!"

□□□□□

# Chapter 15: Witness Confirms

The surprises I received today were overwhelming. First, Rattikarn bought a new car, then she took me to Hua Hin, and now I unexpectedly came across my complicated past. I thought that meeting someone by coincidence in a restaurant only happened in dramas, but meeting them in real life completely shocked me.

The sweet-faced girl with her hair tied back and shiny flower-shaped earrings smiled at me affectionately.

"Why do you look so happy? Are you going to laugh now?" Her teasing words made me raise a finger to scratch my cheek.

"Well... I don't know how I should react. I admit that I'm really surprised."

"I was surprised too. The first thing I did when you suddenly disappeared was to check my wallet to see if I had been robbed, but nothing was missing."

"Did I look like a thief?"

"Not way! But it's strange. Most people exchange numbers to keep in touch later, but you disappeared like magic."

“That’s interesting,”

She said with a smile. I started to feel uneasy, worried that Rattikarn might show up at any moment. Speaking of which, she had already left quite a while ago.

“By the way, who are you here with? Your boyfriend?”

".…"

"No need to answer. You look very uncomfortable. But are you with a man or a woman? I heard it was your first time with a woman, right?”

I raised my hands to cover my face because I didn’t know how to respond, which only made me hear her cheerful laughter more clearly.

"I won’t tease you anymore. My name is Ann. What’s yours?" "Rung.”

Rattikarn’s voice called as she returned from her task, signaling for me to look over to indicate that she's back. The name from the sweet-faced girl’s lips made Ann nod in acknowledgement immediately.

"Now I know your name. I won’t bother you anymore. Nice to meet you!”

She turned to greet Rattikarn politely, who returned the greeting with a smile.

"Nice to meet you."

After Ann left, our food arrived all at once, instead of one by one. Rattikarn stared at the food, her eyes shining, completely ignoring the guest who had just spoken to me.

I couldn’t assess the situation; I didn’t know whether to say anything or explain who she was, so I sat there, chewing my cheeks like a three-year- old lost in thought, picking my nose and thinking to myself.

"Isn’t this good? You haven’t eaten anything." "It's Is good."

"Is it ok? You haven’t even taken a bite yet. I already peeled three shrimps for you, and they’re just sitting there… What’s wrong with you? Ever since you met that girl just now, you’ve been distracted."

"Do I really look like this?" "Yes, eat."

She encouraged me to eat, so I took the shrimp she peeled for me and put it in my mouth, tilting my head curiously.

"You didn't even ask who she was."

"I thought if you wanted to tell me, you would. If you didn't, it means she's not important. She could be someone you worked with or an old friend from school who just wanted to say hi."

"If she's a friend from school, she must be your friend too."

"A friend from college. Since I can only have friends from high school... But it seems like you want to tell me something. She's important, right?"

When asked this, I quickly shook my head so hard that I almost stretched my neck. Rattikarn raised her eyebrows and smirked at my vigorous denial.

"The more you act like this, the more I want to know. Who is that girl... She's pretty, even though I've only seen her briefly."

"Well, we don't know each other that well."

"So that means she’s not important, so you don’t have to tell me."

She didn’t seem to notice how awkward I felt, which made me secretly irritated. Wasn’t she jealous or protective? A pretty girl came to talk to her girlfriend after all. If I were in her position and saw Rattikarn doing this to someone else, I would have asked until I got an answer because of my inherently feminine nature.

Finally, as we were walking back to the car and about to open the door, Ann, who I thought had finished eating and gone home, came running after us and grabbed the door before I could close it. Her exhausted appearance made me assume she must have run because she was afraid of missing something.

"Ann?"

"I'm glad I arrived just in time." "Is something wrong?"

Ann leaned forward, smiling slightly at Rattikarn before turning to talk with great interest.

"Can I have your number? Ever since that day, I thought I wouldn’t see you again. It took me a while to work up the courage to do this. At the very least, we can be friends."

I looked at Rattikarn, feeling a little guilty, and I wanted to show Ann that I already had a girlfriend and that it wasn’t appropriate to do this.

"I really can’t."

"So how about this?”

Ann took a piece of paper out of her bag and carefully wrote her phone number on it with lipstick, although the number seven was a little crooked.

“Here’s my number. Whenever you think of me, call… Ploy.” "Okay."

I took it and put it in my bag. Ann closed the car door and waved until Rattikarn pulled out of the parking space and drove away. I glanced in the rearview mirror and saw Ann waving happily. If it weren’t for Rattikarn, I might have asked her out, since she seemed friendly and fun to talk to.

"Ploy, huh?"

Rattikarn spoke in her usual tone, keeping her eyes on the road. I, worried that she would ask about it, jumped a little before forcing a smile to lighten the situation.

"Yes, I told her my name was Ploy."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because it’s a cute name. I wanted people to call me Ploy." "That’s a good reason."

Am I being sarcastic? But that’s all; my reasoning doesn’t hold up. Ploy is indeed a cute name, but it’s not so special that I would introduce myself to someone just because I think it sounds nice. I closed my eyes for a moment and raised my hands in surrender.

"I’ll tell you who this woman is." "Are you willing to tell me?”

Rattikarn laughed. She didn’t sound serious at all, but I was the one exaggerating.

“Come on, I want to know who she is. It seems like you two are close, but not that close. It’s interesting because she asked for your phone number, but you didn’t give it to her and she had to persuade you to accept. Plus, you introduced yourself as Ploy."

She pays attention to every little detail. Even though she acts indifferent, when she starts talking, nothing is left out, which gives me the creeps. Since she wasn’t as serious about her past as she said, I decided to tell her the truth. After all, I had mentioned it before.

"This girl is the one I went out with."

A heavy silence fell between us. I glanced at her with a bit of apprehension. "The exercise buddy you talk about often?"

"I haven’t mentioned her that often. I told you about her, but you didn’t believe me, always saying I was lying."

I waved my hands, trying to explain.

"At first, I was hesitant to tell you, but I wanted to be honest. I wanted you to know everything. And this happened before we got together."

"I haven’t said anything yet." "Really?"

"Yeah, everyone has a past."

Seeing that she didn’t seem affected, I sighed in relief, glad that at least she, who tends to notice details, wasn’t overthinking it. Besides, what I had mentioned seemed to be confirmed: the exercise buddy really did exist.

"Phew! I was surprised when she suddenly came to say hi to me. I just learned that her name was Ann."

"You had a passionate exercise session with a friend without introducing yourself?"

"Well, it was just a casual relationship. Everything happened so fast, I never imagined I would do something like that. It was complicated."

"Complicated, huh?"

I turned to face her for confirming my choice of words.

"Whose fault is it? You made me want you and then left. I was really shocked by her strange views on love."

“We don’t own each other. You have the right to love anyone, and you have no right to be jealous of me.”

At that time, I consulted many people, one of them was Nui. "Uh-huh."

"So, I took three days off work to process my feelings. That night, I impulsively did something at a bar with a woman, and that’s when I met Ann. She followed me and invited me to go with her. That was my first

experience with dating, and the first time I learned what it was like to be with a woman.

"Yeah?"

"I have to give Ann some credit for that. She taught me how to enjoy myself by imagining that the other person is me."

"Here we are."

As I was recounting this exciting experience, I was abruptly interrupted and realized that we had actually arrived.

"Wow, that was fast."

"Well, you talk so much that you don't even pay attention to the road." "How sarcasm."

The conversation ended without me saying anything else because as soon as we got back to the room, Rattikarn immediately ripped off my clothes without any hesitation or flirtation. I had planned to take a shower first, and then we would make beautiful love in the private pool. But now, everything was not as I had imagined. Rattikarn and I ended up lying in a heap on the cold, hard floor of the hotel room, the marble tiles feeling cold against our skin.

"Shouldn't we take a shower first?" "Who cares?"

She stood up and pulled me, leading me towards the pool behind the room. My clothes were hanging off me, some of them stuck to my ankles.

Impatiently, she stopped at the pool, looked at me for a moment, smiled, and immediately threw me into the water with a splash.

Although the water wasn’t deep, it took me a moment to surface for air because I wasn’t prepared. As soon as I rubbed my face and tried to wipe away the wetness, my eyes met those dark eyes staring at me from the edge

of the pool with an intense gaze that made me blink a few times to see more clearly.

Was it an angry gaze?

But in just a moment, the beautiful face slowly began to remove her clothes piece by piece until her body was completely naked, revealing every curve. Although I knew her well by now, seeing her from below like this was still a breathtaking sight. Rattikarn gradually climbed down the ladder and swam towards me slowly, moving like a snake toying with its prey.

"You look horrible when wet."

I almost reply bluntly. Of course, who could be as beautiful as her? Even with her hair plastered to her head like a newborn lamb, she still looked sexy.

"Well, you threw me in here. If you’d let me walk down the stairs slowly like you, I’d be fine too…”

I was abruptly silenced by a deep kiss. I have to say it was probably harder than ever because I could taste blood in my mouth, but I didn’t dare mention it, fearing she’d be shocked and stop.

"You’re still beautiful to me."

She swam to the edge of the pool and leaned back, supporting herself on her arms, her chest rising above the water, teasing my lips to kiss her, but…

“No, not here. Where then?”

She swung her leg up, resting it on my shoulder, then tightened her grip with her thigh to force me to taste the part of her that had just emerged.

"Right here." “…”

"Imagine this is your body and do what you want the other person to do to you… like this."

Her command was filled with a mixture of desire and boiling anger. She pressed her hips against my face, making it hard for me to breathe.

"That girl taught you well." “…”

"It’s annoying."

□□□□□

# Chapter 16: Her World

The last three days have been a true retreat. You could say that the whole day, we both stayed in bed. When we felt hungry, we would order food and then wrap ourselves around each other without caring about our phones, current events or even work.

We were so absorbed that we ended up turning off our phones to disconnect completely. It made me realize that the chaos of the outside world doesn’t affect my life at all. You can call it ignorance, but now, I only care about myself and Rattikarn.

On the way back, we took turns driving. I learned to drive a little when I left school, dreaming of owning a car someday. But the income never matched the expenses, so I decided not to buy one. Still, believe it or not, I have a driver’s license.

"Are you tired? We can change if you want."

Rattikarn asked when we stopped for gas. I was stretching and yawning. "A little tired, but I’m fine. I can keep going."

"No way. If you sleep, we might end up on cloud nine." "Or we might find ourselves in a hot cauldron." I joked. "True."

She laughed at the joke. In the past three days, I feel like I’ve gotten to know her even better. She’s the type to tell things on her own terms, without pressing topics that might make me uncomfortable. But when curiosity

strikes, she chooses silence, as if she’s cautiously keeping her guard up. Sometimes I wonder if we’re not close?

No, it’s just who she is. If someone loves her, they’ll have to accept that part of her.

"But hey, I drive, so you can take a break. I’m feeling much more refreshed now."

"It’s up to you. We’re almost in Bangkok anyway." I replied, a little sad.

"You’ll go back to your room, as per our agreement, right?" "Why do you sound like that? Don’t you want me to come back?"

"Well… I just want to stay with you a little longer. But it’s okay. It’s not like we’re saying goodbye forever."

Rattikarn stopped to look at me, but didn’t say anything. She moved to take the wheel, and I settled into the passenger seat. As soon as she said it, with the air conditioning in the front blowing on me, I started to feel drowsy. I dozed off, only to be awakened by her gently poking my cheek.

"Hey, sleepyhead, wake up." "Where are we?"

I groggily opened my eyes, scanning the unfamiliar parking lot. Curious, I peered out the window and looked at her, confused.

"Where are we?"

"Get out and you’ll see." "Did you take me to a mall?"

She didn’t answer, just smiled and went to get some bags from the trunk. The parking column had a yellow sticker and a floor number, but no mall name. I tilted my head, confused.

“Come on,”

Rattikarn said, taking my hand and leading me to an elevator. She pressed the button for the seventh floor. The small elevator, more suited to an apartment than a shopping mall, had a condominium sign on it, and I was even more curious.

"Whose condominium is this?" "Mine."

"Huh?"

"Well, it’s not mine. I rent it." Ding!

As soon as she clarified, the elevator arrived at our floor. The prestine white hallway and apartment numbers made me stare at her in bewilderment. She had taken me to her place instead of dropping me off. I was being invited into Rattikarn’s private world.

"We’ll stay here tonight. Don’t worry, your office is nearby. Only three stops away on the BTS."

As soon as she opened the door, a faint scent of fabric softener wafted from the sheets. Rattikarn’s room was a minimalist white space like a hostel, with a few pieces of furniture and a cactus near the window. A mattress on the floor and a small Japanese table with her laptop rested on the side. The kitchen and laundry area were in a small adjacent room. She really only used this place for sleeping and working.

"The room is a bit empty. It can be boring." "It’s not boring with you here.”

I answered honestly, making her wrinkle her nose. "Sweet talk."

Why did you bring me here all of a sudden?

"Well, someone said she wanted to hang out a little longer, so I brought her. But I actually have some work to finish today, so it wouldn't be convenient to go to your place. I thought it would be better to bring her here."

"That's why I'm surprised. You don't seem like the type to let someone interfere in your private space."

"Well, you're not just anyone, and you don't seem like the type to cause trouble later on."

"Cause trouble?"

I frowned a little at her choice of words, not knowing what she meant. Rattikarn went to the refrigerator, poured me a glass of water, and drank straight from the bottle. She spoke in a casual, storytelling manner, and I decided not to press her further, as she might shut down.

"My first partner put me through a lot back then. I had to move, and I swore that no one would ever know where I lived again."

"Uh-huh."

"Don't you want to ask anything?" "Can I?"

My face probably betrayed my curiosity, as Rattikarn chuckled and reached out to gently scratch my chin, almost like petting a cat, making me feel like a child.

"Go ahead, ask. I’ll answer."

It felt like the first time she’d been so open. I must have earned her trust a little in the past three days, or maybe her feelings for me had deepened.

"What happened to your ex?" "I figured you’d ask that,”

She replied calmly, walking over to sit on her mattress and patting the spot next to her.

“My ex cheated on me.” "Uh-huh."

"I found out."

"So, are you guys done?"

"No, I didn’t. I told her it was okay; no one owns anyone else.” She shrugged.

“But if she could do it, so could I. So I went and hooked up with other people without hiding it. My ex couldn’t handle it, and we ended up fighting."

She started telling the story, and I listened in silence. Her ex was possessive and couldn't accept Rattikarn's way of getting revenge on her, so she broke up with Rattikarn. But later, her ex couldn't handle it and even threatened to jump off a building, attracting the police, rescue teams, and onlookers to witness the drama.

"I didn't care, even if she had actually done it. But causing such a scene and disturbing others? That's disgusting. She was the one who wanted to break up, and I agreed. Then she turned around and said she couldn't live without me. After that, I promised myself that I would never bring a partner or a casual fling into my home again. When it's over, it's over. Clean breakup."

She said it in a firm tone, almost as if she was telling me to never do something like that.

"You're not going to kill yourself just because we broke up, right?" "..."

"Just kidding. You look like you saw a ghost."

She teased, cupping my cheeks and squeezing them playfully. I gently pulled her hands away and made a solemn promise.

"I would never do anything to upset you. I promise."

"I thought so. You wouldn’t let me down. Do you have any more questions?"

"You’re really open today."

"Talking to you makes me want to talk more. I usually don’t like to open up too much. It’s weird."

"Probably because you don’t have many friends." "I don’t sleep with my friends. Isn’t that true?" "But I’ve slept with friends before."

Rattikan hesitated, her expression flickering before quickly returning to normal. I’d noticed since we were in Hua Hin that she was a little possessive, even though she tried to hide it. She didn’t even seem aware that it was jealousy.

I would keep that detail to myself. It was kind of cute. "Smart mouth. Fine, I won’t say anything."

"Tell me!"

I pulled her in for a quick kiss and pushed her down onto the mattress.

"Since I have this chance, I’ll ask everything. Who knows when I’ll get another golden opportunity."

"So eager, huh? Ask, but at eight o'clock, you have to be quiet, because I have work."

"You were never break the rules, huh?"

"Bringing you here is already breaking one of my own rules." "Wow... I feel special."

We sat there chatting, doing nothing but sharing stories as friends. I opened up about my family and my home, asking Rattikarn questions in return.

She, who said she wouldn't hide anything, began to share her story.

She is the only child of a middle-class family, not rich, but comfortable enough. She didn't have the money to attend international or private schools with tuition fees in the hundreds of thousands, so we met at a public school, which I guess was fate, and a happy turn of events. As a child, she was a dreamer who loved to read and adored all kinds of pets, any animal that wasn't part of the food chain, like dogs and cats. Still, she never thought about having one.

Because she was pretty, she always had guys chasing her. But her stern demeanor and the way she carried herself kept them from getting too close. She had realized she liked girls in elementary school, when she had a crush on her kind homeroom teacher. She had been heartbroken and disappointed to learn that the teacher was married.

In middle school, she and her friends watched pornography at a friend’s house. While everyone screamed, she found herself disgusted by the male body, thinking there wasn’t much to it except something long and… well, long. She was much more fascinated by the female body, with its curves and graceful shapes, and even if the moans were fake, they were at least pleasant.

"I liked looking at you."

She talked about high school. We had been in the same class since 10th grade, but we had only talked once when I complimented her perfume.

"My mother’s perfume." She admitted.

"I had run out of deodorant that day. I thought it smelled old, but you said it was nice… and that got us talking."

Rattikan looked at me, brushing a strand of hair away from my face.

"I liked you because you were easygoing, quick to laugh. You didn’t study too seriously, but you never let your grades drop. Some days, you’d dress up with your friends, wearing a short skirt, while other days you’d just put on a loose blouse, looking like you didn’t care. I thought it was funny."

Such a keen observer. Besides secretly watching me sleep, she would write down everything, even my grades, how I dressed, the times I failed PE because I didn’t want to exercise and sweat, even I was allergic to my own sweat!

Then she let us slip into memory, a single conversation, occasional glances, and we became mere acquaintances.

We lost touch after that. Technology back then wasn’t what it is today; we didn’t have Facebook. In college, she dated a popular guy. They tried a lot of things, even some making out, but she was the one who stopped when she realized she just couldn’t handle something she didn’t like.

"When that thing pointed at me, I slapped it so hard it flinched. Have you ever seen a snake get hit and recoil? It was like that."

"Really?"

"Mmhmm. I told him I wasn’t attractive; I couldn’t… do that. So, we broke up."

"But you don’t feel that way about… well, the other kind."

"Exactly. That’s when I realized I was gay."

She went on to talk about her final year at university, when she received the news of her parents’ sudden death in a car accident. She inherited what little they had, experiencing such deep sadness that she didn’t know how to move on.

"It’s scary to lose everything and realize that you have to live alone.”

She confided. She was lost at that time, eating little, sleeping less, suffering every day and thinking about death constantly. But then, she met her first girlfriend, who

brought light back into her life.

Rattikarn was able to experience love and partnership, even though her partner was a woman. But that relationship ended in heartbreak when she discovered that her girlfriend was seeing someone else, a man.

"At that moment, I realized that love for people like us… maybe it doesn’t last. You have a momentary spark, but eventually, they go away to marry a man, leaving you alone again."

"..."

"Since then, I decided... it's better not to get attached. Love comes and goes, but the pain remains. That's why I've only had two relationships. The rest were casual flings, people to add a little excitement and then disappear.

That goes for animals too. They have short lives and leave hurt behind. I really can't deal with that kind of pain."

I pulled her close and hugged her tightly. I didn't make any promises, but I began to understand her better. Beneath her serene face, she hid her emotions, never letting anyone see them. She learned to live alone, accepting the changes of the world, knowing that nothing really belonged to her. She didn't dare get attached to anyone, and as she stopped getting attached to others, no one could get attached to her either.

"Anything else you want to know?"

"I want to know... after we're done talking, will you let me go, or should I snuggle with you for a while first?"

"You don’t have to leave." "Hmm?"

Rattikan gently pulled me on top of her, lifting my shirt until it was bunched around my shoulders, leaving me in only my bra.

