
NOVEL
03
KINN
PORSCHE
BY Daemi

Table of Contents

- Color Gallery
- Title Page
- Copyrights and Credits
- Table of Contents Page
- Chapter 26: Return
- Chapter 27: Enough
- Chapter 28: Questions
- Chapter 29: End
- Chapter 30: Too Late
- Chapter 31: Rectify
- Side Story: Vegas × Pete 0
- Chapter 32: Resolve
- Side Story: Vegas × Pete 1
- Side Story: Vegas × Pete 2
- Chapter 33: Stolen
- Chapter 34: Again
- Side Story: Vegas × Pete 3
- Side Story: Vegas × Pete 4
- Chapter 35: Porsche’s Day
- Special Chapter: KinnPorsche 2
- Character & Name Guide
- Footnotes
- Back Cover
- Newsletter


KINN
PORSCHE



KINN PORSCHE

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03

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CONTENTS

26 Return

27 Enough

28 Questions

29 End

30 Too Late

31 Rectify

SS Vegas × Pete 0

32 Resolve

SS Vegas × Pete 1

SS Vegas × Pete 2

33 Stolen

34 Again

SS Vegas × Pete 3

SS Vegas × Pete 4

35 Porsche's Day

SC KinnPorsche 2

- Character & Name Guide

Chapter 26:
Return

KINN

"PORSCHE... PORSCHE... PORSCHE!" I raised my voice, calling out to Porsche. He was sitting on the sofa, staring vacantly ahead.

Porsche startled, glancing at me before turning back to the documents in front of him. "What is it?" he asked without looking at me.

"I'm going downstairs to eat. Do you want to finish this first, or are you coming with me?" I asked, looking at his embarrassed expression. He hadn't been able to look me in the eye these past couple of days, not willing to accept what he'd done the night he got drunk. He'd done things that surprised even me...but I really liked it! *Heh.*

"Go ahead without me," he said. "I need to add up this month's bills first. Your dad wants it as soon as possible." I nodded at him.

I wasn't sure what had happened to the old Porsche, but this new Porsche was coy and flirtatious and loved to make my heart flutter. He was so much more charming now—it was surprising. I could tell that his feelings toward me had changed. I was glad I could make him feel comfortable with me, but it was making me a little uneasy...

"Kinn, where are last year's bills? I need to refer to them for this document," he said, pointing to our revenue statement. I got up from my chair to take the paper from Porsche and took a glance at it. Although today was Wednesday and Porsche wasn't on the clock, I'd coaxed him into staying in here with me like every other day. He didn't protest, and he even helped me organize my documents, acting like he normally did when he was on the job.

"The documents from 2019 are at the office, but if you open my drawer, my old phone is in there. I had Big scan it—it should be in the photo album," I said. Porsche nodded. I bent down to kiss his head, but he quickly twisted away. I smiled at him as I left the room, his curses echoing after me. Porsche was still Porsche—still foul-

mouthed and acting annoyed with me, like he wouldn't budge. But not once did he refuse me!

"Hey. You're home more often now, huh?" I greeted my younger brother at the table. It was time for dinner, so everyone was gathered in the dining room, including Father and Khun.

"Heh... The stuff we have at home is more attractive," Khun answered for Kim, who whipped his head around.

"What are you talking about?" I asked, adding food from the table to my plate.

"I don't want to say...but it's like this," Khun said, slapping the table and leaning in close. I put down my spoon and turned to listen intently. "Kim has been coming home more often these days because of Ch—mmph!"

Before Khun could finish his sentence, Kim stuffed Khun's mouth with the garnish and slapped a hand over his face.

"Quiet! Have some respect for Father! If you want to tell everyone my business, I'll tell everyone yours!" Kim held Khun in a headlock, his hand sealing Khun's mouth shut. Father and I stared at them in confusion.



“Lemme go!” Khun struggled. I shook my head and turned back to my food.

“Stop playing around!” Father chastised them. “Let’s get back to dinner.”

Kim slowly loosened his grip on Khun but didn’t forget to point at him one last time.

“Idiot!” Khun yelled.

“Still acting like children! How can I entrust the business to you?” Father said, frowning.

“Hah, this again? When the time comes, I’ll do it,” Khun immediately argued.

“And when is that time, exactly? You’re not that young anymore, Khun. You’ve had no success in your work…and that’s not even counting the matter of providing the family with an heir. Will you choose a wife by yourself, or do you want me to introduce you to one?”