"I want you here with me. Don’t go."

"After hearing that, I don’t think I’m going anywhere."

□□□□□

# Chapter 17: Accept

Lately, Rattikarn and I have been taking turns visiting each other. Some days, she stays at my place; on days when she is busy, I end up staying with her because I can't stand missing her. When she is working, she concentrates intensely, and no noise is allowed. So, I lie quietly next to her on a mattress. Sometimes, I feel her leaning in to kiss me, thinking I am already asleep.

We are truly together, without the need for labels or definitions.

Even though she lives by strict rules, they are just walls she puts up. She is a woman with love, little temper tantrums, and sometimes a little playful when she wants affection.

"What's wrong?" "Hug me."

Rattikarn climbed into bed, snuggling against me. Her warm body was clear sign that she was getting into the mood. For me, just the smell of her perfume turns me on instantly, and I can never say no.

"Hm? What is this... Oh... you..."

I surprised her with a little toy I had secretly bought. It looked like a small keychain, but it vibrated like a mini massager. The moment I turned it on and aimed it at her sensitive spot, her pretty face flushed, her legs parted, and her hips lifted as she gripped the bed tightly.

She didn't resist, in fact, she seemed to love it, as her muffled moans indicated, pressing her face into the mattress to keep quiet.

"It feels good, doesn't it, my little girl?" I teased her playfully.

"If you don't tell me if you like it, I'll stop."

She grabbed my wrist with a look that could kill. "If you take it off, I'll leave you."

"So scary."

I laughed, grabbing her hair and biting her earlobe to heighten her arousal, knowing exactly what she liked.

"You couldn’t leave me, you’re too wild." "Yes… I’m wild."

She whispered, pressing herself firmly against the toy. Fearing that she would climax too soon, I pulled it away and turned her onto her back.

"Why did you take it off?" She whimpered.

"I’m not done yet. Idiot!"

"You’ll feel better when you see what I do next."

I positioned myself over her, our legs intertwined like scissors. She looked up knowingly, pressing herself against me. One hand intertwined with mine, and we began to move together, seeking the pleasure we both craved.

"So good… so good, my love."

She whispered breathlessly. Every time she loses control, she calls me that, and it drives me crazy.

"How good?"

"I would die at your feet."

I bit my lip, barely coherent, but I had to test something by whispering softly.

## "I love you."

" "

"I love you, Dao."

The sound of our bodies together and the wetness we shared only amplified the intensity of the moment. The scent of our love filled the room as the sheets came undone with our bodies entwined. I finished first, followed by her, and we lay side by side, staring at the ceiling, unsure of who was above or below.

"You know, I've lost weight. I weighed myself in front of the 7-Eleven." "In one of those coin-op machines?"

Rattikarn shifted, grabbing her vaporizer from the table. She clicked it a few times, inhaling the fresh minty scent that briefly replaced the scent of our passion.

"They say sex burns a lot of calories."

"Definitely. I've lost ten pounds. Are we addicted to it?" "Maybe."

I sat up while our legs were still tangled. Rattikarn pulled me back to lie on top of her, then rolled onto her side, holding me close.

"But I like it. Being with you is a good time." "I like it too."

"Do you like me?"

"Of course. How could we be so good together otherwise?" "But I never thanked you."

"Can you do that to someone you don't like?" "I love you."

".…"

Rattikarn was silent before she spread her legs and stood up to go to the bathroom. Whether it was intimate moments or just talking, she always avoids this topic. Like I said, it was an experiment, and I already had an idea of what to expect. But it still hurt that all I got in response was silence and emptiness.

*I know I'm getting greedy.*

Even though I promised her I wouldn't get attached or demand anything, I still wanted to tell her how I felt. I think she feels the same way, but her strict rules and fears make her reject it with silence.

"I have to attend a staff meeting near Asoke tomorrow."

She shouted from the bathroom, without closing the door. The sound of the shower came out. I gave her a small sad smile to get her to look away and change the subject.

"Is it with the writing team?"

"Yeah, I'm taking on a new drama project. I have to get there early." "I see."

"You should go back."

Rattikarn kindly told me to leave. Although her reason seemed plausible, I knew it wasn’t quite like that. This wasn’t like her.

Even when she was busy or had work early, she knew I wouldn’t bother her, and she’d rather I stayed so we could at least cuddle.

"Yeah, I was planning on leaving anyway. My coworkers noticed I was wearing the same clothes."

"Well, clothes are made to be wear again.”

She laughed softly. I didn’t laugh along. I got up, put on my clothes, and packed what I needed while she finished her shower.

“Aren’t you going to take shower before you go?"

"I’ll leave before the train stops running. You’ll be working more too." "Okay, come here.”

Rattikarn gestured for me to come closer, pulling me in for a loud, smacking kiss before pulling away.

“Goodnight kiss in advance. Dream about me tonight." "You too.”

.

.

Everything seemed normal, but I could feel that it wasn’t. Rattikarn did as she was told and didn’t text me goodnight like usual, which meant I shouldn’t contact her either. She had already kissed me goodnight. In the morning, I expected her to text me to say hi, but when everything went quiet, I finally texted her first. She just sent a sticker in response.

My confession of love caused a change between us, and it made me anxious.

But even though I was anxious, there was nothing I could do.

She hates attachment and pettiness. If I texted her to ask about it, she would say I was overthinking it or might even get annoyed that I was making a big deal out of nothing. So I just waited, asking only if she had eaten or what she was doing. She would reply, “I already ate,” or send another sticker, trying to keep things light.

By the third day… the feeling I had feared had intensified. We hadn’t even called each other once. We’d never gone more than two days without talking or seeing each other, if I didn’t come to her, she’d come to me. But now, silence had taken over. I waited, my heart aching, until my face showed my stress clearly. Even one of my juniors at work noticed it while we were having lunch.

"Is something stressing you out lately, Yung?" "Huh? Why?"

"You seem distracted and keep looking at your phone. You don’t seem focused on work. If there’s anything you want to talk about, you can share it with us."

"Share…"

I said slowly, smiling in gratitude. I wanted to talk, but I didn’t know where to start. This junior didn’t know much about my personal life, except that I had broken up with Non. Randomly mentioning that I had a girlfriend now would probably shock her.

"You were dumped, weren’t you?"

Nui, who had come to give me a job, heard it and couldn’t resist the teasing. I shot him a look, not wanting to lose, especially since he had been fighting with me recently.

"Better than some people who never even get to taste it." "Challenge authority? I could fire you right now."

"Go ahead."

"Out of respect for your hard work, I won’t fire you. But remember, you have a job and a salary because of me. Isn’t your condo loan in progress?"

"With my credentials, I could easily find another job. I’m only staying here because you’re my friend."

"You think too highly of yourself." "Fine, fire me today if you want."

I took off my ID badge, feeling reckless. In truth, I just wanted to attack someone, and Nui was there.

"Don’t test me. If you resign, I’ll approve." "Then I’ll resign!"

"Hey, Yung!"

My junior grabbed my wrist, but I shake her off. Seeing that I was serious, Nui softened his tone, even though he didn’t want to lose face in front of everyone.

"Think carefully before you resign. If you apologize, I’ll let you stay." "I’m resigning!"

I grabbed my bag and stormed out of the office. The problem was small and easily dismissed, but I made it huge because I wanted to vent my emotions on someone. When I finally calmed down, I sat down at the bus stop, realizing what I had just done.

Quit my job? And where am I going to get the money to pay for my apartment?!

For the first time, I really wanted to die. Tears of pain welled up in my eyes. I couldn’t even tell what exactly was hurting me, whether it was the

foolishness of quitting my job or being abandoned by someone, just like Nui had said.

"Ugh…"

And then, I started crying like a three-year-old. The people waiting at the bus stop looked at me curiously, but when I met their gazes, they quickly looked away, not wanting to be rude. I wiped my tears and sniffed. Lost and unable to think clearly, I picked up my phone and opened my contact list, preparing to share my story with someone.

### Rattikarn.

Her name appeared at the top. I looked at our last conversation, from two days ago. All the messages were from me; she had only responded with stickers. Wasn’t she someone I could lean on? The very person at the root of my sadness and despair?

Love was supposed to be happier than this, right? Why did it have to be so painful? I scrolled past her name and looked at old conversations, mostly with colleagues about work, until I saw Non’s name. I stopped, clicked on the chat.

“What are you doing?”

The moment I sent it, I felt a wave of guilt. I had been a burden to him, but now, in my own sadness, I was going back to him. It felt unfair. So I canceled the message, closed the chat, and went to another platform to scroll aimlessly, trying to distract myself.

As I scrolled, a notification popped up from an unfamiliar name. I clicked on it, curious. I didn’t recognize the name, so I checked the profile to see who it was. And then I froze in surprise.

### It was BM.

How had she managed to add me? I stared at the name, debating whether to accept her. A part of me felt petty and wanted to do it out of spite. Since I

had no one else to talk to, meeting someone new didn’t seem like the worst idea. Well, not exactly new. We had already shared a memorable moment together, a memory I would never forget.

Oh, whatever. Let's see what happens.

**Accept it.**

**00000**

# Chapter 18: I don't love you

The sadness made me wander aimlessly outside, and I only returned to my apartment at almost 8 pm, carrying a bag with four or five cans of beer to numb myself. As soon as I entered the lobby, I heard a familiar voice, making me stop in surprise.

"Yung."

"Non... what brings you here?'

It had been a while since we had seen or spoken to each other because he asked for some time to heal. Non raised an eyebrow and picked up his phone.

"Someone sent me a message and then canceled it in a hurry." "Oh..."

So, even though I canceled the message, it still showed up for him, huh? I couldn't help but give a weak smile, feeling a little embarrassed. My ex looked at the bag in my hand.

"What is that?" "Beer."

"Yeah, I see that. But who are you drinking with?" "Only me."

"Do you mind if I come in?"

.

.

Now we were both sitting in front of the condo like homeless people. We could have gone upstairs to drink, but that didn’t seem like a good idea. We had broken up, after all. Drinking together could lead to some messy place. This seemed safer. I was feeling vulnerable, and Non understood, so he didn’t mind sitting here, even if the mosquitoes were almost going to take us away.

"How stressed were you that you ended up texting me?"

He asked, raising his can to mine in a “cheers” gesture before taking a sip.

"Just a little… I didn’t know who else to talk to. But then I thought better of it and canceled the message."

"And that gorgeous person?" " "

I didn’t answer, just shrugged. Non could probably guess that the reason for my stress was Rattikarn, but he didn’t press me. He was just waiting for me to talk to myself.

"Are you happy?"

"Yeah… mixed. Happiness and sadness, back and forth. And I also just quit my job."

"It’s all piling up on you in one day, huh? No wonder you came prepared with a stash of big green cans. But usually, Nui spoils you. He’d hate for you to quit. Why did he let it slide this time?"

"I kind of freaked out. He kept throwing different things at me over and over. So it ended like this. Sigh…"

"So you took your problems with your partner out on your work. I get it. It’s hard when your mind is a mess; it’s hard to keep things in order. So what are you going to do now?"

"I have no idea. Probably just stay home, do nothing, let my mind wander." "Maybe you should talk to Nui again. That might help."

"Lose face doing that? Yeah, right."

I laughed, but thought about it. I could do that if I had to. For now, I wanted to give my brain a break.

"Some downtime might be good. I could reflect, figure out where things went wrong."

"When we were together, we were friends and lovers, right? When I had problems about work, family, anything, I had you to talk to. And you did the same with me. Why was that?"

"Because we were confidants."

"Exactly. A partner isn’t just for physical intimacy. They’re also your confidant."

“…”

"So why can’t you be like that with your person?"

I swallowed hard, unable to even look him in the eye. I had thought the same thing, why couldn’t I talk to the person I wanted to share things with the most?

"That’s because you think that person isn’t ready to listen. So, you chose to talk to someone else who would. And that person is your ex. If that’s the case, then why be with her if having her feels like being alone?"

His blunt words stung, and I felt a stab of anger. I didn’t mean to judge Rattikarn so quickly. It was me who didn’t want to open up yet, that’s all.

"No, it’s just… I didn’t want to talk. I’m waiting for things to calm down."

"Why wait for things to calm down when you’re hurting the most right now? She should be the one dealing with this."

"Enough. I don’t want to talk about this anymore." Seeing that I was getting upset, Non sighed.

"You must really love her if you’re protecting her even when she’s at her worst."

He put down the can and took something out of his pocket before handing it to me. The diamond ring he’d once proposed to me with, now in front of me, and I could only stare in shock.

"What’s that?"

"A ring."

"I meant, why are you giving this to me?"

"If you ever get tired of this love, you can come back to me. I'll be here." He kept pushing the ring towards me, not letting me refuse.

"Come on, take it."

I took the ring, looking at it in shock and confusion. "Are you still waiting for me?"

"Yes. Do you think moving on is that easy? I'm just waiting for the day you get tired of this relationship. It's okay. No matter how long it takes, I'll wait."

"Why do you think I'll lose interest? Do you think I have no future with her?"

"Most relationships end like this. How many actually last?"

People see love like this as something intangible, don't they? I sighed, feeling a pang of sadness. I was serious about my love for Rattikarn. Even though she was distant and indifferent, I kept telling myself that deep down, she must care about me too.

.

.

"Hey."

The deep voice of someone familiar and very nostalgic made me look up quickly, so I stood up quickly, putting the ring in my pants pocket in a hurry.

"Dao, how did you get here?"

"I came to surprise you, but then I found you here with... Non, right?" "Yes," he replied."

Rattikarn nodded politely, and Non had to return the gesture, albeit a little reluctantly.

"Seeing you here with Non surprised me even more. Why don't you go up to your room and talk? The mosquitoes will eat you alive out here."

"I'm just planning to stay here for a while; I'm about to leave... Well, have fun. I'll be going now."

Non gently touched my shoulder as a farewell, nodded once more to her and said,

"Goodbye." Goodbye," she replied.

Non went inside the condominium to get her car. As he passed by, he waved a sad goodbye from inside, and I stood there, torn between gratitude and sadness, watching until he disappeared. Then I turned to the person who had just appeared out of nowhere, leaving me perplexed.

"Why did you come all of a sudden? You didn't even call." "If I called, would I see you with your ex?."

She said with a teasing smile, as if me being with Non was no big deal. "So, what happened? Why didn’t you call me?"

"What happened?... Did you know?"

"Of course I knew. Nui called me, asking me to talk to you about quitting. He wanted me to apologize on his behalf for being harsh and making you upset. So, what’s the story?"

"It’s… nothing big."

"If it’s nothing, why didn’t you tell me? But you stayed here talking to your ex?"

"Because I wasn’t sure if you would listen!"

I raised my voice, forgetting myself. Everything went silent. There was only the sound of cars on the road and the faint rumble of the train above, probably it's Non had taken back to his own destination.

"It’s mosquito heaven here. Let’s go upstairs." "Are you coming up to my place?"

"Why do you ask like that? Don’t you want me to come up?" I hesitated, a little confused, and then nodded.

"Alright, then, let’s talk upstairs."

We went upstairs together. It had been days since Rattikarn had visited me, and I felt that the void left by her absence was now somehow filled. My feelings of hurt were slowly being soothed, but it wasn’t enough; there was still something unresolved inside me.

"Do you want some water?"

I took her to the fridge and poured her a glass. I couldn’t look her directly in the eyes because I could feel the tears welling up. If I spoke, I knew I would lose control.

"I’m not thirsty; I want to talk."

Rattikarn put down her bag and walked over, placing her hand on my shoulder as I poured. I froze, looked at her, and then the tears began to flow, unable to hold them back any longer.

"Why are you crying?"

"You’ve been away for the past few days." "I was working."

"Hmm."

I recognized it easily without reacting much. Rattikarn sighed and got straight to the point.

"Why did you quit? You know very well that Nui is just being harsh; it’s not personal."

"When people get hit by things every day, there comes a time when they can’t take it anymore. For me, that day was today.”

I took a sip of water, trying to swallow my sadness.

“Quitting is probably a good thing. I’ve been working hard for years. Maybe it’s time to try something new, to gain new experiences."

"So, what are you going to do?"

"I don’t know. Maybe freelance, like you. Sounds easy enough. But let me think about what I’m actually going to do."

"What’s wrong with you?" "Hmm?"

"What’s wrong with you? Why did you just lose control like that? You’re quitting even though you have to pay the condominium, cover living expenses, do you think finding a job is so easy these days?"

"I just wanted to live and act simple, like you. That's all. Don't look so serious. I'm glad you're here. At least I know you care."

I pulled away from Rattikarn and sit on the bed, turning on the TV. The beautiful woman came over, took the water from my hand and turned off the TV, forcing me to focus solely on her.

"It's obvious that you're not okay. Talk to me. If you have a problem, you should talk to me, not run to someone else like your ex. So, what am I to you?"

"Yes, what exactly are you to me?" "Rung…"

I stood up suddenly, pushing Rattikarn in the chest, but she stood her ground.

"You've been avoiding me, haven't you?"

I pushed her away again and took a step forward, my anger boiling. “…”

"Every time I ask you something, you just send a sticker. If I told you about quitting, you’d just send a sticker saying, ‘Noted.’ Why would I bother

telling you anything? It’s like having a partner who isn’t there, while my ex, just one simple question, and he showed up in front of my apartment.

Shows who really cares, doesn’t it?"

I reached out to push her away one last time, but Rattikarn grabbed my hand before I could.

"I was busy." "Liar."

“…”

"You were just avoiding me because you can’t handle the feelings I expressed when I told you I loved you, right?"

The beautiful woman looked at me intently for a moment, then admitted it clearly.

"If you knew, then why did you do it?"

Her question felt like a fresh wound being torn open again. The pain was so overwhelming that I could barely stand. I wanted to clutch my heart, fall to the ground, but I just stood there, paralyzed.

"I don’t know. Maybe I expected you to love me back. But don't worry... Seeing you today made me realize that having you is better than being alone, even if you can't be everything to me."

I pulled my hand from hers gently, lifting her chin and kissing her, full of desire.

"Rung..."

"From now on, I won't love you anymore."

□□□□□

# Chapter 19: 540

I won't test anything anymore. Having you is enough. If you don't want to hear 'I love you', I won't say it. I won't expect anything. Let everything flow naturally. In the end, if I can't take it anymore, I'll leave easily.

But I can't blame you. I was the one who broke the rule you set from the beginning. You don't like being tied down. Even hearing 'I love you' can make you feel confined and suffocated. Since the day I said I wouldn't love you anymore, even if it's not as easy as I made it seem, I've resolved to do this. Or even if I still love you as much as ever, I won't say it again.

"Is it tomorrow that you have the training? That came up quickly."

I said as I looked at my schedule and check it's tomorrow Rattikarn would be giving a training session. I've never seen her work with a large group of people before. Thinking about it, I felt a little excited for her.

"There's no backing out now, is there?" "Why would you want to?"

I laughed and looked at her as she closed her laptop, took off her glasses and placed them on the table, rubbing her tired eyes with a hint of worry.

"I’m not used speaking in front of a large crowd. Most of my work is with a small team of four or five people. This time, there are over twenty. What if I don’t do well?"

She looked at me with a face that looked like it was on the verge of tears. Rattikarn, who usually never falters, looked genuinely nervous, making me laugh affectionately.

"You’ve always done well. This time will be no different." "Pat my head."

She crawled out from under the table like a kitten, playfully asking for comfort. Sometimes she’s too adorable. It makes me a little mad because it feels like she’s doing this to stop me from moving forward. I patted her head gently and hugged her tightly.

"You’ll do well, as if you were giving a presentation in class."

"I wasn’t that good at presentations back then. What made me take this job?"

"Hmm… maybe Nui?" Rattikarn looked up with a pout.

"You already know. Don’t act like you don’t know." "Are you saying you got it because of me?"

I feigned surprise.

"If not for you, then for who else?" "Wow, I feel so special."

"What made you think it wasn’t because of you?"

Rattikarn lay on top of me, resting her chin on her hands as she spoke. "Oh, I dare not be so full of myself."