Khun choked on his water and sprayed it everywhere, narrowly missing Kim.

“Ooh, Father’s asking about a wiiiife. Is that enough to make you choke?” Kim taunted with a gleeful laugh. I was beginning to wonder what secrets Kim had found out about Khun for him to look so delighted—he was clearly hiding something.

Khun coughed again. “Father, I’m not ready. Get wives for Kinn and Kim,” he said, throwing the problem to the two of us. I rolled my eyes, but Father turned to look at me, sending chills down my spine. *Shit, Khun! Really?*

“Can I really hope for an heir from the two of them?” Father said with a sigh. He knew Kim’s and my tastes lay elsewhere. He didn’t quite accept it, but he didn’t stop us, either. He tried not to meddle with our personal affairs, but I knew he was disappointed…

“Why not hope, Father? Kinn’s so handsome, your grandkids will be adorable!” Khun said with a laugh. He reached over to pull at my cheeks, turning my face from side to side.

“Khun!” I scolded him, slapping his hands away.

Father sighed. “Since we’re on this topic already… I’m not complaining that your tastes are what they are. I already said this when you were with Tawan: I’m disappointed, but I will try to accept it.” I turned to look at him awkwardly before looking back down at my plate, not daring to make eye contact.

“But whatever you do,” Father said, “you should think before you act. Don’t be so inappropriate. Hugging and kissing in the middle of the house… Aren’t you worried people will see you in a bad light?”

I froze. Everyone at the table stared at me. Father must have been referring to the incident three days ago when I went to apologize to Porsche…

“I didn’t want to say anything at first,” he said. “I was hoping to let it go. But how can you be sure that no one can see what you’ve been doing?”

“Is that true, Kinn?” Kim asked me, looking a little pale.

“I’m sorry,” I said, owning up to it. I’d had the guts to do it, so I might as well have the guts to admit it. I’d thought I had been careful enough.

“I’m concerned it will affect your image, but also…are you certain? Are you serious about it this time?”

I glanced at Father, considering how I should answer him.

“I won’t let it happen again,” I said, choosing to avoid the question of whether I was serious about Porsche or not. I wasn’t sure of it myself.

“All right… Please think it through,” said Father. “I don’t want to see you get hurt like that time with Tawan. And I don’t want you to treat anyone like Tawan’s replacement. Do you understand?”

I looked up and nodded at him. I was already considerably troubled by this, and now I knew that the people around me were aware of what was going on between me and Porsche. Although I never said anything, we were together nearly every hour of the day. I guess I didn’t need to say anything at all—everyone must’ve known.

“Come on, let’s eat. Father, you should eat more. The older you get, the more you complain,” Tankhun said, trying to steer away

from the subject. Khun and Kim could read the situation. They were crazy, but they weren't stupid.

Father sighed. "I've lost all hope for the three of you," he said wearily.

"About what?" Kim asked.

"Grandchildren... With Khun being the way he is, how can he hope to find a wife? Should I change my will to bequeath everything to the temple?"

"Stop joking. Let's eat. There's always surrogacy," Khun said with a laugh.

"Fine," Father said. "I've resigned myself to the situation..."

The conversation ended and we went back to eating. Although we moved away from the topic, the atmosphere remained tense. I'd lost my appetite, still ruminating over Father's words.

He didn't want to see me hurt, like what happened with Tawan... I was so heartbroken over Tawan that I swore I wouldn't love anyone else again...

Kim came over to pat me on the shoulder. "Don't fret over it, Kinn."

"Why did Father even have to bring up that bastard?" Tankhun remarked, putting down his spoon and pouting. He meant Tawan. After the day we broke up, Khun and Kim acted disgusted with Tawan and cursed him on my behalf for months.

"Don't *you* bring it up." Kim turned to scold Khun. Father had finished eating and had already left the table.

"Well, that's that. Don't let him in my sights—I'll have him killed!" Tankhun angrily declared.

It still made my heart ache when I heard Tawan's name or when I ran into his younger brother, Mek. It made me think back to the time my heart was broken.

"I'm going back up to my room," I said. My brothers watched me go, worried.

I'd stopped agonizing over Tawan for a long time now—ever since I met Porsche. He brought so much chaos into my life that I'd completely forgotten about other things. However, the closer I got

to Porsche, the more my feelings overlapped with what I used to feel toward Tawan.

I opened the door to my room with a creak. I stopped in my tracks when a familiar conversation rang through the air.

“Say it again, please, please, I want to hear you say it, Kinn!”

“Noooo!”

“…You’re like this every time.”

“Don’t be mad, Tawan. Fine, fine, I’ll say it. ‘The sky might have the Sun,[1] *but by my side, I have you.’ Do you like it? Ha ha!”*

“Ewwww, you’re so corny!”

I went still when I recognized the voices in that video. I tried to gather my wits, quickly marching over to snatch my old phone from Porsche, who was frozen as he stared at it.

“Ah, not this phone…the other one,” I said, picking up the correct phone that contained the documents.

He was speechless for a moment. Then he stuttered out, “Uh, th-there were two phones in the drawer, and I didn’t know which one…” Porsche quickly took the second phone from me, avoiding my gaze.

“You can go downstairs to eat and rest,” I said, cutting things short. “Let’s continue tomorrow.” I wanted this conversation to be over as quickly as possible. Porsche looked like he didn’t quite know what to do, but he nodded and went to gather the documents on the coffee table into neat piles before taking his leave. Once I was sure the room was empty, I huffed out a sigh.

I looked down at the phone I’d just snatched from Porsche’s hands and slowly sank down onto the sofa. I’d forgotten that I kept this phone in that drawer, too. It contained memories of my time with Tawan. It had been over a year since I ended things with him, and the pain came back every time I pictured his face in my head. We’d ended our three-year relationship on bad terms, and both of us were hurt in the process.

I’d been stuck in the past for so long, and I’d tried to forget everything that had happened. Tawan had been the one person I loved the most in this world, and also the one person who had hurt me the most…

After we broke up, I started to fear commitment. I was afraid of starting all over, but most of all, I was afraid of love. I was betrayed by the man I'd trusted most. He'd been sleeping around the whole time we were together, and I was the fool waiting for him, trusting him. I was obsessed with the idea of love, but in the end, it all came crashing down: my delusional affection for him, thinking that our love was so beautiful...when it was merely an idiot's fantasy.

I ceased all contact with Tawan, no matter how hard he tried to apologize. At the time, I wasn't ready to even see his face. The reason I hooked up with so many different guys was because I wanted to erase Tawan from my heart. I tried to find happiness with other people without committing to any of them, slowly burying memories of Tawan under an endless series of flings.

And the moment it seemed like I could... That fluttering feeling in my chest, that feeling of falling in love—it came back again when I was with Porsche. However, this time it was tinged with fear and even paranoia. If I loved Porsche as much as I loved Tawan, it would be agonizing if we ever broke up, and I was terrified of going through that again.

I knew I was falling further each day. I wanted to hug Porsche, to kiss him, to see his face whenever I could. But at the same time, there was resistance in my heart; I was so scared of falling in love.

In these past few weeks, no matter how hard I tried to hold back my feelings, I'd become even more infatuated with Porsche. If things kept going like this, I would surely be worse off than with Tawan.

I pressed play on the video again, watching myself and Tawan laughing happily as familiar memories flooded my mind. I wasn't only afraid of love, but I was also scared I would unconsciously see Porsche as Tawan's replacement. Especially when I took Porsche to that Japanese restaurant he liked so much—Tawan loved that place. I didn't want to turn Porsche into anyone's stand-in, but I'd forgotten that it was my and Tawan's favorite restaurant.

I'd thought Porsche was different, but as time went by, the changes in him reminded me of the past more and more. Acting spoiled, teasing me, his adorable side slowly coming to light...

Porsche seemed tough on the outside, but on the inside, he was quite a sensitive person.

I was afraid of two things: afraid of falling deeply in love with him and having my heart broken, and afraid that what I felt for him was only an echo of what I felt for Tawan.

I looked at the phone that I'd kept turned off for over a year, scrolling aimlessly through old pictures, videos, and messages. I stared at everything despondently, unable to see a way out. As I scrolled, the thoughts swirling through my head began to exhaust me, and I drifted off to sleep on the couch.

***

I woke up aching all over. I picked up my phone to see that it was already eight in the morning. I immediately thought of Porsche—we usually slept in the same bed at night. For me to suddenly disappear like this... I wondered how he was doing.

[LINE]

PORSCHE: I'll sleep with my brother tonight

He had sent the message around one in the morning. I closed my eyes and let my head fall against the backrest of the sofa before wearily typing my reply.

KINN: Sorry, I fell asleep.

Within a few minutes, my message showed up as read, and Porsche sent a message back.

PORSCHE: Okay. I'm at the university now.