She opened her mouth to say something, then closed it, her expression changing as she leaned in closer. I could sense what she was planning, so I let her lead, even asking playfully,

"By the way, have you finished your work?"

"Even if I haven’t, I’d rather be with you first." "Wow, am I more important than work now?"

Our clothes started coming off until we were left in just our underwear. As Rattikarn reached up to take off her bra, my phone ring, making me jump a little, and I reached over to check it, trying to act casual.

"Oh, just another live clothing sale?"

I made a disappointed face, ready to pick up my phone but Rattikarn stopped, in the middle of taking off her bra and gave me a stern look.

"Who are you waiting to hear from?"

"I'm just waiting for a drop of a specific perfume. When someone in this group posts something, it shows up on my timeline first. I don't want to miss it."

"Is it more important than us right now?" "It's not like that..."

The truth is, I've been trying to distract myself with perfume shopping lately. I've heard that scents can make us feel attached to someone or something easily. I mean, look at how I feel about Rattikarn.

It's proof enough. I’m looking for a new scent to replace the old one; that way, her importance will diminish.

Maybe it will even make my feelings for her disappear. "Forget it."

Rattikarn stepped away and grabbed a T-shirt to pull over her head. I held her wrist, looking at her with pleading eyes.

"What’s wrong? Are you in a bad mood?"

"I never in a bad mood, and you know it."

She actually gets annoyed over little things, but she never realizes it. I didn’t want to provoke an argument, so I pulled her shirt back over her head and peppered her face with kisses to apologize.

"Come on, I was just a little distracted."

"You’ve been acting weird lately… It’s nothing… mmf!"

I pressed my lips to hers to interrupt her, turning the table to take the lead this time. Her familiar scent filled my senses, making my heart race like it had the first time we met. Even though the desire was building, it hurt to know that I had never stopped loving her. If I kept letting myself feel like this, I would never be able to get away from her. Forget loving her?

Impossible.

I clenched my fist, then decided to walk away from Rattikarn to grab my phone. She took a deep breath, sat up and quickly put on her shirt and pants, then walked back to her desk.

"Damn… it’s not even the scent I wanted. Hey, why are you getting dressed?"

"I think I’ll go review my notes for tomorrow’s lecture." "Really? Too bad."

I didn’t say anything else, just grabbed my clothes, put them back on, and lay down on the bed, scrolling through my phone as if nothing had happened. I actually don’t care much about perfume. Even if I did, now wouldn’t be the right time. I was just trying not to get too consumed by it, like someone trying to cut out soda to avoid too much sugar.

"Are you regret?"

Rattikarn’s tone carried a clear hint of anger, even though she pretended to be staring at her laptop screen. The person who used to crawl around like a

cat, seeking head pats, had now transformed into a ferocious tiger. A tiger that didn’t even roar. She was ready to take me down in an instant.

"Why wouldn’t I feel regret?"

"I don’t know. It seems like you don’t feel the same way you used to." "Maybe it’s because I don’t love you anymore."

"..."

"Heh.."

I laughed and placed my phone next to the mattress.

"If you're not going to continue, I'm going to sleep then. I have to wake up early tomorrow to prepare the event for you."

"You don't like the smell of No. 5 anymore?"

## Thump, thump...

Rattikarn, who still couldn't let it go, made me open my eyes to look at the ceiling again, gathering myself to answer.

"Yes."

"So that's why you're looking for a new perfume?" "People don't have to like just one perfume, you know?" "So, what perfume are you waiting to buy?"

"It's a niche one, Baccarat Rouge 540."

"That's an unusual name. Isn't it sold in department stores?"

"Yes, but it's much cheaper on perfume exchange forums, almost half the price. It's a group of perfume enthusiasts who bring it to sell."

"Where did you get to smell this perfume? Did you suddenly decide to like it?"

"The other day, I got off the Skytrain, walked around Paragon and tried it. I liked it, but it's very expensive... over eight thousand baht per bottle. With my humble salary, I can't afford it. But on that forum, it sells for only four to five thousand, so I set it as my 'first' so that I'll see it immediately if someone posts it. But so far, I've never been quick enough."

"You seem to really like it." "Of course."

## "More than you like her?"

"Excuse me? What?"

Rattikarn didn’t say anything else, then took out her e-cigarette and took a drag, letting the smoke drift thinly across the room. I actually heard her, but I pretended not to. There was a bittersweet feeling, a strange, mixed feeling of hope and sadness. I wanted to fool myself into thinking she was a little jealous, but I didn’t dare think too highly of myself.

Knowing my place was the safest thing to do.

.

.

I woke up early and left Rattikarn’s room first. As I said, I had to manage everything at the event venue to prepare for the company’s screenwriting workshop today. When she returned and we made up, I called Nui to apologize for my impulsiveness. My boss and my talented friend were, of course, happy that I had returned. Since then, we have never exchanged sarcastic words—a good lesson learned.

Those who had signed up for the online screenwriting course started arriving around eight o’clock. Rattikarn texted me that she's two stops away on the train, which would take less than ten minutes. As I was checking the

arrangements and documents to be delivered, I was startled when someone nudged me in the side.

"Oh!"

"Surprise again." "Miss BM."

My eyes nearly popped out of my head and my heart began to beat irregularly. The last time we met in Hua Hin, it was pure coincidence. But to say it was coincidence again this time...

"Didn't I tell you to call me Ann?"

"Oh, Miss Ann. I shook my head, trying to clear my own thoughts." "Are you here to take the screenwriting course?"

"Well, yes. I have nothing else to do. I saw that it sounded interesting, so I signed up. Maybe it will be useful for future projects."

The scent emanating from her made me raise an eyebrow slightly. "Perfume..."

"Oh, I didn't wear Chanel today. You really notice scents first, huh Ploy? I bet you have a history with that perfume."

"You already know my name is Rung. Why do you keep calling me Ploy?" "I know, but I'm just waiting for you to introduce yourself."

Ann tilted her head, smiling, and reached out to touch my face just as Rattikarn walked in, looking at us and clearing her throat.

"How's the setup going, Rung?"

"See, you haven't introduced yourself yet. I've heard your name from other people twice already."

Ann barely paid attention to Rattikarn and still focused on getting my name straight. I turned and smiled at her, while Rattikarn kept her face impassive. I responded politely to keep things professional.

"The setup is ready, Miss Rattikarn." "Thank you."

She glanced at both of us one more time before getting ready to walk by, but...

"So, I finally know your name is Rung. I’m afraid you might be disappointed today because I wore a different perfume, BCR 540."

Rattikarn hadn’t even left yet when she froze at the mention of “540” and turned to ask without any hint of politeness.

"What is BCR 540?"

Ann, clearly wanting to show off, took the chance to introduce her perfume, now filling the air with its fragrance, giving its full name. I straightened up, surprised at how coincidental it was, since I had just mentioned it the night before.

## "Baccarat Rouge 540."

□□□□□

# Chapter 20: Getting Serious

The screenwriting training course started off smoothly. We used a conference room and set up about 30 chairs for the participants to listen to the lecture and take notes, including myself and a few staff members who also wanted to listen.

Rattikarn continued to present well, although she said she was nervous the night before. Once in front of the class, she was able to present herself smoothly, making it seem as if her previous concerns were simply to downplay her abilities and remain humble.

Writing a screenplay is completely different from writing prose or novels. Novels focus on describing emotions and feelings. Some use first-person narration through the eyes of the character, while others use third-person narration to describe the thoughts and feelings of all the characters as if the narrator were a god or a medium.

But screenplays are different. Everything that is said will be shown as images; there is no need to describe the thoughts or feelings of the characters. There is only dialogue, and the scene transitions happen as the director interprets them and directs the actors on how to act.

It’s like a novelist being an architect and structural engineer who draws up the blueprints of the house and calculates the structure in advance, while the screenwriter creates the 3D visualization of all the angles, with the director being the contractor who follows the plans.

Sometimes the screenwriter is the same person as the author, but it usually doesn’t work well. They may be good at describing, but not at creating the layout. It’s like novelists shouldn’t be screenwriters because they don’t understand camera angles or visual composition. If you don’t believe me,

try watching a drama where the screenwriter also writes the script with budget-saving measures from the producers, or watch a series where the parent company doesn’t want to pay the writers and drafts the plot on their own.

It’s like the owner drawing the blueprint and handing it over to the contractor without a proper plan or structure. Now you can imagine what it’s like, right? If you’re good at something, just stick to it.

As I admired Rattikarn’s ability to describe and create understanding for students, my phone on the table vibrated slightly, signaling a new message. When I opened it, I saw that Ann had sent me a message via inbox. I glance at the sender, sitting not far away, and see her raise an eyebrow at me.

.

## Anna:

You’ve added me as a friend for so long, but you’re only talking now?

## Rungtiwa:

If you’re not concentrating on the lesson, be careful, or you might get punished by the teacher.

I typed and smiled a little, looking at her. She give me another smile before returning her attention to typing.

## Anna:

I’m paying attention, but I can’t help but look at another student. Your partner teaches very well.

## Rungtiwa:

If she’s really that good, Ann, you should focus on learning, not getting distracted by texts like this.

## Anna:

I was focusing on you, the student, with full attention.

## Anna:

You seem very proud of your teacher. So, is Rattikarn really your partner?

## Rungtiwa:

If I said "yes", would you stop chatting and concentrate on the lesson?

## Anna:

I would focus on the class, but I wouldn’t stop chatting.

.

If Rattikarn is the shade of black and white, Ann is the bright and vibrant shade that shows that she is an open and quite flirtatious person. Someone like that should really be paired with the teacher in front of the class. She could love many people without pressure and maybe even prefer to be with someone who doesn’t care. I thought to myself, I wish I was like that.

"Is there anyone who isn’t paying attention in class and flirting here?"

Rattikarn’s tone is playful, and she glances at me and Ann, apparently noticing. This made me straighten up in shock, realizing that I had been caught.

"Did you notice?"

Ann replied in a cheerful voice, wrinkling her nose playfully. Rattikarn raised an eyebrow, seeming not to take it seriously.

"You can flirt, but only after this class is over. If you don’t learn anything, I won’t dare teach you next time. I give up. "

"Sorry for distracting you, teacher."

The cheerful student responded to the teacher at the front of the room and give a cute bow, followed by laughter. No one upset because it seemed like a playful teasing. I just raised an eyebrow at Rattikarn, teasing her back.

However, she didn’t smile.

Her behavior towards Ann and me was completely different. So I pretended not to notice and focused on reading the documents. I felt a small pang of

guilt for playing with my own past, but I quickly shook it off as she was generous and said it was okay. Why should I tie myself down? Right?

.

.

The training went smoothly. It lasted over three hours, including a workshop to come up with plot ideas and break them down into scenes for the teachers to review. Everyone applauded the successful training and filled out the feedback forms on the website. 10 out of 10 participants said it was beneficial, well-organized and that they wanted more sessions in the future. It's a resounding success.

"Thank you very much everyone,”

I said, thanking the participants, who began to leave. Ann was the last to leave, apparently on purpose, wanting to talk to me longer than the others.

"How about we go eat?"

Her direct and simple invitation caught me off guard. I smiled at her, not teasing, but simply acknowledging the situation.

"Even though you knows I have a partner?"

"Well, it seems she doesn’t mind. I already asked for permission." "What?"

I gestured toward Rattikarn, who is talking to Nui. Ann might not have stayed behind just to talk to me, but she had spoken to the teacher earlier.

"And what did she say?" "She said it was okay." "Oh…"

"She’s surprisingly open, isn’t she? Thank you."

Ann’s choice of words, “thank you,” could be interpreted in many ways, and it made me a little uncomfortable. It seemed like she was interested in me, but she also had her eyes on Rattikarn, which made me uncomfortable. However, I kept my feelings to myself.

"So I'll ask her to make sure.

"And if she confirms, will you go with me?" "Yes."

I walked over to Rattikarn, who is still talking to Nui about work. When my boss saw me coming, see muttered knowingly.

"Okay, you two talk first."

After my annoying friend left, it's just the two of us. Rattikarn gathered her things in her bag and looked at me.

"What's up?"

"Did you really give me permission to go eat with Ann?" Rattikarn looked at Ann and smiled before looking at me.

"Yes, I told her that if you're okay with it, then I'm okay with it." "So, does that mean you're okay with it?"

"If you want to go, why would I say no? It's the same as if I wanted to go with someone, you wouldn't have the right to stop me."

"Really?"

I looked at Rattikarn and smiled before turning to Ann, who is still waiting. The sweet-faced girl winked at me as if she already knew the answer,

twirling the keys of her BMW car in her hand, the same convertible as before.

"Are we going yet?"

Before answering, I glance at the teacher, who slinging her bag over her shoulder and walking past us, smiling at Ann as a polite gesture. She didn’t seem interested in whether I would agree to go or not, which prompted me to answer without hesitation.

"Yes, but if the food isn’t good, it’ll be funny."

.

.

We ended up at a moderately priced restaurant in a popular shopping mall, not far from my house, but closer to Ann’s. I vaguely remember calling a taxi back from her apartment once. The girl with shoulder-length hair, now tied back in a small ponytail, did so to keep her hair from falling into the food while we ate.

"How about we go back to your place after dinner?" Preet!

I choked on the food in my mouth, quickly grabbing a napkin to wipe my face, afraid that the Pad Thai noodles I had just chewed might come out of my nose.

"What?"

"I was just kidding! You’re exaggerating. Heh.”

Ann reached out and ruffled my hair lightly like a puppy, resting her chin on her hand, looking at me.

“I just want to get close to you quickly, so I said something silly. They say you should talk about dirty things to get close to someone until you get used

to them."

"That may not be a true theory."

"Should I be embarrassed around someone I've already slept with? I've seen it all."

"Is that all you think about?"

I said, a little sarcastically. Talking to her was like talking to a flirtatious guy who always wants to go to a motel.

"I admit, I mostly think about things like that, but only with you." "..."

"I missed you. I never thought I'd meet you again, no, wait... for the third time."

"Coming to learn screenwriting today can't be a coincidence, right?" "It's not a coincidence. I did it on purpose."

Ann raises her hand in recognition, as if confessing.

"When I added you as a friend, I found out where you work. After searching the web, I saw that there was a course being held at the company, so I quickly signed up, thinking I'd find you."

"So how did you find me on Facebook? Do we have mutual friends?"

"I saw you in a perfume group. The profile picture and real name caught my eye, so I clicked on it and, boom, it was you... Plus, I knew you had your eye on Baccarat Rouge 540 perfume."

Or...

"So I sent you message using it today. Cool, huh? I planned it carefully."

She winked at me cutely, looking like she had no money problems. If she wanted to impress someone, she would buy a bottle of perfume worth almost ten grand to make a good impression.

"You've done this with a lot of people, right? You seem so smooth."

"Everyone has their own technique, but it's always short-term. If I feel like there's nothing else interesting,"

She said, picking up a strand of pasta from my plate with her fork and rolling it into a ball before offering it to me.

"Eat it."

"No, thanks."

"Why? Does it feel like an indirect kiss?" "Something like that."

"Even though we've exercised together before?"

"That was a while ago. Let's think of it as a past activity."

I said as I took a sip of my drink. Ann then turned to eat, chewing and talking at the same time.

"That's why you're interesting. You're not like anyone else. We've met, but you don't seem attached at all."

"..."

"I like you. I want to take this seriously."

.

.

When I got back to my apartment, my heart was racing. I had to admit that I felt satisfied both from the delicious meal and from the feeling of someone confessing their love for me. After agreeing to stay with Non, we became a couple without having to say much.

Everything felt natural. Even Rattikarn said that he liked me sometimes, but it wasn't like a confession of love. It wasn't the same as Ann. She came right out and said that she liked me and wanted to take it seriously.

Whether it was genuine or not, I would have to see later, because someone who flirts easily and gets close to people can do anything. But if

someone who likes to have fun like that wanted to take it seriously, it meant they were ready for commitment and had chosen me. That gave off a special and different feeling.

"You look happy."

As I was about to enter the elevator, I stopped at the sound of Rattikarn's voice and turned to see her standing there.

"Ah, you're here. You didn't mention you were coming." "Now I have to tell you in advance, huh?"

"Not quite."

I laughed a little and waved her to stand next to me.

"I just thought you'd be tired from training all day. By the way, did they tell you that you did great today? You explained everything so clearly. You'd make a great teacher."

Ann give a thumbs up with her heart, still looking at the elevator doors. But Rattikarn didn't smile.

"Today, your sweet words are different than usual." "Really? Crazy. I always compliment you."

"Because you're in a good mood, so you're better than usual. What did you do?"

"I just went to dinner. You know that. You even let me go with her." "Just dinner?"

"Yes. What else did you think I was doing?"

.

*Ding!*

The elevator doors opened, and I walked into my room, unlocked the door, took off my shoes, put my bag on the floor, and grabbed some water from the fridge. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that Rattikarn had placed a few things on the coffee table, including a small shopping bag from a department store, before she stood up and glared at me coldly, which made me turn to meet her gaze.

"You look stressed."

"I'm fine. You're too happy. Are you sure you just went out to dinner?" "What else could I have done?"

I laughed at her creative thoughts.

"I got back here so fast, compared to going out with you." "You were done in five minutes."

"Done what?"

Even though I already knew what she meant, I wanted to hear it from her. I was starting to get frustrated with her projecting negative emotions onto me.

"Do you think I went and did something with Ann?"

"Who knows?"

Rattikan leaned in close, grabbing my chin and turning it left and right, as if searching for any traces she could find, while sniffing me.

"You smell like her." "Smell?"

"That Baccarat perfume."

"It’s not strange. Ann drove me home. The smell lingered in the car. It’s normal for some of it to stick."

"It’s not normal. You came back looking really happy."

Rattikarn pushed me hard, making my back hit the refrigerator with a loud thud, then slammed her hand against the wall.

"Are you telling me it was a coincidence that this woman met you in Hua Hin and signed up for a screenwriting course where you work?"

"We talked and coincidentally ended up together, didn’t we?" "That’s why I don’t believe it!"

Her aggressive behavior made my heart race with excitement and anger. It seemed like everything depended on her. We weren’t really together, but I couldn’t go anywhere with anyone. And if she had someone else, I had no right to be jealous. Why was everything like this? How did I end up in this kind of relationship?

"In Hua Hin... we really met by chance." "And then..?"

"Ann added me on Facebook because we met in a perfume shop." "And then..?"

"She saw where I worked at, so she found a way to meet me again." "And then..?

"She invited me to dinner, even though she knew you were my girlfriend."

I looked into Rattikarn’s eyes.

“And it turned out that you let me go with her.” “...”

"And Ann said I was interesting. I wasn’t like the others she’d met. And then..."

Rattikarn clenched her teeth tightly, struggling to contain her emotions as she listened to my next words, her heart racing.

"She said she wanted to be serious. Ann likes me, and that made me smile!"

**"Rungtiwa!"**

**OOOOO**

# Chapter 21: Three Ways

It was the first time I saw Rattikarn lose her composure. She yelled at me loudly, and the room fell into complete silence. The atmosphere became tense, and I, who had been smiling and laughing since the beginning, could only grit my teeth and stare at her, unwilling to back down.

"Why did you call me?"

The beautiful woman slowly leaned towards me, but after a moment, she pulled away and shrugged her shoulders as if what had just happened was a joke, laughing.

"Was I good at this?" "Good at what?"

"Pretending to be jealous of you. Heh."

Rattikarn laughed and then walked over to sit on the couch, looking completely at ease.

"I saw you happy, and I felt a little irritated, so I wanted to ease your happiness a little. Well... I'm so happy for you, someone confessed that they like you."

She took out her vape, turned it on, and the menthol smoke wafted through the room while I was still in shock.

"So you mean... you were pretending to be jealous?" "Yes, that's right."

"Why did you do that?"

"Hasn't that ever happened to you? Getting angry when someone is very happy? It's so enviable. But... you have a certain charm."