KINN: It's early. How did you get there?

PORSCHE: Tem picked me up. I've got a test, so I had to come and study.

KINN: Okay

I exited out of the chat with Porsche and checked out my friends' group chat. There were hundreds of notifications. I had no damned clue what Tay, Time, and Mew were talking about last night. I slowly read through each message—and cursed out loud.

Shit! My high school friends were meeting up for dinner tonight! I'd completely fucking forgotten!

They were talking about what they were going to wear and where they were going to go. I sat there pondering whether I should go, too, before tapping out my message to the group chat.

KINN: Can I pass on this one? I forgot.

TIME: What the hell? You have to go. We've talked about this for months.

KINN: I'm feeling lazy

TAY: We're just going out to eat.

MEW: I'm lazy too. If Kinn's not going, I'm not going.

TIME: See! Both of you have to go. Sun and the rest really want to see us. I already promised them.

TAY: And I already made the reservations, you bastards!

I rolled my eyes but acquiesced to the unexpected dinner. It wasn't a formal reunion, just our class meeting up for a simple dinner party at a restaurant. We'd made the plans months in advance, but I'd managed to forget all about them.

I lay there pathetically on the sofa for a while. I only had afternoon classes today, so I could afford some time to laze around. I talked to my friends on LINE for a while before checking my Facebook feed, which I'd left abandoned for a small eternity. I scrolled through my timeline until my eyes stopped on a name: Porsche Pachara. I'd added him last week, but his account was just as inactive as mine. However, I could see he commented on his friend N'Tem's status last night.

[Porsche Pachara commented on a post]

[Tem Taran]: Should I give up? I wanna forget everything :(

[Comments:]

[Porsche Pachara]: What are you sad about?

[Tem Taran]: You're nosy!

[Porsche Pachara]: Don't make me kick it out of you.

[Tem Taran]: My life is so sad, even my friends want to kick me when I'm down.

[Jom Jukkrit]: Argh!

[Tem Taran]: My heart hurts! Why am I still enduring?[2]

[Porsche Pachara]: How many times can we start over, cruel lover?

[Tem Taran]: My heart aches like I'm dying, I can't live without you~!

[Porsche Pachara]: What's the next line? I forget the rest.

[Jom Jukkrit]: If you're heartbroken, it's because you guys are butt ugly. Fucking deal with it.

[Porsche Pachara]: Asshole!

[Tem Taran]: Go play in traffic, Jom.

[Jom Jukkrit]: What, I'm offering some comfort. Just think of all the shit things they did and you'll get over them.

[Tem Taran]: That's cute, Jom

[Porsche Pachara]: Yeah, cute

[Jom Jukkrit]: Good job, guys.

I smiled at the comments.

The more Porsche acted like this, the more urgent it was that I sort out my own feelings. It's not like I was unaware that he had feelings for me. And that wasn't my ego talking—his actions made it obvious. But I wanted to make sure that I truly loved him, rather than treating him as a replacement for someone else in my heart. I

wanted to be sure I was ready to start over and love someone else. Right now, I didn't know how I felt.

Having Porsche by my side made me so happy. He wasn't my type at all, but he made me fall for him more each day. I wasn't sure of my feelings, and I needed time. Was that selfish of me? If I was just having fun with something new, then I wouldn't take things further, but if I really did love him, then I was ready to make things official between us...

I went to class like usual and hurried back home to get dressed for dinner. Porsche had asked for the day off to compete in a judo match at the university, and I gave him my permission. I brought Big and the rest of my guards instead.

The dinner party with my high school friends was at a high-end restaurant inside a skyscraper hotel that Tay's family owned. We had a great time catching up, not having seen each other in ages. The table was crowded—it wasn't just people from our year, but close friends from other classes, as well as significant others people had brought along to show off. I went to an all-boys school, so people showed up with both men and women on their arms.

"Oh, Mek, you're back from the U.K.?"

My classmates cheered and went to welcome Mek as he walked in with a smile.

"Sun invited me. I only heard about this yesterday," Mek said, coming over to the table and looking for a seat. I nodded at him once in greeting.

"Come on, sit down. You can take the seat next to Kinn!"

The whole table seemed excited at Mek's arrival, probably because he'd gone on to study in the U.K. after finishing high school and rarely came back to Thailand. I sighed to myself, feeling a little uneasy. Mek's presence was one of the things messing me up right now. Mek was Tawan's younger brother, and Tawan was three years older than me. Mek and I used to be close—we'd known each other since middle school—but after I broke up with his brother, we had a falling-out.