Now, I felt goosebumps from head to toe. I didn't know if she was still pretending, but if she was, then she was such a good actress that I wouldn't be able to catch her lying.

"I'm shocked to know that you were pretending..."

"Why are you shocked? I said from the beginning that I would give you freedom. I wouldn't tie my feelings to anyone else."

Rattikarn shrugged.

"I've always believed that people can change at any time. If you hold on to that idea, it won't hurt so much."

"Your life is so simple."

"You can't make it too difficult. Once you love someone or something, it disappears, like everything else. I don't like sadness. By the way, that person you're talking about is also beautiful. When she smiles, she’s so cute. I wonder if she was serious about you."

“…”

"Why are you quiet? Share with me. You can talk to me about anything. I want to be your partner and your friend. Even if one day we break up, we can still talk like we used to."

I stared at Rattikarn, feeling the deepest pain. Her coldness couldn’t penetrate, even though I knew it. But I still chose to endure it because I was afraid that living without her would hurt even more.

But was I right? Is it right to force myself to do something that isn’t really me?

"If we really break up, I would probably end things with this woman. Or maybe I would turn to someone else waiting."

As I said that, I stood up, took the vape from her, and took a puff. Even though I was told not to, I didn’t care anymore. Sometimes, smoking can be a way to hide my sadness, just blowing out the smoke. Who knows?

"Who is the other person?" "Non, of course."

The chill of the mentholated vape liquid hit my nose. It was cold and pungent, but it wasn’t as bad as the first time I choked on the smoke.

"Are you saying Non is still waiting for you?"

"Do you remember that day? When Non and I were sitting, drinking beer outside the condo, without going inside?"

I got up from the couch, took the diamond ring that was the size of a ring finger from the drawer of the nightstand and put it on, showing it to her.

"Non said that if I got tired of this relationship, I could always go back to him. He’s waiting."

"You never told me about this."

"I thought you wouldn’t mind, but since you said we could talk about anything, because we’re partners and friends, I thought

it would be better to tell you. Just in case, one day we change like you always feared, at least you’ll know where I ended up."

"Us changing… hearing that makes my heart ache too."

She spoke almost as if she was lost in thought. I pursed my lips lightly, shook off all my feelings of resentment, and walked over to sit beside her.

"So remember, from now on, don’t fight, because you never know when feelings might disappear."

She glances at me briefly.

"Is that how you feel? That it’s almost over?"

"If it was gone, why would I sit so close to you? If you’re afraid it’ll disappear, then come and give me more, like you used to do.”

I nodded toward the bag she had, which caught my attention as soon as I walked in. I wanted to open it, but if the owner didn’t let me, it would be very rude.

"Yours?"

"Mine? What did you buy?"

I reached out and grabbed the bag, opening it. Inside was a white box, neatly wrapped, with a logo I recognized from Baccarat Rouge 540 perfume.

"You…"

"I stopped by the mall. I saw that you liked it, but I missed the sale, so I bought it for you."

Now, I felt a lump in my throat because I couldn’t speak. The cold person who never forgets any detail went out to buy the perfume I wanted, even though the total price at the mall was almost 10,000 baht. And because she was like that, I got even more irritated. What was supposed to be a small act of pretending to be okay turned into me bursting into tears, biting my lip in confusion.

"Crazy."

"What?"

Rattikarn, watching me cry and clutching the perfume box so tightly that it began to bend, blinked in confusion, not understanding.

"Did I buy the wrong one?"

"Go back." "..."

"Go back right now!"

I tugged at her blouse until the beautiful woman stood up. To make it easier, I grabbed her purse and dragged her to the door, throwing it at her chest.

"What did I do wrong?"

"I hate you, you crazy bitch!"

*Bang!*

The door slammed in her face, echoing through the apartment. I didn't know if the neighbors would come out, but in that moment, I didn't care. The confusion, as it twisted my mind, made me feel like I was losing control. I could no longer tell what was real or fake.

*Did she leave me, or was she not jealous?*

*Did she feel something, or did she feel nothing? Did she love me, or did she not?*

*Why was our love so difficult?*

There were no external obstacles like other couples, no parents interfering, no society throwing stones, no legal issues, nothing against religion. We were both single, but the problem was entirely in her mind. Her excessive caution was eating away at our relationship.

She was so afraid of uncertainty that it was slowly destroying us. I couldn’t keep up with her thoughts anymore and I didn’t know how much longer I could hold on.

There had to be a day when it would all end!

.

.

Two whole days passed without contact between Rattikarn and me. I decided not to contact her because I wanted to test my own heart and see how long I could go without her. I also wanted to know if, when I didn’t text her first, she would contact me.

The silence remained...

The first and only time she texted me was when I liked her status that day. Since then, I was always the first one to text her. I could only smile sadly, trying to hold back my tears, because I was at work and no one knew about our relationship except my boss.

And that was the one person I didn’t want to meet. I was suffering because of it, because I was feeling suspicious and doubtful.

## Anna:

What are you doing, cutie?

The only person I didn’t expect, but who always texted me, was Ann. Her messages reflected care and importance. When I saw her message, I could only smile sadly and send a sticker back as a polite gesture.

*Sigh*.

## Anna:

Did you have a fight with your girlfriend?

.

Why did she ask me that all of a sudden? I stared at the message for a long time before typing a reply.

## Rungtiwa:

What made you think that?

She seemed to be typing something, but then she stopped, and I felt strange. Normally, if I answered, she would respond immediately, but this time, it was as if she hesitated, deciding not to answer.

.

## Rungtiwa:

Is there something I need to know?

## Anna:

I shouldn’t have asked that.

## Anna:

Maybe it’s better for you to figure things out on your own. I just wanted to tell you that I miss you.

The anxiety made me unable to hold it in any longer, so I decided to call her immediately through the Messenger app, even though I had never thought of calling her before, even though we had slept together once.

It rang three times, and then Ann answered. It seemed like she had guessed it was me when she heard my voice saying,

“Hello, go ahead.”

[I’m glad you called, but it shouldn’t be for something like this.]

From her tone, I could sense her hesitation. This wasn’t a drama with a villain, and Ann wasn’t that kind of person. She seemed to enjoy life a lot. Although she liked to play with fire, she didn’t let herself be carried away by the smoke.

"What’s really going on? Please tell me. Think of it as something between people who..."

[Had sex, huh? Heh.]

Her cheeky tone almost made me laugh, but the emotions didn't match. When Ann see that I'm silent, she reluctantly told me, clearly worried.

[To be honest, I don't like causing fights between people. Although I appreciate it, I don't want you to fight with your girlfriend. I asked because... well, why did I ask?]

"You don't have to justify it. I understand. Just tell me what's going on. Why did you ask that?"

[It's your girlfriend. She texted me. I don't know where she got my number from, but she invited me to dinner. Did you agreed she asked me out? If you didn't agree, then I guess you two had a fight, right?]

She was still worried that this would cause a fight between us, so I ignored it, irritated.

"Even without you, we could have fought."

[Oh... does hearing that make me feel relieved? Heh. No, don't do that. I'm just the odd one out between you two. If there's a problem and I'm blamed, that's bad. I don't want to be the villain in anyone's story because I usually play the heroine.?]

"Ann..."

I was running out of patience.

[We have a dinner date tonight at 8 with Rattikarn. I'm not sure what she wants to talk about. It's okay if you want to sit with us. I like being with Rattikarn... and I'm interested in you.]

Her bluntness almost made me laugh sarcastically. She didn't mean anything weird by it, did she?

"Where is it?"

[Oh, you're coming, huh? Should I tell Rattikarn, or do you want to surprise her?]

"Surprise, then."

.

.

We hadn't seen each other for two days. Today was the third day. What was more surprising was meeting up unexpectedly, especially with a third person who felt like a thorn in my side. I didn't know why Rattikarn wanted to meet Ann, but it certainly wasn't a good thing.

I wanted to know too. Of course, if I wanted to know, I had to sit at the table with them. Rattikarn was bold enough to talk about it at the dinner table.

It's already 8:10 p.m. I sit next to Ann, waiting for her arrival, not taking it too seriously. The sweet-faced person ordered me some champagne, as if to cheer me up.

"Have a drink. When there's alcohol in your blood, everything seems lighter."

"What does 'lighter' mean?" "The pain."

She raises her glass slightly in a gesture of 'greeting'. We both raised our glasses in sync when Rattikarn appeared. Her gaze immediately fixed on me, full of suspicion, and she forced a smile at Ann before asking,

"What's going on here? You didn't tell me you had a guest." "I'm not a guest. I'm the main guest,"

I interrupted without thinking.

"Don't forget, I knows Ann better than you do. I hope you don't mind me sitting here"

"Even if I wanted to, it's probably too late now."

She sit down across from us and called the waiter to take our order, showing no sign of anger, as I had predicted. She kept everything to herself. If you didn't know her, you'd think she was easygoing, but in reality, she controlled every detail, and you never knew what she would do next.

"It can't be a coincidence that we're meeting, right?"

Rattikarn asked, looking at Ann, who took a sip of champagne and paused for a moment, as if searching for the right words, before denying it categorically.

"That’s no coincidence. I texted Rung like I do every day and told her I had an appointment with you. She wanted to join."

"I didn’t know you guys talked every day."

"We didn’t talk every day, only recently after training with Rattikarn. Rung was curious about what you wanted to discuss, so she asked to come."

"So, Ann, when you make appointments, you invite everyone to join, right?"

She scoffed, but Ann wasn’t affected in the slightest.

"Actually, you’re right. I forgot to ask what we’re discussing. Since everyone is family, I thought it would be nice to meet up. So, are we talking about something secret? Exciting, huh? Here’s the thing.”

Ann looked at me and nodded.

“Rattikarn is going to talk about something secret. Rung, do you want to leave now? After we're done, I'll call you."

She was pretty cool. When ridiculed like that, she would throw the burden onto Rattikarn, making her take the lead. If Rattikarn had something secret to discuss, I would have to stand up, and of course, after that, we would argue for a long time, with Ann hardly having to take any responsibility.

My *girlfriend had to settle things with me personally. I couldn’t help it.*

"You don’t have to leave. Stay here with us,”

Rattikarn said coldly, as soon as the waiter arrived with the food. She shifted a little and got straight to the point.

"The reason I called you, Ann, is because I have something to ask." "Go ahead."

"Do you like Rung?" "Crazy."

Ann laughed, amused by the question. “How could you ask that?”

“…”

"I mean, I should know. You text her like that every time. If someone can’t see it, it’s her fault. The reason I’m laughing is because I don’t understand why you’re asking something you already know. You two are a couple, right? You should have told each other by now."

Rattikarn licked her lips lightly, then interlaced her fingers on the table, resting her chin and looking at Ann with a piercing, bright gaze.

"I like Rung too. We're partners." "I love the word 'partners.'"

She didn't even introduce herself as my girlfriend, and that made me laugh. I picked up my champagne glass.

"We both like the same things, don't we?" "True."

Ann mimicked my gesture, almost as if she were showing her other side. She winked.

"If that's the case, it should be easy to talk."

"Go ahead, then. Our idea of 'easy' might mean the same thing." Rattikarn glanced at me briefly and shrugged.

"Alright, I'll be direct. I don't like jealousy. I want to clear things up directly. Ever since Ann showed up, it seems like Rung and I have been arguing a lot, and it's uncomfortable. It's bad for our mental health."

"Yes, there are always complications when there's a third party." "That's why I have a proposal."

"Tell me. I'm listening."

## Thump, thump...

**Thump, thump...**

I suddenly felt uncomfortable. The two people talking so easily made me feel like the victim in this situation. Rattikarn sit quietly, back straight, took a sip of water, and then looked at Ann, who is listening with a smile.

**"So, shall we three of us date together?"**

**00000**

# Chapter 22: Forever

I was so overwhelmed by the deal they were discussing that I started to feel dizzy. They toasted with champagne, sealed the deal, and smiled at each other as if everything was settled. However, no one bothered to ask if I was okay with it.

Now, all I could do was clench my pants tightly, digging my nails into the fabric to distract myself from the pain instead of screaming in frustration.

"I've never enjoyed talking to anyone so much," Ann said, resting her head on my shoulder.

"So, how are we going to organize our days? Monday with me, Tuesday with Rattikarn?"

"Whatever works. I'm flexible."

"But there are seven days in a week, leaving one extra day. What are we supposed to do with that?"

Ann teased, narrowing her eyes at Rattikarn before leaning in closer flirtatiously.

"How about we make a day just for us, so you can take a break?" "That sounds good."

I replied, swallowing my resentment and taking a sip of champagne. If they could be nice, why couldn’t I?

"Because that day, I’m going to give it to my ex… Ann, I hope you don’t mind if I date men too?"

"Oh, how exciting!"

Ann gasped, her hand on her chest.

"We have so many characters in this story. Whatever makes it fun, I’m in."

"Alright then. Now I know what Rattikarn wanted to discuss. If there’s nothing else, I’ll go back."

I stood up, but Ann grabbed my wrist, pouting.

"What now? We haven’t even set the schedule. Who are you going to stay with tonight? Pick one."

She demanded, pointing between herself and Rattikarn. I gave her a nice smile and shrugged.

"Why don’t you two continue without me? I’ll go home and figure out a schedule myself, or maybe I’ll call Non tonight."

"You’re great at finding solutions. So... tonight is ours." Ann laughed, looking at Rattikarn, who just smiled. "Excuse me."

I took a taxi back to my apartment, but on the way I changed my mind and directed the driver to Non's house. It was already past nine, and my ex, who still lived with his parents, got out looking alarmed when he saw me.

"Yung, is something wrong, showing up so late...?" "Non..."

I whimpered, and as soon as I saw his face, I threw myself into his arms, sobbing shamelessly. My ex held me, patting my back gently, without

saying a word. He could probably guess that I was hurt again by the same person, but this was a new kind of pain. It was a chaotic relationship that made me feel useless.

"Do you want to come in, or maybe sit at the front table? If my parents see you crying like that, they'll be shocked."

"Okay."

"I'll get some water and bug spray, mosquitoes are bad." "There are always mosquitoes around when we met" “Yeah, Yung.”

Non laughed, ruffling my hair gently before disappearing inside. I sat at the marble table in front, wiping my eyes as I waited. Soon, Non returned with a bottle of water, and I couldn’t resist asking.

“Didn’t your parents wonder why you brought a bottle of water?”

"I hid it under my shirt. Besides, Mom’s busy with her soap opera and wouldn’t even notice. Here, drink up, you don’t look great. Crying doesn’t make you any prettier."

"You’re such a smooth talker. Someone’s waiting to marry me, you know."

"Well, this guy must be an idiot to keep waiting. And the girl he’s waiting for is an even bigger idiot, treating him badly and getting herself into trouble she doesn’t even understand.”

Tears welled up again despite wiping them away, and Non reached out, using her thumb to brush them away with a sigh.

“What did she do to hurt you this time?”

I just smiled, not giving details, because it was too much to explain. Normal people wouldn't behave like that, so I chose to stay silent, shrugging my shoulders.

"Just a little disappointed, that's all." "Still defending her?"

"For the last time, Non."

When my friends talk about love problems, 'the last time' never really exists. It's like buying a game or makeup, there's never a final purchase. A little sweetness, and they forget all about the past.

"Did I do this to you often, Non?"

He chuckled, apparently remembering his experiences too. "Yes, love, right?"

"Got someone new?”

I asked, more like a friend checking in.

"With this face? Sure. But none of them match like you."

We both fell silent. The pain I was feeling almost made me blurt out that maybe we should get married, but I held myself back.

Words spoken in the heat of emotion can’t be taken back, and I didn’t want us to regret them.

"What’s that noise outside, buzzing around?"

Non’s mother, wearing a long nightgown and slippers, came out, looking confused.

“Why are you two talking outside? There are so many mosquitoes! Did you two have a fight?"

"No, Mom, we’re just talking."

"Why don’t we talk inside then? Yung, have you eaten yet?”

I thought of the restaurant I came from, where I only touched champagne, and shook my head with a small frown.

"Not yet."

"Then go inside quickly. I made fried shrimp with chili paste for you. If it doesn’t taste good, you can slap me."

"Are you sure?”

I said with a playful and excited face. "Can I really slap you if it’s not tasty?"

"Silly! It’s just an expression, not to be taken seriously. Still naughty as ever, huh? Good thing there’s still rice in the pot…"

Mom continued talking cheerfully, clearly happy to see me. It had been a while since I had eaten there, since I broke up with Non, actually. The atmosphere in the house, as we ate, seemed warm and fun, and time flew by. Before I knew it, it was already eleven at night, after all the talk with the adults about politics, dramas and scandalous celebrities.

"It’s eleven already? Do you have to work early tomorrow?" Non asked. I looked at the clock, surprised, and laughed.

"How did time fly so fast? I just wanted to eat here. I have to work in the morning, but it’s okay; I can wake up."

"I’ll take you home."

"No need. It’s okay. I’ll call a taxi." "Stop being silly,”

Mom interrupted with an irritated look.

“It’s late. Just stay the night, and Non can take you to work in the morning.”

Since this wasn’t the first time I’d stayed there, our relationship wasn’t a secret from the adults, so there was no need to hide anything. What they didn’t know, however, was that Non and I had broken up, and he hadn’t told them. I wasn’t sure if he was afraid of their reaction or secretly hoping I’d come back to him.

"My work and Yung’s are in opposite directions. If I’m going to take you, it has to be now. There’s going to be traffic in the morning. Come on, Yung.

I’ll take you home."

"Or you can let me go on the way if you’re fed up.”

Non said nothing, went to start the car, and I said goodbye to everyone before following him. He apologized again for not being able to take me in the morning, making reasonable excuses.

"I know it would make you uncomfortable, so I thought it was best to take you now. I’m sorry."

"Why apologize? I'm the one who's imposing on me. I showed up crying, I had dinner, and now you're taking me home... How can I repay you?"

"Just come back."

His answer made me fall silent. He laughed, as if he already knew what my answer would be.

"Just kidding."

"Maybe I will, Non. But if that day comes, who knows if you'll still be willing to give me a chance."

"Don't say something you'll regret."

He didn't say anything else, and we sat in silence the rest of the way until we reached my place. I watched him leave, then went back to my room and felt a sudden fear at my own door.

I had to be alone again... This was the time when I would be tormented by thoughts, but there was no escape. This was my only refuge. So, I unlocked the door, feeling like I had no choice. The moment I turned on the light, there was Rattikarn, sitting on my couch.

"Why are you here?" "I missed you." "Stop."

"Where were you? Why did you come back so late?" "I was with Non."

"You're lying."

"Where else would I go? Who else do I have? You were at the restaurant with Ann, so Non was the only place I had."

I put my bag down, exhausted.

"It's funny, he's the only place I have to go when I don't have anyone else. But what about you? Wasn't today your day with Ann? We agreed on that, didn't we?"

"Why did you go there?"

Rattikarn stood up, hands on her hips.

"I told you, Non is the only safe place I have." "I mean, the restaurant."

"I wanted to know what you two would talk about, and now I know."

I looked at her with all the hurt I felt, and Rattikarn seemed to sense it.

"I used to think you were cold and distant because you wanted to protect yourself from disappointment. But seeing this shocked me. You are so open because you really are. Do you like living like this, sharing days? I feel like a lover with two sponsors, Monday with one, Tuesday with the other. The only difference is that these women get paid, but I get nothing!"

"Because you are not a lover."

"So what am I to you? Ah... a partner." "You are my girlfriend."

"That's not what you said."

Rattikarn started to say something, then stopped, hesitating, as if she couldn't decide whether to speak or not. She was always like this, keeping things to herself and letting others guess. It was completely frustrating at times.

"I miss you." "Enough. I'm done."

I waved at her in a plea. Rattikarn moved closer, as if to kiss me, but I pushed her back and yelled sharply.

"I said I'm done. I'm not going to do this anymore. No feelings, no nonsense, do you understand? What's wrong with you? I did everything you wanted."

"I wanted? What did I want? What do you think I wanted?" "You wanted Ann."

"Is that what you think I wanted? What made you think that?" "I was so exasperated I almost screamed."

"You like her, you're obsessed with her perfume... You're angry because your heart is changing. I don't want to fight with you anymore. I..."

"My heart is changing?"

"Yes! People always change, and you're about to love someone else, to stop loving me."

"..."

"I'm losing you, and I don't want that. Keeping you... I thought if Ann was in your life too, you'd stay. We wouldn't fight, and things could go on like this forever."

"..."

"Or you could have Non too." "Rattikarn!"

I lunged forward and grabbed her by the collar, tears streaming down my face in anger. I couldn't understand what she was thinking or why she did what she did.

"Are you telling me that agreeing with Ann was for my happiness, so we could live as a love triangle, or no, maybe four of us, so we could have a 'healthy' relationship? Are you saying you did this for me?"

"I did this for you, of course. You saw that," She said, looking completely confused.

"You did this to yourself. You can't even admit that you love me and that you're afraid of losing me!"

"Love? Why do people always say that word? We both know it's not real." "Maybe it's not real to you, but to me, it is!"

I pushed her to the ground, and Rattikarn turned her face away.

"Don't say like that. That kind of promise will only end up hurting you." "Would it really kill you to hear that I love you?"

I knelt down, holding her shoulders tightly. Tears streamed down my face, and I didn't know if they would soon turn to blood.

"You're so afraid of change that you keep running away from that word. Do you know how much this is hurting me?"

"Rung..."

"The fact that you want me in your life is already proof that you love me. You're willing to let me be with anyone else, as long as you're still in the picture. Isn't that proof enough?"

"..."

"I'm tired, Rattikarn. Tired of trying to understand what you’re thinking, what you want. Tired of guessing, tired of trying to make sense of it."

I stood up, walked to the drawer of the nightstand and slipped Non’s ring on my finger.

"Love should make people happy, not hurt over and over again." "Why are you putting that ring on?"

"I love you, Rattikarn." "..."

"But if you can’t accept my love, I’ll go to someone who’s ready to hear it and willing to say it back. It might not be as gratifying as hearing it from you, but it’s better than that."

"..."

"Better than feeling worthless every day." "See? It always ends like this..."

Rattikarn stood up, taking a step back, as if all his energy had drained away. "Everyone leaves. Even you, after I tried everything to keep you."

"It’s not holding on if it’s all in your head. This is my final test for you... if you really want me in your life forever..."

"Forever it doesn't exist."

I ignored her protests, determined to set the rules, leaving her with only the choice of accepting or rejecting them.

"If you really want me in your life forever... then hold on to me with all the love you have."

"But I..."

"But if you don't love me, I'll be the one who walks away, and we'll never see each other again."

"..."

"And then you'll see that forever is real!"

□□□□□

# Chapter 23: A Night of Fun

I'm so scared.

This is the first time in our relationship that I've set rules. Since the day we met, she has been the one who dictated everything. She initiated the first conversation, decided where we should meet, came and went as she pleased without saying a word.

Everything has always revolved around her. It wasn't because she was selfish, it was simply who she was. And because I liked her so much, loved her deeply, never opposed her wishes. Even when she hurt me, I kept quiet and never said what I liked or didn't like.

But this time, things are different. I've reached a point where I can't take it anymore. The one who loves the most always loses, and it seems like I've always been that person. But now it seems like I've woken up, finally opening my eyes to see the reality around me.

I can't keep fooling myself forever. Sometimes, I have to face the pain. I accepted her rules before because I loved her. This time, it's my turn. If we don’t hold on, we’ll drift apart…

Forever.

It's been a week Rattikarn and I last spoken. Every day has been painful, but thankfully my job keeps me busy. Between meeting people and a boss who constantly piles tasks on me, perhaps as revenge for losing in the race for love, I haven’t had much time to think. And honestly, it’s a blessing in disguise. Whenever thoughts of her come up, I quickly push them away and focus on my work.

*Ding!*

The sound of a text message pulls me out of my thoughts. That sound now feels like a source of hope and fear at the same time. Deep down, I keep hoping it’s a message from her, but I’m often disappointed when it turns out to be from someone else.

Sometimes it’s ads for exercise equipment, sometimes for books or magazines that might interest me, things like that.

## Anna:

You’ve been ignoring me lately, huh? So arrogant. But thanks anyway.

.

Ann is one of those messages. Ever since the day the three of us met, I haven’t really talked to her much. A part of me irrationally blames her for the worsening of my relationship with Rattikarn.

## Anna:

Or are you avoiding me because you’re afraid I’ll ask for the promised day?

.

Although I can’t hear her voice, I can almost feel her laughing playfully, as carefree as ever. Even I can’t help but smile. In the end, I give in and answer her.

## Rungtiwa:

I’ve been busy with work. When I’m free, I’ll make time for you. In the meantime, go hang out with one of your other partners.

.

I’m trying to fish for information, to see if Rattikarn has contacted her, because I haven’t heard anything from her. How is she now? Maybe she didn’t accept the rules I set and decided to leave for good…

## Anna:

You mean Rattikarn? That one has gone silent, as if she’s disappeared from

the face of the Earth. I’ve sent her a message, but she only reads it and doesn’t reply. So cold.

## Anna:

If she is like that, she might as well block people and get it over with. Leaving messages on read like that just gives false hope to someone who wants some fun.

## Anna:

Why is it so easy to talk to your partner, but she never keeps her promises? Half the fun in my life has disappeared. I thought I had found something exciting for the first time.

## Rungtiwa:

You are living life to the fullest, aren’t you?

## Anna:

Well, life is short.

Life is short… I agree with that sentiment. Instead of making up and moving on, here we are, wasting time on conflicts and misunderstandings. Humans live, on average, a little over 20,000 days. Staying angry for 10 or 20 days is already too much.

## Anna:

Let’s meet up sometime. I’m bored.

I thought about that message for a long time. Whether it was loneliness or boredom, it made me respond quickly.

## Rungtiwa:

Sure, let’s find something fun to do together.

.

Ann never disappointed me. She took me to a hidden go-go bar somewhere in the city. I always thought that places like that were exclusively for men, but it turned out that women could also go in and do everything men did without any distinction.

I watched as Ann stuffed one and a half hundred baht notes into a girl’s bra and tight panties, making them twirl provocatively right in Ann’s face.

I was completely shocked. "What’s that like? Fun?"

"Quite surprising, to be honest. You’ve really broadened my horizons.”

I blinked repeatedly, covering my face in embarrassment as countless hips swayed dangerously close to me.

“You have a knack for finding these places. I thought places like this were only for men.”

"Anything men can do, we can do too. After all, we’re both together, even if we’re not men."

I glanced around nervously, worried that others in the bar might hear, but given the provocative dancing around me, it seemed like there was nothing left to be ashamed of in a place like this.

"What do you do for a living, Ann?" "Work?”

Ann raised an eyebrow and smirked. “What’s that? Work…"

"Hmm?"

"I’ll tell you the truth. I’m a mistress."

The loud music pounded in my chest, but her words seemed to silence the world around me. Ann looked at me and laughed, clearly amused by my reaction.

"Why are you so shocked? Being a mistress is a job too."

"A mistress? Like, another man’s wife?" "Exactly."

"But you…"

"But I’m gay. Being a mistress pays well, but sexuality is another matter entirely. Why? Does knowing this make you not want to talk to me anymore?"

"That’s not it. It’s just… unexpected, I guess."

"I’m someone who likes things simple. At first, I did it because I was struggling to pay for school. No woman would take care of me. If one had, it might have been better, but, well…”

She stuffed another bill into a dancer’s panties, giving them a playful slap before turning to me.

“When you can make money this easy, it’s hard to settle for a corporate job with a measly monthly salary and early mornings. I understand if you find it distasteful, it’s not exactly a respectable line of work.”

I’ve always despised mistresses. They knowingly come second, causing heartbreak to their legitimate partner. It’s selfish and immoral. However, hearing this from Ann, I didn’t feel disgusted. Instead, I was curious to understand her perspective.

"I don’t judge. Everyone comes from different backgrounds and circumstances. Our ways of thinking and living are bound to differ. I’ve met people with unconventional mindsets before…"

*Rattikarn…*

"The cold-hearted one?"

She referred to Rattikarn as “cold-hearted,” Which made me laugh.

"Something like that."

"It’s a shame, really, that you two couldn’t have fun the way we talked about. You two seem to live outside the box, but honestly, you’re madly in love with each other."

"In love?"

I raised my eyebrows and smiled wryly, feeling the impossibility of the statement.

"You must be mistaken." "I hope I’m wrong." “…”

"Because I want you both."

We stayed out until the bar closed and ended the night at a late-night porridge restaurant. And yes, porridge here literally means porridge, after all, this is Thailand. These places cater to the late-night crowd returning from their escapades.

For the first time, I had a real, open conversation with

Ann, learning about her life. In my opinion, she’s a lovely friend. But still... being friends with someone you slept with feels a little weird.

"Is it really 4 in the morning?"

I looked at my watch in surprise, realizing that it had been years since I had stayed out this late.

"Yeah, I planned on it lasting this long."

Ann replied. She parked in front of my apartment.

"It's okay, you can drop me off. I don't want to bother you."

"No way. I brought you back and I want to enjoy this fun night." "Fun?"

"That's why I said I planned on it lasting until 4 in the morning."

I still didn't get it, so I just smiled at her before opening the car door. Ann got out, walked around the car and opened her arms, silently inviting me for a hug.

"What is this?"

"I took you out to relax and I can't even get a hug back? Ungrateful." "Insensitive." I teased.

Still, I silently agreed with her. Without Ann today, I wouldn’t have had as much fun or opened my eyes to new experiences. I would probably have spent another lonely night sulking in my room, just like so many other days.

Hugging her back didn’t seem like a big deal, in fact, I was more than willing. Ann had a sweet and gentle personality, after all. I leaned into the hug, feeling my heart skip a beat as her scent hit my nose.

"Is that it…?"

"Chanel No. 5. Your favorite perfume, isn’t it? I thought you wouldn’t mention it."

The scent reminded me of Rattikarn. The hug that was supposed to be a simple gesture of gratitude turned bittersweet. It made my chest ache with longing and memories of her. Instead of letting go, I held Ann tighter, inhaling deeply as if she could replace the person I truly missed.

"Holding on so tightly could get us in trouble,” Ann joked.

Her suggestive tone was clear, but before I could respond, everything happened in a blur. I was yanked back, roughly ripped from Ann’s arms.

Someone stepped forward, grabbed Ann by the hair, and shoved her against the elegant car.

"I’m going to kill you!"

Ann screamed in pain, snapping me out of my stunned silence. Rattikarn, the beautiful and furious Rattikarn, still held Ann by the hair, her hand raised as if ready to slap her. I quickly grabbed her wrist.

"What are you doing, Dao? Are you crazy?"

I used her nickname, as I always did when it was just the two of us, hoping it would calm her down.

"Oh, so your name is Dao?"

Ana laughed softly, despite the situation. She held Rattikarn's hand and looked at her, completely unfazed.

"Finally lost your composure, huh?"

"Where have you been? Why are you coming back at this hour?" Rattikarn demanded, ignoring Ann's taunts.

"We went out to have fun." Ann replied nonchalantly.

"Rung said she's never had so much fun since she met you. You lost, Rattikarn, no, wait, I mean Dao."

Ann's words were deliberately provocative, her tone dripping with mockery. Rattikarn's hand shook with anger as I grabbed her wrist.

"How could you let someone else make your own person feel so good?" Ann added, her smile growing.

"You..."

"She's mine now,."

Ann declared, her words hitting like daggers. "It seems you failed in your job."

The sound echoed loudly in the silent night.

### Slap!

***□□□□□***

# Chapter 24: Certain is uncertain

What the hell are you doing!

I pulled Rattikarn's arm away from Ann. The delicate-faced woman, now with a red mark from the hard slap, stumbled backwards against her own car. Our screams drew the attention of the people in the lobby and the security guard, who must have just left to go to the bathroom, came running to see what was happening.

I looked back and forth between my partner and Ann, torn, unsure of who I should run to like a dramatic heroine, although I was not conflicted in my heart.

"I don't know..."

Even Rattikarn, who had just slapped someone, looked down at her own hand in confusion. Her face, now red with embarrassment, tilted upwards as if to escape the scene.

"I don't know, I don't know!" "Dao... where are you going?"

I shouted at Rattikarn as she ran out of the condominium. The sky was changing to a deep navy blue, signaling the dawn of a new day. Ann, who looked dazed for a moment, waved at me, asking me to follow her.

"Don't worry about me. It's just a slap. I'm not dying. Go talk to your girl." "But you're hurt."

"A wife's slap hurts more than that."

As bizarre as this reasoning was, I ran after Rattikarn. The beautiful woman was storming off as if her life depended on it. Her pace forced me to alternate between walking and running until I finally caught up with her and placed a hand on her shoulder.

"Where do you think you're going? You can't just make a scene and then run away! That's not like you!"

Rattikarn ignored my hand without even looking at me, so I grabbed her by the shoulders and spun her around. That's when I saw tears streaming down her cheeks. We argued often, and usually I was the one crying. But this time, the roles were reversed. Her tear-stained eyelashes made her look even more pitiful.

"You..."

"You're right. It's not like me. I've never done anything like this before!" She wiped her tears with the back of her hand.

"And this crying... the last time I cried was when my parents died. But now, over something as trivial as love? It's the most ridiculous thing in my life.

And yet... *h- hic*... I can't stop crying!"

She sobbed like a child. I could see her struggling to hold it in, but her body didn't seem to cooperate. By now, a few cars were starting to pass by as the early risers headed to work, fearing traffic jams.

A handful of pedestrians on the sidewalk looked at us curiously, wondering what was going on. I decided to grab Rattikarn's wrist and lead her to a nearby bus stop. It wasn't far from the condominium. She resisted the entire time, and in the end, she pulled her free hand away and glared at me with disdain.

'Don't touch me. You're filthy." "Filthy?"

I held my hands up, confused.

"Who knows where those hands have been, digging into who knows what."

"I didn't touch anything inappropriate. What are you talking about? What's wrong with you? Why are you acting like this?"

I started to get irritated and stood with my hands on my hips, watching her wipe her hands on her shirt as if she had just touched something disgusting.

"You two had fun all night, didn't you? Since I've been with you, I've never physically cheated on you."

"I didn't cheat."

"So where were you all this time!" "I was..."

I looked at her, noticing her accusatory tone.

"Since when do you care about my whereabouts? Didn't you say you would give me complete freedom? That I could do whatever I wanted, go wherever I wanted? Didn't you say you'd be okay with a threesome?"

"..."

"Or were you just saying that to seem cool and open-minded, but in reality, you're possessive and jealous?"

"Shut up! Who's jealous? Who's possessive? You can go wherever you want, be with whoever you want."

"Then why did you come to the apartment, crying and slapping Ann? What was that? Why did you do that to her?"

"I already told you I don't know!"

"It's because you're jealous. You couldn't stand the idea that we could have slept together, could you?"

Luckily, the bus stop was still empty, so our screams didn't attract any strange looks, other than the spirits or gods residing in the nearby Bodhi tree. But I couldn't see them anyway.

"Stop talking!"

"Just admit that you left me, but you're possessive and say you love me, will it kill you?"

"Yes, it will! Because if I say it, it means it's true!" "..."

"And if it's true, what should I do?"

Rattikarn clutched her chest as if her heart would stop. Tears streamed down her face once more. The confident woman I had always known was gone, leaving behind only a fragile and pitiful Rattikarn."

"What should I do if I really love you?" "..."

"And one day, uncertainty will come. You'll disappear, just like my parents did."

A lump formed in my throat, and my chest tightened as if I could cry at any moment. I tried to stay strong, but seeing her like this broke me. I knelt down to meet her eyes, ready to talk instead of just fighting.

"Nothing in this world is certain. But because of this uncertainty, we realize how important it is to cherish the good times we have."

"..."

"If everything was right, if you or I were guaranteed to never leave, we would become stagnant in each other's lives. And when that happens, the pain of not loving each other will be worse than not loving each other at all."

"Don't try to sound profound... Say whatever you want. You don't understand what loss feels like."

Rattikarn clenched her fists and punched me lightly on the shoulder, crying as she did so. I left her, not because it hurt, but because I wanted to absorb her fears.

"What if you're the first one to leave? What if you change your mind or... or die? Then I'd be the one left heartbroken."

"So why do you still want this relationship to continue? Aren't you afraid of the pain? Of the heartbreak?"

"Of course I'm afraid. But now... I'm more afraid that if we don't work this out, we'll end up breaking up for real, leaving each other while we still love and care deeply for each other."

This time, it was my turn to cry. I had set these rules to protect myself, but now I found myself on my knees, begging her to stay. It felt like I was begging for her love, desperate to not let go.

"Are you scared now? Scared, even though you ran away with her and had fun together!"

"I didn’t have fun. And I didn’t do what you think I did. Every day without you felt unbearable. She was just… someone who helped me get through the day. That’s all."

"That’s a lie. The last few days, you seemed perfectly fine, eating out with friends, exercising, and spending time with Ann. Is that what you call unbearable?"

"How do you know all this?"

"Because I watched you every day from afar. You didn’t notice." “...”

"I tried to live without you, but I couldn’t. I used to be fine on my own, but now... now I can’t anymore. You’re horrible!"

Rattikan pushed my shoulder in frustration, her anger making me smile through my tears. Since we started dating, she had never shown herself so much. She was always rational, even when talking about her family. But now, she was all raw emotion, and that was progress.

"What do you think it is? Have you figured it out yet?"

I reached out to wipe her tears and tucked her hair behind her ear. Even though I already knew the answer, I still wanted to hear it. She pursed her lips, no longer the composed Rattikarn, but a pouty, vulnerable woman showing a side I had never seen.

"I won't tell."

"If you don't tell me, I'll find someone else."

"Who else? Ann is probably still running for her life after that slap."

"There's still Non, you know? He's waiting to marry me. If you don't stop me with a good reason, I won't be with you. That's what "forever" means to me."

I repeated the same words I'd said before, but this time I didn't mean them. Her actions had already told me everything I needed to know. Right now, I could take my time. But then...

"I love you."

Rattikarn blurted out, then quickly covered her mouth with her hand in shock. As for me, hearing those words made my heart race so fast that I almost fell backwards.

"...What?"

"I only said that to stop you from marrying him! Don't expect me to say that often."

"O-okay."

My face felt hot as I slowly stood up. We both felt embarrassed when a few people arrived at the bus stop.

"Let's go back to the apartment. We've had enough arguing for today." "Hold my hand."

"..."

"I can't walk. My heart is weak."

Rattikarn spoke with a childish pout, her words made me laugh. I reached out my hand, letting her take it. No one seemed to mind the gesture, they probably thought we were just friends. Even if they did notice, I didn't care anymore.

"Can I rest my head on your shoulder?" "Sure. Are you sleepy?"

"Yes. I haven't been able to sleep for the past few days. Even when I did, I would wake up in the middle of the night. You ruined me."

She blamed me, lightly punching my arm again.

"I can’t be alone anymore, I can’t sleep alone. Take responsibility for this!" "You’re not the only one. I feel the same."

"So, you love me, don’t you?" She looked at me hesitantly.

"But I remember you said you’d never tell me again."

"Well, and since you never planned on telling me that either. Since you broke the rule, I don’t have to keep it anymore."

I gently touched the back of her hand and spoke as if it were the simplest thing in the world as we walked.

"I love you, Rattikarn."

"I love you too, Rungtiwa."

"Your words are flowing more naturally now, huh?" "Don’t tease me!"

□□□□□

# Chapter 25: No.5 [END]

It took a long time for Rattikarn to gather the courage to meet Ann.

Although she knew it was the right thing to do, her pride and self- consciousness made it almost impossible for her to utter a simple apology. Her self-confidence, nurtured by being independent all her life, convinced her that her actions were always right.

But today, like everyone else, she had to face the reality of conforming to social norms, which meant saying just one word:

"Sorry."

Ann, sitting across the table at the restaurant, looked down at the floor, which prompted me, sitting next to Rattikarn, to look at her in confusion.

"What are you looking for?" "A pikul flower,”

Ann replied with a smile.

“I figured that in the time it took her to say that, some mythical flowers might have fallen to the floor. But no, nothing.”

She leaned back in her chair, smiling.

“It took a long time. Come to think of it, it’s been about two weeks since that slap."

Ann’s tone was full of playful sarcasm, as if she wanted to exaggerate her words for effect. Rattikarn, still with her stoic expression, gave me a

displeased look. "To be honest,”

Rattikarn finally said,

“I’m not apologizing because I think I was entirely at fault. But we’re adults now, living in a civilized society, and violence isn’t the answer. So I’m doing it. But don’t forget, you’re not innocent either. That day, you were trying to provoke me!"

From that day on, I learned Rattikarn’s perspective on why she had shown up at my apartment at 4 a.m. Ann had texted her that she was going out with me that night. It seemed like Ann had been subtly teasing her throughout the night, sending updates while we were together.

I wasn’t sure if Ann’s actions were meant to mend the rift or if she was simply having fun, causing trouble.

"Tease you? That’s ridiculous,”

Ann said, examining her nails with feigned innocence.

“I was just keeping you updated. After all, we have our designated day of the week together.”

As she spoke, Ann teasingly nudged Rattikarn with her foot under the table. Honestly, I didn’t think Ann was just trying to provoke Rattikarn. She seemed intent on irritating both of us.

“Let’s end things between us here,”

Rattikarn said, getting ready to leave. Ann, however, shook her head.

“What kind of apology is that? You called me here, but we haven’t even had a proper meal. Besides, I have to object, there’s nothing to ‘end’ between us because nothing really started. How can you say something like that without feeling embarrassed?"

"What do you want, then?"

"At the very least, you should buy me dinner,” Ann said, waving at the waiter.

“And no matter what I order, you’ll have to pay. Let’s start with a bottle of 1980s red wine."

"This place sells chicken rice. They don’t have red wine." "Wow, you’re no fun. Okay then,”

Ann said with a laugh.

“I’ll have the special crispy chicken rice.”

The vendor nodded and took her order as the waiter walked away, playing on her phone. Ann stretched lazily and gave us a curious look.

“Why are you staring at me?"

"How boring must your life be to find joy in things like this?” I asked.

"Very boring."

Ann replied with a smile.

“But you two are adding a little excitement to it. Still, if you’re going to take me out to dinner, couldn’t you pick a better place? The first time you invited me, the restaurant was so fancy."

"Sorry about that,” I said.

“This place is conveniently across from the condo.”

I had actually tricked Rattikarn into coming down from her room by pretending I’d forgotten my wallet. Even though she agreed to apologize, she was stalling. So I resorted to this tactic.

Chicken rice in front of the condo.

"Everything always has to revolve around you, doesn’t it?" Ann said, directing her words at Rattikarn.

"If you keep this up, don’t be surprised if Rung eventually gets tired of you."

"What are you talking about?"

"In your relationship, you’re the one who sets all the rules. ‘I want this, I want that. If you can’t handle it, we’re done.’ And Rung was always the one who gave in. Except for that one time when you were the one who panicked, feeling like Rung was slipping away."

An awkward silence hung between us. I wasn’t sure if I’d ever voiced these thoughts before, but Ann seemed to have read the situation perfectly. Her words touched a nerve.

"What do you know?" Rattikarn muttered.

"Even to apologize, you had to be tricked into coming down. You always force things more than you should. If you don’t fix that about yourself, someone as good as Rung will slip through your fingers."

The chicken rice arrived quickly, leaving the three of us alone at the table once more. Ann served some rice and chicken on a plate and handed it to me.

"Eat." "Uh..."

I hesitated and shook my head, politely refusing.

"Today is my day, remember? We're not here for an apology?"

With that thought, I reluctantly opened my mouth, chewing slowly before swallowing. Ann handed me a glass of water with exaggerated care, smiling mischievously at Rattikarn.

"There is someone who really wants to take care of Rung and give her all the attention she deserves. You should keep that in mind."

"..."

"If Rung escapes, you will lose her... forever." "..."

"Forever and ever."

Ann's cheeky comment caused Rattikan to stand up abruptly and leave the restaurant without looking back. I watched my girlfriend leave and clicked my tongue in annoyance.

"Things were finally starting to go well. You're unbelievable, Ann."

"It was fun! Honestly, Rattikarn is adorable, so easy to tease. Wait, don’t leave yet!"

"What now?"

I snapped, my tone harsher than intended. Ann, however, responded with a bright laugh that somehow made it impossible to stay mad.

"Pay for the meal, will you? I only have a credit card and no cash."

.

.

After sitting with Ann for another 20 minutes and watching her drive away, I walked back to the apartment with a heavy heart. The past two weeks had

been wonderful; we hadn’t argued once and had grown closer, learning to communicate and understand each other better.

Yet here I was, causing trouble for no reason. If Rattikarn didn’t want to apologize, I should have let it go instead of dragging her into this mess.

When I opened the door to our apartment, the cool air from the air conditioning greeted me, along with an eerie silence. Since it was a studio apartment, I could see Rattikarn lying on the bed from the entrance without having to get closer.

"Are you already asleep so early?"

There was no answer. I walked over to sit up, looking around to see if she was really asleep or just pretending. Normally, she was a light sleeper, waking up even when I teased her, slipping a hand under her waist. But now, she lay there like Snow White,

as if under a witch’s curse. "Dao…"

"Rung…,”

She mumbled in her sleep, shaking her head as if trapped in a nightmare. “Don’t leave me…"

"What’s wrong?”

I reached out to touch her, but she continued to mumble in her sleep.

"I’m trying to change… I’m sorry… Don’t go. I can’t do this without you." "Are you talking in your sleep?"

"I know I made you uncomfortable, but I'm working on it. From now on, I'll pay more attention to you. I'll listen to everything you say, all your concerns. No more rules, no more restrictions. I just want us to be happy.

I... I..."

"If you're going to monologue so much, why don't you wake up and say it straight?"

"..."

"This isn't a soap opera. Didn't you make fun of me the other day?" I couldn't help but laugh, covering my mouth as I teased her.

Rattikarn opened one eye, reached out, and lightly slapped my arm. "Ouch! Why did you hit me?"

"How did you know I was using that as an excuse?" "What kind of person talks in their sleep in such detail?"

Without another word, she dove under the blanket, wrapping herself like a cocoon. I tried to peek, but she had wrapped herself too tightly.

"You're evil!"

"Wait, how am I the villain again? Hey, I'm sorry! Come out and talk to me properly."

"No! I was serious, and you laughed. Why would I go out and embarrass myself even more?"

She always had a way of making simple things complicated. But when it came to difficult things, like excelling at work or winning people over at first sight, she made it seem easy, almost like a gift.

"Why would you pretend to talk in your sleep?"

I asked, leaning closer to the bundle she had become. "Because I can’t say those things to your face!"

Her voice softened, and I stopped laughing. I gently pulled the blanket away until I could see her face. Her expression was one of quiet vulnerability, as if she might cry at any moment.

"I’m sorry. Don’t make that face, it hurts me."

I said, running my thumb over her cheek tenderly. She pursed her lips, trying to keep her composure.

"What Ann said…it hit me hard." "What part?"

"About how…I just asked you to do everything my way without really caring about how you felt. It’s shocking because she said exactly what you said that day."

I froze, stunned, thinking about what I had said during that argument. That day, I had exploded because I couldn’t hold it in any longer.

"I kept talking about what I wanted, you need to be like this, you need to be like this for us to work. Setting rules as a warning for you not to break them. I almost lost you because of my own fear."

"That’s all in the past. I accepted it because I love you."

"But what if, one day, you lose your temper like that again? What would I do? Remember my biggest fear? Change. Now, you love me. But as time goes by, love settles down and turns into boredom. It happens to every couple, and it only gets worse."

"How are we going to sustain this, then?"

"To sustain this, we both need to work together. But it seems like you were the only one trying. Ann was right. If things continue like this, I will lose you."

Rattikarn pulled me into a hug. She seemed so different from the woman I had known. Here she was, a woman opening her heart to her partner, and it

made me feel grand, like someone loved beyond measure.

"I’m sorry, Rung. I’ll pay more attention to you. From now on, if you want me to apologize to someone, even if it means offering them trays of flowers or ceremonial items, I’ll do it."

"Is that really necessary?”

I laughed, patting her back reassuringly.

“It doesn’t have to be so difficult. Just be a little less stubborn, and I’ll be okay with it. Because I love everything about you, your looks, your personality, even your… smell.”

I pulled back and sniffed, noticing something for the first time today.

She wasn’t wearing her usual perfume. Instead, it was Baccarat Rouge 540, the one she’d bought for me.

"What’s wrong?"

"You changed your perfume."

"You said you liked that perfume… This is another way of showing that people can change. Even for something as small as a perfume, if it’s something you like, I’ll make myself like it so you’ll keep loving me."

She had changed so much. She was trying to become someone I would love in every way possible. I looked at Rattikarn before leaning in to kiss her, her beautiful face tilted back against the mattress. Her arms wrapped around my neck, ready to receive and give.

Piece by piece, our clothes fell away, leaving us naked as we entwined. The scent of her new perfume mixed with the fragrance of love that filled the air. Our moans mingled with the rhythm of our shared passion, making us lose track of time.

Though it wasn’t our first time, we enjoyed it as if it were always the first, excited and eager to surprise each other with what we could offer.

"Your scent..."

I whispered in her ear as I moved deeper, quickening my pace.

"It doesn’t matter what perfume it is, as long as it’s on you, it’s always perfect."

"Rung..."

"It's because I love you, not your perfume, Rattikarn."

In the final moments, her body trembled, pulling me into a tight embrace. We kissed as if to comfort each other after sharing our intimacy. As the wave subsided, she cupped my face with her delicate hands, her eyes shining with tears.

## "I love you, Rungtiwa."

" "

## "I love you so much, and I promise to tell you every day."

We hugged for what seemed like an eternity before falling asleep. The future is uncertain and unpredictable. But for now, we will live in the present, doing our best. Let's strive to nurture this relationship, not by changing each other, but by paying more attention to each other.

And that includes her changing her perfume to suit my preferences.

## No. 5.

**Note**:

-------TH END-----

□□□□□

Special Chapters Gone with the Wind

# Chapter special 01: Change

"Are you coming back today?"

Rungtiwa's sweet voice greeted me as I adjusted my cloth bag by my side and tied my hair into a high bun for convenience. I nodded a little sadly, as I had to get back to work. The drama is about to start filming, and the channel's crew is rushing to write the script. There's barely time to breathe.

"Mm."

"Why the ugly face? Are you tired?"

My talented partner approached me, holding my face with both hands. "No, I just don't want to go back working in my room."

"So stay a little longer."

"If I stay here, I'll just want to be around you and be near you. Whenever I'm around you, I don't want to do anything."

"Mm... that sounds like a good or bad feeling." Rungtiwa said, smiling.

"But shouldn't you go back now?"

"Well, I’m trying to put off leaving as long as I can to be with you, but… all good things must come to an end."

"You don’t have to say goodbye to the good times if you move in with me."

"Move in?"

I asked again, since I had never thought about it before. Rungtiwa seemed surprised that she say that, then waved her hands.

"I just said that, do whatever is comfortable for you. When you get home, text me, so I know you’re safe."

We hugged for a while, said goodbye, and I left. When we talked about moving, I noticed that her face looked worried. It wasn’t the first time Rungtiwa had looked like this. Even though we agreed to always talk openly with each other from now on, I could still feel that she was hesitant, as if she was afraid that I would get upset.

On the train ride back to my house, I wondered why she seemed so careful with her words. We’ve been together for a while, but she’s still worried that I might get mad.

I looked at my reflection in the train window. If my partner still hesitates before every word, then maybe we’re not as close as I thought…

.

.

## Rattikarn:

I’m in the room now.

## Rungtiwa:

Okay, I’m relieved. Don’t push yourself too hard.

## Rattikarn:

Are you going to sleep now?

## Rungtiwa:

I was thinking about going to a nightclub for a while.

.

.

After reading this, I straightened up a bit, feeling like there was a small fire

burning in my chest, until the other person sent me a sticker with a laugh from the official account.

## Rungtiwa:

Hahhhh!

## Rungtiwa:

Are you crazy? I need to sleep. There’s nothing to do now. You’re not here, and the series we were watching has to be watched together, right?

## Rattikarn:

If you want to watch it, go ahead. I can catch up with you later.

## Rungtiwa:

No, it’ll ruin the surprise if I watch it alone. Then you won’t want to watch it.

## Rungtiwa:

Actually, I had planned to sleep and watch with you tonight, but since you went back to your room, everything is ruined.

## Rattikarn:

So that's why you're trying to make me move in with you?

## Rungtiwa:

No, no.

.

.

Rungtiwa started typing shorter messages as she got nervous, trying to explain something. I noticed that when she gets like this, she doesn't finish typing a message in one go, as if she's afraid the other person might misinterpret things before the message is complete.

## Rungtiwa:

I asked because I see you're always going back and forth.

## Rungtiwa:

Also, most of the time, you stay with me because of the pool in my apartment, right?

## Rungtiwa:

You like working out here.

## Rungtiwa:

So I thought I'd ask, but if you don't want to move, that's fine.

## Rungtiwa:

I understand.

## Rungtiwa:

If you don't want to move, you don't have to. You should have your own personal space.

## Rungtiwa:

We don't have to be together all the time. It's okay to have some space.

## Rungtiwa:

I don't want you to feel uncomfortable.

.

.

I didn’t feel uncomfortable when I asked, but I just wanted to clarify her question from earlier today. Looking at how nervous she was, however, I frowned because I was frustrated that she was being overly attentive to me. I never said I was uncomfortable. If she wanted me to move, she should have just said so. Or if she wanted me to stay the night, she could just ask, and I wouldn’t come back. It’s that simple.

## Rattikarn:

We need to talk.

## Rattikarn:

Let’s meet tomorrow.

.

I took out my vape and pressed the button to take a puff. It didn’t mean much because I wasn’t addicted to nicotine, but I just wanted the fresh minty smell to calm my nerves. Right now, I needed that cool feeling to cool the anger in my heart.

Angry for having so much work piled up instead of having time to sort out personal issues. Damn it!

Later, I texted Rungtiwa saying I was staying the night and that we needed to talk. She read it and quickly replied:

## Rungtiwa:

Sorry.

.

.

Why was she apologizing? It wasn’t anything serious, and she needed to stop doing it. I didn’t want her to feel pressured about being with me. She should feel comfortable being herself, even if she was a little spoiled sometimes, or venting her frustrations. I wanted to be the one she trusted, not the one she tiptoed around.

.

.

After submitting my work for review, I quickly excused myself. Normally, we would have had some discussion afterwards, but since I was probably too quiet, the staff didn’t try to stop me. Even if they had tried, I would have ignored them. Once the work was done, it was done. After that, there was no point in engaging in small talk.

I arrived at Rungtiwa’s house first. When I feel stressed, I like to sit in the dark and be alone with my thoughts to reflect. Sometimes I even hope to see a ghost, although I’ve never seen one.

I’ve never told anyone about sitting in the dark hoping to find a ghost… But see, I’m being so open with Rungtiwa, sharing even the little things like this.

*Beep!*

The sound of the remote control on the door and the lock opening. Rungtiwa turned on the lights, took off her shoes, then looked up and saw me, startled.

"Why do you like being in the dark?" "I want to see a ghost."

She looked confused, maybe because I said it so abruptly. I thought she might actually like hearing things like that and wanted to have a conversation.

"Have you seen one?" "No."

"The ghost must be scared of you.”

Rungtiwa smiled and made a joke to lighten the mood. “You look really fierce right now."

"We need to talk. Come sit next to me on the bed.”

She reluctantly walked over and sat on the bed when I asked. Her nervousness showed, and she lightly poked my shoulder with her finger.

"Don’t make that face. I already told you I don’t want you to feel uncomfortable. If you don’t want to move, that’s fine."

"I’m talking about this. I'm serious."

"Well, if you don’t want to move out, why are you making it so serious?"

"Why are you so afraid that I’ll feel uncomfortable?" I looked at her seriously.

"Didn’t we already agree that if we feel something, we should just say it? If you want something, you can just ask. Like, about moving in together."

"Because… some things seem too rushed. You seem like someone who likes to be alone and has a high level of personal space. If I insist too much…"

"So what?"

"Huh?"

"Are you afraid that I’ll get mad? So you keep hesitating and swallowing whatever you want, pretending that everything is fine? Should I just accept this?"

Rungtiwa opened her mouth as if to say something, but then closed it again. She seemed like she wanted to explain, but she still didn’t know how to respond.

"You can stop being afraid of me!" “ ”

"Am I really that scary to you? Am I a partner who feels more like a boss than someone you can vent to or complain to whenever you need to?"

"Why is it like this? I just don’t want to pressure you."

"Some things you can be firm about. If you can’t, then we can just discuss and find a solution. Don’t bottle up your problems and keep them to yourself. Otherwise, one day, it will explode like it did that time."

I slammed the mattress angrily, remembering what Ann had said about how Rungtiwa always tried to please me. If I didn’t change, she would be the one who would, and I wouldn’t allow that.

"It’s not something I can’t accept. I just want us to have space for each other. Your room can be a safe place for you when you want to think or be alone."

"Do you want me to move in?"

I asked directly. Rungtiwa still avoided the question. "It’s up to you."

"Do you want it or not?" "Well…"

"Answer me."

I insisted. She looked at me and gave me a small smile, which made me realize that I was tense. I started to shrink and almost wanted to cry.

"Am I intimidating you?"

"No, it’s not like that. You’re not like that…"

"Okay, so why are you scared? You always wanted things right away, even with this. You’re pressuring me."

"Oh, Dao, you need to stop. It’s not a big deal. Listen…"

This time, Rungtiwa reached out to grab my shoulder and looked me in the eyes, determined.

"I’m not afraid of you. I just want to respect your privacy. Normally, I'm just like any other girl who clings to her boyfriend, wanting him around all the time, but I know you don't like that. It's annoying."

“..…”

"I didn't think about how when we fight, you get angry and sarcastic and leave the room. So the next problem is, where do you go? If this were a

drama, would you walk out in the rain, crying and yelling something like that?"

"I wouldn't do something like that."

"Great, I'm glad you wouldn't. But I've thought about it more deeply. When we fight, there needs to be a safe zone. So you can go to your own room to calm down and reflect. I don't want you to feel hurt and then say, 'I shouldn't have moved if I knew this would happen'. I've planned for all these scenarios."

She looked at me, frowning as if she was unsure. "Do you really think that way?"

" "

"You're not just being considerate or afraid that if you ask for something, we'll argue because I don't like it, right?"

"Well, there's some truth to that." "See?"

"But you can't do everything by yourself. So can I. Whenever you're selfish, I'll remember and get revenge."

"Why do you have to get revenge?" I muttered, pushing her chest lightly.

"I'm not the selfish type, and if I were, you could just tell me."

"We're both adjusting to each other, right? You've had me worried all day, you know that? *Sigh* "

Rungtiwa sighed, raising her hand to push her hair back.

"I admit, I'm considerate of you, but mostly, I'm afraid you'll feel uncomfortable. I wonder why I even suggested something silly like this. What's wrong with us being together like this?"

"I don't think what you suggested is silly. Your reason is good. If we fight, at least I'll have a place to go."

Rungtiwa smiled, but I was still in a bad mood. "You should have told me sooner."

"Why?"

I gestured towards the small couch near the TV. A small suitcase, filled with my essentials, was placed there.

'I’ve already packed my few clothes and moved in with you."

"Really? What about the bed and the refrigerator, all your companions in misery?"

"I sold them online. I came here to live with you for free, enjoying the clean pool without shame... Wow!"

Suddenly, I was attacked by Rungtiwa. She jumped on me and playfully hit me on both sides, laughing with joy.

“What’s this?"

"You’re really moving in? You’re not kidding, right?" "So, you’re happy about this, right?'

"Of course! We’re really moving in together. Yay!"

I laughed at her excited, girly reaction and tickled her back. We wrestled on the bed, teasing each other playfully. The phrase “living together” was so sweet, and I was even happier to see how happy she was about me moving in.

By the way… she’s right. If we fight, where will I go? Maybe I'll end up walking in the rain like a heroine in a music video, and she'll run after me to apologize.

Now that I think about it, that doesn't sound so bad either.

# Chapter special 02: Quota

We agreed that if we ever had a fight, Rungtiwa would be the one to go out in the rain and play music like in a music video, since she was the owner of the room. If I left first, it would seem like the hostess was intimidating the guest too much. Of course, she had no problem with it and even laughed at the serious agreement that if we fought, she would be the one to leave.

Living together wasn't much different from before. It was like I was visiting Rungtiwa and not going back to my own place. Since my job required me to work from home and I didn't have a personal office, I offered to pay the water and electricity bills.

"Are you crazy? We're living together, why we should share the expenses. There's no need to separate them."

"You're already paying the condo fee and now you have to pay the electricity too? Besides, I'm the one who stays in the room and uses the electricity, so I should pay. It'll lighten your load."

My reasoning was definitive. Rungtiwa couldn't argue because I was right.

"Fine, do whatever you want. You always have a million reasons. Let's share the food expenses then."

"That's fair. No objections."

We easily agreed and lived together happily... The End.

.

.

Life has no end except death, but living together was not something to worry about. I did well, considering I never thought I would share a room and a life with another person. Ever since I was a child, I had my own room separate from my parents. After they passed away, I lived alone. Oh, I had a girlfriend once, but she came and went, never staying the night because she had to go home like a good daughter until we broke up. This was my first time actually living with another person.

.

"The lead actress is pretty, isn't she?"

Rungtiwa, lying on the bed watching TV with me, complimented the actress from the American series. I looked at her and started to cuddle, as I always did when I wanted something.

"I’m prettier,”

I said, pulling her hand under my shirt as an invitation to turn off the TV and enjoy the real thing. Rungtiwa never refused. She teased me even while she was still watching TV, gently touching under my shirt and then moving her hand inside my shorts.

I spread my legs to give her access and moaned softly to start things off. When she turned to kiss me and pulled her hand out to take my clothes off more easily, I realized…

"Oh!"

"I was wondering why I was so wet…"

*My period…*

It’s a normal thing for women like us, but it wasn’t normal for my girlfriend’s hand to be covered in blood, especially since she’d never killed anyone.

.

.

"You can stop being embarrassed now, hehe."

Rungtiwa nudged me lightly with her shoulder as we walked through the supermarket to buy household items, including sanitary pads. I still couldn’t look her in the eye. In my thirty-plus years, I’ve never felt so embarrassed that I wanted to die until today.

"I’m sorry for dirtying you, the sheets, and even your blanket. I didn’t realize it was a heavy flow day."

"You’re so lucky. Other women get cramps and feel sick during their periods. I’m one of them."

"But the good thing is that you know when it’s coming. Unlike me… Even when I’m on my period, I still invite you to do things without considering my condition."

I really couldn’t accept myself. I’ve never felt so embarrassed because I couldn’t look at her. So I pretended to pick up my pace, but she pulled my ponytail, making me look up.

"Ouch, that hurts."

"Where are you going? The pads are right here." "Just take some then."

"How can I? How would I know what brand you use?" "Any brand can absorb blood."

"But I can only use certain brands because I’m allergic to some of them." "Allergic?” I looked confused.

“What are the symptoms?” "Rashes all over my butt."

"You opened my eyes. I never knew people could be allergic to pads. I’ll remember that for my writing."

"How would you describe the main character getting rashes all over her butt from pads?"

Rungtiwa laughed and motioned for me to help her choose as she told me which brands she was allergic to.

“I use this brand, so if I get my period and can’t get it up, you might have to buy it for me. I’ll also remember and write it down when your period comes so I can be prepared.”

She was so thoughtful, and it touched me, even though it seemed like a small thing.

"Okay, I’ll remember. And when you get your period, I’ll write it down too."

This is what it’s like to live together as women. I was used to being alone, so I never knew sharing like this was something families did. Thinking of the word “family” made my heart race. As I pushed the stroller to the car, I reached out to link my arm with hers possessively.

"Hm?"

"You handle living together well,” I complimented her.

“Probably because you’ve had a boyfriend before." "You’ve also had a girlfriend."

"But I’ve never gone out shopping together like this. It’s a little weird."

"You’ll get used to it. We’re going to be together for a long time." "When you had a boyfriend, did you have problems like this?" "About periods? How would I have them? Non is a guy."

"How do you know how to deal with me then?"

"Well, I love you. Love makes you deal with everything about the person you love."

"Really? Can you deal with everything about me?" "Yes."

"No matter what?" "Yes, no matter what."

.

.

"I said it’s nothing, Dao… Why are you making a big deal about it? Is it because you’re on your period?"

Rungtiwa raised her voice when I pointed to her phone and saw that Non had texted her. We had just talked about this guy yesterday, and today he texted her. Hmph, they must be in secret contact. How could they do this?

"Don’t blame it on my period. That’s the sensible thing to do. We just talked about your ex yesterday, and today he texted you. What are you two talking about?"

"We haven’t talked yet!"

"What are you going to talk about?'

"I don’t know. I haven’t opened it yet." "You’re hiding something."

"Oh come on, I told you we didn’t talk. You used to be so reserved. Why are you like this now…"

When she said that, I was stunned, tears welling up. Remorse welled up in my chest, making it ache. Rungtiwa looked at me guiltily and looked like she was about to cry.

"This is getting out of hand, Dao. You’re being sensitive because of your hormones."

"Stop making excuses. You raised your voice at me! You said you’d love me no matter what, no matter what I did, you’d still love me no matter what."

"I was wrong to raise my voice… I need to learn this. Learn that you don’t get cramps during your period, but your mood swings a lot."

"I said it wasn't because of my period. I was fine. I’ve never had this before."

"Who would have known if you always had this?" "Mosquitoes!'

"What mosquitoes?"

"The mosquitoes in my room know, and they never raise their voices because they don’t contact their exes like you do."

"I think I should get away from you for a while.”

Rungtiwa shook her head as if she was exhausted, then grabbed her phone and bag.

“I’ll come back to talk when you’ve calmed down."

"Where are you going? Why do you have to go?" "Or do you want to go?"

"No, that’s your quota."

"Exactly, that's why I'm going. Luckily, it's not raining today."

She said that and left, closing the door softly. Even though it wasn't loud, it made my heart ache. Even when she closed the door, she did it gently, as if she was mocking me.

Do you think I'll apologize? I can be alone. She has nowhere to go because this is her room.

Now, this room was mine. Since she left, I would take over. I would watch the series we were watching without her and ruin it for her to make her so upset that she wouldn't want to watch it anymore.

This is my sharp revenge. I won't suffer alone. Remember that.

The snacks we bought at the supermarket yesterday were being chewed in my mouth in frustration, turning into sugar and fat accumulating in my body. Every time I had my period, I would eat a lot and liked snack like this.

It was boring. When I tried to watch the series, I thought it wasn't fun to watch alone. I wanted to swim, but I couldn’t, because the pool would turn into a boiling sea.

I jumped in and looked at the clock on the wall. Rungtiwa had been gone for two hours and showed no signs of coming back. Where could she have gone? She had nowhere to go.

Or maybe!

It must be, she must have contacted her ex, who had texted her. This wasn’t right… I had to find her and bring her back to fight again to be an inspiration and encouragement to lesbians in this world.

"Where are you?"

I called her. Rungtiwa answered, but sighed.

[Still in a bad mood? I thought you had gotten over it by now.]

"When are you coming back? Where are you? What are you doing? And with whom?"

The question shot out like a bullet, full of jealousy and anxiety. Before she could answer, a male voice interrupted the call, making me straighten up like a cat ready to unsheathe its claws, unwilling to back down.

[She’s with me downstairs in the condo.]

His voice made me rush out of the room and take the elevator to see for myself. I kept my displeasure bottled up, quickly exiting the elevator with my fists clenched, trying to contain the outburst.

And what Non had said was true: Rungtiwa was sitting in the lobby downstairs, talking to him, her ex. I marched over to them and stood over, my icy gaze fixed on them as if they were having an affair.

"Hello, Ms. Rattikarn."

Rungtiwa’s ex greeted me politely. I remained calm and cool in Rattikarn, even though I was burning inside.

"Hello, Mr. Non. How long have you been here?"

"Just a little while. Yung said she was free to talk now."

I glared at Rungtiwa. She fought with me and then quickly contacted her ex. It was the same thing last time, and now again.

What was I supposed to think!? "Are you done talking?"

"Yes, but I wanted to talk to you, Ms. Rattikarn, because I think I'm the reason you two are upset... Yung told me."

"She's good at sharing everything with others."

I emphasized the word 'others' for Non to hear, even though I knew he came first. But that was in the past.

"Dao, don't be alarmed.

"You're raising your voice again."

Rungtiwa and I were ready to clash again, but Non waved her hands to stop us and quickly explained, not wanting this to drag on.

"Yung and I don't have anything going on anymore. It's not what you think." "What do I think!?"

Normally, I didn’t refer to myself as ‘I’¹ because it sounded too dramatic, but in this context, it felt like a distant, slightly dismissive, and self- important way of speaking.

"We’re not in contact because Yung wants to consult about anything or rekindle old flames."

"So what are you talking about?"

"I’m here to announce my ordination."

*Oops…*

*.*

*.*

No matter how much my emotions fluctuated or how much my hormones messed with my life, at that moment, I knew I was wrong. Aside from

getting Rungtiwa’s hands bloody, I had no right in any case, and I was too embarrassed to face her.

"Dao, you’re awfully quiet… Uh, what are you doing?"

I covered my ears and crawled to hide on the other side of the bed so she couldn’t see my face. Rungtiwa was silent for a moment, then climbed onto the bed to peek at me, huddled in the corner.

"Hey, naughty girl, even if you turn into a microbe, you can't escape me. Get out."

"I know I'm wrong. Give me some time to accept it, and then you can scold me however you want."

"Why would I scold you?" "Because I'm being stupid." "You know that too, huh?"

I looked at her, but when our eyes met, I turned away because I couldn't look at her. Today, I was completely defeated. Rattikarn had to dissolve today, waiting for the day she would be reborn from the moon.

"I'm on my period."

"So all this fuss today was because of your period?' "Probably."

"And all day you insisted it wasn't, so what's the problem?" "I've never fought with anyone during my period."

"Not even mosquitoes?"

"Not even mosquitoes... Stop rubbing it in my face. It's partly your fault too. If you had said that he was here to announce his ordination, it would have

ended there. We wouldn’t have to fight over jealousy." "Ah… so it’s because you were jealous."

"No, it’s because of my period." "Any reason will do, really. Hehe.” Rungtiwa looked at me fondly.

“I love you, you know?”

When she said that, I suddenly felt emotional, and tears rolled down my face.

"I'm on my period, and you still love me... *Waah*."

"Oh... my emotional little girl. Who would have thought someone as cold as you could be so stupid."

"*Waah* "

I hugged Rungtiwa and cried, letting her comfort me.

"*Hic* I promise, if you act stupid, I'll be patient and calm and won't fight

with you in return." "Just in exchange?" "Because I love you."

This was a promise from one woman to another. I was determined to repay her, no matter what we fought about next time. I would be patient and let her win.

But, well... it was easy to say, but when it came time to actually do it...

.

.

"Rattikarn, you bought the wrong pads. I told you they need to be 22 centimeters, not 22.5!"

And now it was my turn. On her heavy day, she was complaining about the length of the pads because the company suddenly decided to change the packaging and product, even though it was the same brand.

She made me realize how much patience she had with me that day. Whether or not my promise would be kept depended on whether I was truly the calming water for her.

Having a girlfriend requires a lot of patience and emotional strength.

□□□□□

**Footnote**

***1 - Normally, Rattikarn refers to herself as (Khao), which sounds light and friendly. But here, she uses (chan), a pronoun considered too formal in some contexts.***

# Chapter special 03: Rattikarn in a relationship

One of the things I loved most about arguing was that it often ended with us making up in bed. Every bit of body language expressed our deepest feelings, ranging from gentle to fierce. Her every touch conveyed how much she loved and cherished me.

I vividly remembered her advice to treat the person in front of you as your own body - do unto them as you would have them do unto you. I took that to heart and mirrored every detail she did to me, and it worked wonders.

“That feels so good, mmm.”

Her moans were the best feedback, and every time she writhed, my body felt like it was heating up, like a thermometer steadily rising. I couldn’t explain why, but even after I finished, I could start over every time and beg her to do it over and over again. So our lovemaking sessions lasted quite a while.

Saying that sex is a great way to burn calories was no exaggeration. We ended up drenched in sweat and other fluids, making it fun, sweaty, and healthy.

It was love...

On the days we had morning sex, I would skip my workout because I already felt healthy enough. While I showered, Rungtiwa would go in to brush her teeth or take care of other personal matters. We never locked the bathroom door because we were too close to hide anything from each other. I walked out naked while she finished rinsing her mouth.

"You woke up later than me today."

"It's a holiday. Not everyone is like you, waking up early to swim every day and then taking a nap in the afternoon. Ugh, I'm so jealous of people who work from home,”

She said playfully, then examined my body. “Sit on the toilet for a bit.”

"Hmm, why?"

She didn't answer and left the bathroom for about thirty seconds, returning with a pair of scissors. I looked at her, blinking at her murderous behavior.

"What are you going to do?" "Kneel down and spread your legs." "Why?"

"I'll trim you."

Sure, we were close, but this was a little embarrassing. Sure, we had seen every part of each other, but it made my face flush.

"No, I'll do it myself."

"What's the harm if I do it? Be quiet, or I'll stab you with these scissors."

*Cut, cut, cut.*

The sound of the scissors between my legs was both thrilling and embarrassing. Rungtiwa looked serious as she trimmed, occasionally scolding me when I moved and even slapping my leg like a mother scolding a noisy child on the train.

"Move, and I'll cut you by mistake."

"If it was too long, you should have told me. You don't have to do this." "I'm doing this for you. What's wrong with that?"

She looked up, confused.

"This is my favorite place. I have to take care of it myself. Last night was a little rough when I used my mouth on you."

I covered my mouth at her bluntness. "And it’s for your hygiene too." "Should I wax ?"

"No, I like it this way. Just make it thinner. You’ll feel it more, and it’ll be easier for me next time."

She spoke as if she was discussing a new cartoon without any embarrassment, making me relax and let her do what she wanted. I stared at the ceiling, listening to the sound of the scissors and trusting that she wouldn’t cut me.

"This morning, there was a reminder of an event on Facebook about our class reunion. Did you get the notification?"

"Oh, yeah, I saw it."

I replied, remembering." "Are you going?" "Probably not."

"I thought so."

"What about you? Are you going?"

"Yes, Jan made me promise. She said she missed everyone. All our friends are going. If I don’t go, they’ll be mad."

I nodded in understanding, but a memory made me pause. "So, Channarong will be there too?"

"Wow, you remember we had a friend named that? Yes, Chan will be there." "The one who sent you love letters?"

"Yes. You are good at remembering details,”

Rungtiwa said, blowing on the trimmed area like a hairdresser finishing.

“All done. You can sit normally now. Take a look at my work. How does it look?”

I looked down and smiled shyly. "What’s it like? Well, it got shorter." "Now it will be easier to lick."

"You idiot!"

"Want to trim mine?”

She winked, handing me the scissors. I thought about doing it for her, but she seemed to know better and handed me the scissors willingly.

“From now on, this is our job for each other. I take care of yours, and you take care of mine. Deal?"

"Do any couple actually do that?"

"Probably, but they just don’t tell the world."

.

.

I was still thinking about the reunion. Although I had told Rungtiwa that I wouldn’t go, seeing friends posting excitedly about it made me reconsider. I checked the place again. During school, I wasn’t particularly close to anyone. I could join any group, even the boys, when I did projects.

I was like an extra in class, but I never disliked it. Everyone welcomed me, knowing that I enjoyed solitude. So, I didn’t have close friends to talk to like she did.

I remember Rungtiwa being loved by everyone. She was my opposite, fitting into any group and getting along with everyone. In gym class, she would play basketball with the boys, and during projects, everyone wanted to be in her group because she did such great work and often did it alone.

She never minded being taken advantage of, as long as the result was good and her grades didn’t drop.

She was always the center of attention, drawing my eyes to her.

After deciding not to go, I ended up at the restaurant where our class reunion was held. Everyone was sharing their life stories. Some even brought their children.

"Isn’t that Rattikarn?"

Someone shouted when they saw me. The room was silent for a moment before everyone greeted me warmly. I smiled politely and sat down next to Rungtiwa, who happened to have an empty seat next to her, or maybe someone had gone to the bathroom.

"I thought you wouldn’t come." "I changed my mind."

"But this is Jan’s seat."

'Jan can sit somewhere else."

Jan, coming back from the bathroom, stopped when she saw that I was in her seat. I smiled at her without a care in the world. There was no need for politeness, since we would only see each other today and then no more. She should sit somewhere else. I wanted to sit with my person.

At least I knew Rungtiwa was my person.

"Rattikarn, you look so pretty. Why not become an actress?" A friend blurted out, making me laugh.

"You probably can’t act. Better behind the scenes."

"I heard you write scripts. What’s it like? Do you know any actors?"

They all asked excitedly, sharing their professions. Some owned auto repair shops and others became cartoonists despite having studied art and mathematics. I listened, thinking I could use their stories as material until it was Channarong’s turn.

"I want to invest in making movies too. I saw a studio making hundreds of millions."

Channarong, who had once courted Rungtiwa, said proudly. I silently assessed him.

"I heard you’re rich. What do you do?" "I own a construction company."

That was a completely different field. Did he think money could buy anything? Or was he just trying to have a moment? I smiled coldly, saying nothing, looking at Rungtiwa chatting with a friend.

"Do you have any tips, Rattikarn? Working behind the scenes, you might know something."

He asked, trying to start a conversation. I shook my head honestly.

"None."

"What a shame. I was hoping you’d write a script or star with Rungtiwa.' Hearing her name, Rungtiwa turned her attention.

"What?"

"Chan said he would make you the lead if he made a movie. Would you accept that?"

"You're kidding," Rungtiwa laughed.

"With this face? No way."

Her laughter irritated me a little. I stared at her until she noticed and raised an eyebrow.

"What's wrong with you?" "You seem in a good mood." "Come on,"

She said, sensing my displeasure. She reached out and gently patted my thigh, trying to show that she didn't mind.

Channarong, seizing the opportunity to gain his attention, did everything he could to impress.

"You still have that bright, cheerful laugh, Yung, as always, no matter how many years have passed."

"Oh, Mr. Lover, haven't you gotten over that smile yet?" Another friend at the table teased, nudging him with a shoulder.

"I still remember the day you gave that letter to Yung. Weren't you embarrassed? Just thinking about it makes me cringe."

"Not at all. It was a good time, at least memorable for the two of us and for her... I know you remember it too, right, Yung?"

Rungtiwa continued to laugh, but it was a forced laugh, probably out of politeness towards me, who was sitting there with a cold smile.

"What are you talking about? I don't remember anything."

"How can you not remember? That day, I tried really hard to write that letter. Just thinking about it still makes me excited. In fact... I'm still excited now."

"Stop flirting. Are you trying to hit on Yung? Ask her first if she has a boyfriend, you playboy."

Everyone laughed heartily, and Channarong, following his friend's advice, asked directly.

"Yung, are you dating anyone?" "Yes, I am."

Rungtiwa answered almost immediately, smiling at the questioner, making Channarong's face fall.

"What... but still, as long as you're not married, I still have a chance."

There was applause of approval, and I started to get really angry as I looked at the speaker.

"Love is love. I don’t care if you have someone else. As long as you love me back the way I love you, I’m okay with it."

This kind of thinking felt familiar. It reminded me of how I used to think it didn’t matter if she had someone else. I didn’t care because I was open-

minded enough. We don’t own anyone, and no one can own us. But experiencing it firsthand made me angry at myself for thinking that way.

"No, I’ve decided to have only one person. If I can do it, she should be able to do it too. It’s a deal."

"If he doesn’t know, it’s not wrong, is it? I can accept that."

The friends continued to cheer openly, without regard for morals; they were just having fun. This pushed me to my breaking point, and I snapped soon after.

"If having good manners won’t kill your father, please keep some."

*Gulp...*

Everyone at the table fell silent, staring at me in shock. Rungtiwa looked around at everyone, then stood up and bowed gracefully in apology before announcing to everyone.

"Rattikarn and I are dating. Sorry, everyone. Please don't tease anymore."

And from that moment on, no one dared to cheer or tease for the rest of the meeting...

.

.

"I shouldn’t have come, seriously. The event was a total failure."

Rungtiwa and I were driving back together. She sat silently, not sure if she was mad at me for ruining the event. She kept fiddling with her phone, looking at various things.

"Are you mad?" "Hmm?"

Rungtiwa looked up from the screen and asked again:

"What? I didn’t hear you. Jan sent a message asking about you, so I was replying."

"About me coming today. I said I shouldn’t have come." "Is it true?"

"Is it true?"

I suddenly slammed on the brakes, causing her to drop the phone. She made an irritated sound and glared at me.

"What do you want me to say? You made the meeting a total failure. No one else dared to speak or provoke."

"They were cheering for nonsense. It was annoying." "You’re so jealous."

"What are you talking about? I’m not jealous at all. I never have been." "Oh, how lovely.”

Rungtiwa laughed, not really mad, and picked up the phone.

“You’re the most jealous person in the world, but you pretend. If you could stop pretending, and it wouldn’t kill your father…"

"My father is already dead.” "Oops."

She covered her mouth, realizing she had misspoken.

“Then I can’t stop pretending. If not wanting anyone to flirt or hit on you is jealousy, then I’ll accept it.”

I ran my hand through my hair and sighed.

“Today made me realize how cruel it was to pretend to be open-minded, letting you date whoever you wanted without us owning each other. You must have been really hurt."

"What made you bring this up all of a sudden?"

"Channarong… when he said he didn’t care if you had someone else, as long as he got your love in return because it was love, it made me realize how pitiful the other person who loves you must feel. Just the thought of you being with someone else or sharing your heart even a little bit, I can’t bear it."

“...”

"I’ve never loved anyone like this before. I’m so sorry."

The car was stopped at a red light. I gripped the steering wheel tightly and kept quiet. It was a deeper confession of love, making the person next to me fall silent as well.

"Sorry for what?"

"Sorry for today and everything in the past. I’m sorry for being so inconsiderate."

"You are forgiven."

She answered briefly, then tilted her head and smiled at me. "Forgived for what?"

"For today and everything that happened in the past."

Rungtiwa turned back to her phone. The red light was counting down to yellow and then green. As I waited for the light to change, my phone vibrated with a notification. Facebook showed a red number, indicating that someone had tagged me or some activity. It made me turn to look at her.

"If you’re afraid of people hitting on me, then announce it to the world."

I laughed, was pleased, and accepted the relationship status, which also appeared on my profile.

"Yes, announce it to the world."

*Rattikarn is in a relationship with Rungtiwa. Rungtiwa is in a relationship with Rattikarn.*

*□□□□□*

# Chapter special 04: Family

Most same-sex couples manage to stay together through understanding and attitude, but they can easily break up due to one important factor, which is... family.

The other day, Rungtiwa and I decided to go public with our relationship on social media. Our high school friends who saw it were surprised and very interested. And yes, no one dared to comment anything negative. Most of them just hit the "Wow" button and typed their surprise and congratulations.

But on Rungtiwa's Facebook, it wasn't just friends. On the website... she also had a family. One of the comments made me bite my nails and lose sleep until now. I couldn't guess the tone of the person who typed it, but I felt an unshakable fear...

.

## Anastasai Pimp:

Bring her here. I want to meet her.

Rungtiwa must have noticed my restless state and turned to hug me, resting her chin on my shoulder from behind.

"Still worried about my mother's comment? Don't think too much. If you don’t want to meet her, you don’t have to."

She left the decision up to me, which made me feel even more pressured. When people are in love, they don’t think about a third or fourth person. But after those activities are over and the relationship develops to a certain level, family gets involved in our lives immediately.

I had completely forgotten about this because I was too busy thinking that the world consisted only of us, forgetting that she had parents and they were still around!

"It’s not that I don’t want to meet her…" "I know you’re scared,”

Rungtiwa said sleepily as she rested her chin on my shoulder.

“It doesn't matter to me whether you meet her or not. Our love is our business. Are you comfortable now?”

"You’re always like this, always letting me decide." “...”

"Rung."

*Snoring...*

She had fallen asleep. She had been out all day with Nut to work, so she must have been very tired. Now, it was just me, awake in the darkness. We weren’t alone in this world. As long as we were social animals, we had to engage in meet-and-greet. It was inevitable, and I had made my decision.

"I’m going to meet your parents. Tell them we’ll see them today."

In the morning, I got up to drink some fat-burning black coffee before exercising. Rungtiwa, who had just taken a shower, looked at me in surprise.

"Why the rush?"

"If I don’t go now, I won’t have the courage later."

After thinking about it all night, I decided not to run away anymore. It must be the feeling men get when they have to meet their girlfriend’s family, or like women when they meet their mother-in-law. I’ve never been afraid of

anything in my life, not even ghosts, no matter how scared I was. But this… well, I couldn’t explain it. It was just an unfamiliar feeling.

"You haven't slept all night, have you? Your eyes are so dark!"

She came over, hurriedly dressed, and touched my dark circles with her fingers.

"A little."

"You must be very stressed. It's just a comment from my mother." "If your parents don't like me... will we have to break up?"

I asked, just in case. Rungtiwa fell silent and shrugged. "I don't know."

"I understand if you listen to your parents. After all, they raised you."

She didn't argue and gently ruffled my hair before going to pick up the phone and call home. I assumed the person on the other end of the line was her mother. She said shortly,

"Mom, we're going to stop by today, taking my girlfriend."

.

### BA-DUM...

***BA-DUM.***

.

Her saying she was taking her girlfriend made me almost faint, even though I tried to act tough. We had a small car, just the two of us. If we arrived at her house and got out of the car, revealing only two women, how would her parents feel?

"All set. Are you going to wear that outfit? But, well... you look beautiful in anything."

She kissed my temple loudly and went to do her makeup at the small vanity next to the wardrobe. I looked at her, feeling a little hurt.

If her parents don't accept me, will we really break up so easily?

I thought about when I was with my ex. We were facing the same problem... the problem of the family not accepting us. I remember I graduated a while ago and my parents died in an accident.

I couldn't manage my life. Everything was confusing and disorienting. I wanted to cry, but I didn't know who to cry to. Then she came into my life like a log saving a drowning person.

Khemanit.

Her name was like that of a popular actress at the time. She was beautiful and mature, even though we were the same age. She was just an ordinary office worker who met me when I was drunk at a girls’ bar.

I don’t know why I cried and told her everything that night. We slept together, and I thought it would pass like before, but it didn’t. She kept visiting and leaving home-cooked food with the building management.

She came every day, but she never showed up. It was like she just wanted to leave food and leave. One day, I had to wait for her to find me, and we started talking seriously.

"I want to take care of you."

That was her answer. Her words “take care” seemed a little condescending to me. Maybe she pitied me or something, but it made me angry. She handled my tantrums with a smile and left, only to return with food again.

"Why are you being so nice to me? "You’re pretty. I like you."

It was such a simple reason that I laughed.

"Is it that simple? Just because I’m pretty?"

"What else should I feel about you? Other than your beauty, I don't know anything about you yet."

True... if she had given a fancy reason like a beauty queen on stage, I would have seen it as fake. Because she was so straightforward, I accepted her into my life easily. We became a couple without ever saying "I love you".

It wasn't a passionate love, but a sense of security, knowing that if I got hurt, Khemanit would be there to comfort me. Everything went well, and I liked it that way. There were no fights, no raised voices, just talking about our day, having sex and then going our separate ways.

It must have been a form of love...

But that confident was shattered when one day Khemanit told me that her family wanted her to meet a friend's son. I listened without comment, perhaps because I trusted her and knew she was gay and didn't like men.

I trusted that she would end up with me for the reason she had given. But I was so naive. Being gay didn't mean she couldn't date men. There are many forms of it. Some people can date women and men.

And I found out she was dating that man...

Even though it wasn't a love born out of jealousy, I couldn't accept being cheated on. What I hated the most was someone making me look like an idiot.

I broke up with Khemanit immediately, and that drove her crazy. "I can't break up. I can't leave you. I love you!"

"Do people in love do that?"

"What else could I do? My parents want me to date this guy."

"So you're dating him because your parents told you to? Fine, You better leave."

"But I love you!"

She knelt down, hugging my legs and crying.

"I like this relationship. You make my life colorful. I feel safe knowing you're here."

"But two people can't be in the same place!" "I can't take you to meet my parents." "That's your problem."

"It's easy for you to say. Your parents are dead. If they were alive, you would do the same to me."

I pushed her away, feeling angry that she dared mention my family. I didn’t know how my parents would feel about me liking women, but I would never let them control me to the point of forcing me to be with a man when my heart wasn’t in it.

"Leave."

"No. I’m not leaving… I’m not breaking up with you. I’m going to stay like this."

"It’s okay. If you don’t leave, I will."

I left the apartment to avoid the hassle. After that, Khemanit climbed onto the balcony and acted like she was going to jump. People gathered around to watch. It became a big problem with rescue teams, police, and local reporters taking pictures.

She kept screaming that she loved me and threatened to kill me. I was so embarrassed that I didn’t know what to do, so I ran away because I knew

that someone like her loved herself too much. I also loved my delicate face too much, so I left.

In that incident, no one died, but the owner of the place asked me to leave and return my deposit. I didn’t have the face to stay there anymore, so I quickly found a new place to live and lost contact with her. Until I met Rungtiwa, this was a new chapter of love, different from before. I was the one who couldn't bear her leaving and begged her to stay with me until death.

The End

.

.

I can’t end it like this, can I…? "This is my home."

Rungtiwa was driving today. I sat there stiffly, not daring to move or do anything, until my smart girlfriend got out of the car and opened the door for me.

"Please, my lady." "Don’t do this!"

I quickly got out of the car and pushed her hand away, worried that her family would see how much she was spoiling me.

"Do you want your parents to hate me?" "Hate you for opening the car door for you?" "Really?"

"Yes, it’s true. Everyone loves their daughter… You should be the one to be taken care of, not the one who opens the car doors."

"On the outside, you look calm, but in your head, you’re thinking so far ahead that we’ll have three children together by now."

"Three children!? How can we have children? You don’t even have a dick. Can I speak figuratively!?"

Rungtiwa reached out and patted my head lightly, then sighed.

"Be yourself, relax, and let’s go meet my parents." "Your parents..."

I started to feel really scared. I had been brave enough to come, but now, standing in the tiger's den, my legs were shaking.

"Okay, it's just your parents' house, nothing to be afraid of. That's right. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Then why don't you just go inside? Why are you standing there?" "I'm trying to be a shoe model"

I replied absentmindedly. But when I saw Rungtiwa's face, I walked quickly ahead of her into the house, unable to bear the mockery.

"Why are you standing there? You should be taking me inside." "Okay, Okay."

Now, I entered Rungtiwa's house, a two-story wooden house that looked to be over 40 years old, with some parts renovated with cement. The furniture was scattered around as if people actually lived there, not for aesthetic purposes.

*Wow!*

I jumped when I saw a group of people playing cards or something. They all stopped in the air with their cards and cues, looking at me.

"Who is that?"

An older woman’s voice came from inside the house, and as soon as she peeked in, Rungtiwa waved cheerfully.

"It’s me, Mom."

"Oh, you’re back early. What did you bring?" "Nothing."

"How can you come home empty-handed? Kids these days."

An uncle sitting in the middle of a card game said in a slightly stern voice as he looked at us.

“Don’t give your parents pocket money; you should at least bring some pork or chicken."

"Don’t be so harsh. The child can barely take care of herself. How can she take care of us?"

"Don’t be shocked; this is my father,”

Rungtiwa whispered, making me smile bitterly. I felt guilty for not bringing anything as a courtesy because I was too busy being scared.

"I’m sorry. "Who is this?”

Her father nodded at me, apparently wanting an introduction. I immediately greeted them as warmly as I could.

"Hello, my name is Dao."

"I pray with my heart and words that my daughter, Daoprasook, my little Venus in the night sky, will shine her brilliance and grace like one of those stars."

The people at the card game sang along, knowing the final part of the drama well. I blushed, looking at Rungtiwa, who waved her hands as if she knew she was about to be scolded,

"No, I didn’t tell them about your name."

"Then why did your father start singing the song?" "It’s a famous song."

Her mother, who must have heard us talking, sat on the sofa across from us, resting her chin on her hand, examining me.

"Hearing the name Dao, we couldn’t help but think of the song. Are you mad?"

"Uh… no, ma’am…"

"Even if you are, I’m not sorry anyway. Ha ha ha!"

Her unique laugh left me dazed. And when she started laughing, everyone else followed suit. If this were at school, I would feel intimidated, but among adults, it seemed too good to be true.

"Mom, stop teasing. My girlfriend doesn’t know what to do now." "Rung!"

I pulled on her shirt when she said “girlfriend”. "Don’t be shy. We know you’re dating."

Her mother said, crossing her legs and still examining me. "Are you a tomboy?"

"N… no."

"If you’re not a tomboy, then how are you dating?"

"Mom, nowadays, many women date each other,” Rungtiwa interrupted, trying to help.

"Then how do you know who’s the top or the bottom?"

Her mother asked innocently, making everyone in the card game stare at us. "Is it rude to ask? But don’t say I’m nosy because I am. I want to know.

With such beautiful, long hair, how do you know? Is there a sign like ‘Oh! I’ll dominate you’ or ‘I’ll be bottom for you’?"

"Mom, you really shouldn’t ask that!"

Rungtiwa scolded her mother lightly before sitting down next to me, hugging me.

"But I’ll tell you a little bit. When I met her, my heart skipped a beat. I fell in love with her at first sight."

"And did she love you back like that? Interesting." "No, she said she didn’t love me."

"Rung!"

This family spoke so openly, without reservations, that I was shocked by a culture I never thought I would encounter. In novels or series. The main obstacle for same-sex couples is usually family, but here, I was at a loss.

"Falling in love at first sight, what kind of person does that?" Her father seemed to be right next to me, making Rungtiwa pout.

"But she’s beautiful. Anyone would love her. Her face is so attractive." Her mother complimented me directly.

"Why did you choose this troublemaker? She’s not even that pretty."

"Mom!"

"Yung looks like her father, so she’s not pretty."

"Why do you always look down on her? Everyone says Yung is cute. Only you make her feel inferior. Her girlfriend isn’t that pretty either."

Her father stopped looking at his cards to look at me.

"Just long hair, high nose, thin lips, tall and thin. Is she a doll?"

"Dad, if you’re going to compliment her, do it. And you, Dao, you’ve been quiet for a while… Say something. Introduce yourself to my parents,”

Rungtiwa interrupted, implying that her father was joking. I licked my lips and smiled weakly, still standing there without moving since I entered.

"My name is Dao. I’m dating Rung. I’m not a tomboy."

I didn’t know how to introduce myself to her parents. I was on the verge of tears. It was scarier than I imagined. Everyone was so welcoming.

Is there really anything that easy in the world? "Have you ever had a boyfriend?"

Her mother continued to pry, interested.

"With your looks, you must have had a lot of admirers." "I did, but it didn’t feel good."

"Wasn’t it fun?" "Mom!"

"I’m asking because I want a friend who thinks like me. It wasn’t fun for me either. Let’s be honest… I’ve only been with one man, my current husband. Life is so boring."

The old woman sighed and pouted.

"If I hadn’t gotten pregnant, my life would have been more colorful." "But you wouldn’t have had a lovely daughter like me."

"I didn’t want to have one, but I got pregnant. Back then, we didn’t have money to buy condoms. We didn’t know about them. Bad upbringing.

I wanted to cover my face, embarrassed by the frankness of the older generation, but Rungtiwa laughed. The people in the card game of the same generation didn’t think our love was strange. They acted as if it was normal.

"One husband, one wife, what’s wrong with that, Mom?"

"Because I couldn’t experience different things. You’re lucky. You dated a guy, broke up, and then dated a girl. You can compare which one is better. But I… I’ve never been able to compare anyone to your father, except cucumbers."

"Mom, don’t say such things in front of Dao."

"You had an affair with a cucumber and made me eat it?" Her father almost threw his cards, yelling at her. "Because of your cucumber, I lost."

"So, with Non, it’s over, right?"

The old woman changed the subject, which I was grateful for, not wanting to hear about cucumbers anymore.

"Yes."

"Because of her?"

### BA-DUM

The direct question made me uncomfortable. Although they broke up before we dated, I still felt like I was the main reason Rungtiwa left him.

"I broke up because I like women. Non proposed to me, but I couldn’t."

"So, you were the one who cheated. My daughter is amazing, living a colorful life. Everyone give applaud."

Everyone in the card game complied and continued playing. Rungtiwa laughed and looked at me apologetically for dealing with her family.

"It's good to know what you like, not to force yourself to do what you don't like. I'm proud of you, Yung."

"Mom..."

I finally spoke after being silent for so long. "Don't you feel restless?"

"About what?"

"About us... being in love and both of us being women." "No. You're very pretty. I like you... I like pretty things." Mom said openly and directly.

"If Yung is happy, that means you're okay. I approve."

"Mom, are you saying that 'as long as we're good people, everything's okay?'"

Rungtiwa asked, using a cliché phrase as if she was trying to understand her mother's approval.

"Cliché. Stop using such pretentious words; it's nauseating." The old lady playing cards made a horrified face.

"Whenever I hear that on TV, I change the channel immediately. 'As long as you're a good person, you can be whatever you want, yuck. If you're bad, does that mean you can't be gay? Even if you sell drugs, your mother and I will still support you in that. Remember that."

My heart pounded at the family's attitude. I never expected to hear something like that, and I made a mental note to use it in a script. Honestly, I was a little embarrassed that I had written those lines for actors to say.

"Mommy and Daddy really love me," Rungtiwa said with a touched expression.

"No, you selling drugs would make us rich. We want a new house." "Dad, it's me, your daughter."

"Oh, really? I thought you weren't." This family... is the real culture shock.

.

.

I was still perplexed by what I had experienced. Even after we got back in the car, I couldn't shake the confusion. I looked at Rungtiwa in surprise.

"Your family... is so weird." "Weird? How?"

"Why are they so open-minded?"

"Mom and Dad think simply. As long as I’m happy, they’re fine. Mom always says that they won’t stay with me for the rest of my life, so I have to choose for myself. Even if I choose wrong, it will be a lesson."

But as she said this, she looked like she was going to turn around and vomit because she couldn’t handle what she was saying. She said it was too artificial.

"Waaah, your family is so lovely."

I made a crying sound, even though I wasn’t really crying.

Rungtiwa laughed, and that made me reach out to stroke her arm, feeling love and relief that the obstacles weren’t as scary as I thought.

"You were born into a good family, that’s why you’ve become such a sweet and lovely person to me."

"Now you can stop worrying. Mom really likes you. She said you have a beautiful nose and asked for a clear photo to send."

Hearing that made me blush.

"Your mom likes me so much that she wants to keep a photo of me? That’s very sweet."

"No, she wants to use your nose as a reference for her rhinoplasty."

*Okay... I guess it'll take me a while to adjust to this kind of cuteness.*

## THE END