Mek blamed me for leaving his brother and never gave me a chance to explain things. Very few people knew what had actually

happened between me and Tawan. Time, Tay, and Mew knew, as well as Khun and Kim, but that was it. I was confident that Tawan hadn't told his brother the whole story, so Mek had hated me since then. Our friendship deteriorated to the point where we physically came to blows…

"Hey, you," Mek said. "You didn't invite me."

"I only remembered this morning that this was happening," I said, trying to act as nonchalant as possible. Truly, a long time had passed since then, and I'd been trying to forget and move on.

"When are you going back to the U.K.?" Tay asked, raising his eyebrows and looking displeased.

Mek smiled at him. "Why? Am I an eyesore?" Time looked between me and Mek.

"No…I'm just asking," Tay said with a casual shrug of his shoulders. After they found out what Tawan did, and having been there when Mek came to pick a fight with me at university, my friends hated him, too.

"Might be here a while. I've got business to deal with," Mek answered, staring at Tay.

"What business?" Tay retorted.

"You're spending an awful lot of energy prying into my affairs." Mek smirked. "Shouldn't you be watching your boyfriend instead? Be careful you don't catch something from sharing him so generously."

"Fuck you, Mek! Shut your mouth!" Time shouted, slamming his fist on the table and silencing the room.

"Shit, guys. We don't get to meet up often. Let's all get along… We're all right. Keep eating," one of my classmates said, trying to ease the tension by changing the subject. He invited Tay and Time out to the balcony to take pictures so they wouldn't clash with Mek.

"Is your pet bodyguard not with you today?" Mek suddenly asked. I whipped around to look at him before glancing outside to where Big and the rest were sitting.

"Who?" I asked him.

"Porsche, of course. Don't you bring him everywhere you go?"

I looked at Mek distrustfully. I was a little surprised that he remembered Porsche's name. They'd only met once—why was he singling him out?

"He's busy today," I said. Mek smirked and gave me a calculating look. A suffocating feeling had been building up inside me for a while now, but I did my best to push it down.

We continued to eat and talk. Mek didn't bother me again, although he did occasionally turn to take a jab at Time and Tay. The look Mek kept giving me was a little strange, but I tried to ignore it. After a while, he got up to take a call and disappeared.

"Kinn..." Mew nudged me to look behind us, appearing as shocked as Time and Tay did.

"Hey everybody, my brother wants to join us!"

I followed everyone else's gaze and saw the newcomer. My heart plummeted and my entire body went numb.

"Shit," Tay cursed under his breath.

That familiar face stared back at me, his eyes shining with sorrow. He stood there aimlessly before Mek brought him over to sit next to me.

"Tawan," I rasped out.

He gave me a small smile. I couldn't believe he was right there in front of me; I hadn't seen him in over a year. All sorts of emotions came rushing back to me, surging through me without mercy. Old wounds threatened to reopen in my heart.

"Kinn...have you been well?" Tawan's sweet voice hesitantly asked. I was still frozen in shock, words getting caught in my throat. I couldn't speak. Why was he here?

"My brother asked you something, Kinn. Aren't you going to answer him?" Mek's voice brought me out of my thoughts. I glanced at Tawan before turning away.

"Mm... I'm fine," I answered evenly, trying to keep my emotions at bay. Images of the past flooded my mind, along with that last agonizing memory... The image of him sleeping with someone else.

"Kinn, are you ready to go?" Mew said, looking worried. "We're gonna leave soon."

“But my brother just got here,” Mek said with a mocking smile, making Tay glare at him.

“Let’s leave,” said Tay. “The vibe’s all weird now.”

“Kinn… I…” Tawan sounded like he was about to cry. His uncomfortable demeanor was stifling.

“We can leave now.” I turned to nod at my friends, who looked ready to get up from the table. I said goodbye to my classmates as they expressed regret and tried to stop me from leaving, but I knew I’d only ruin the mood if I stayed. Most of my classmates knew what Tawan and I were to each other, but they didn’t know why we broke up.

I left the table without looking at Tawan’s face. Although it didn’t hurt as much as those early days had, seeing him without warning was jarring. I couldn’t cope with all these emotions.

I made it to the elevator. My bodyguards had seen me leaving and hurried down to bring the car around. As soon as the elevator doors opened, I took a step inside, only to be stopped by someone pulling at my arm. The momentum made me turn around to face him.

“Kinn…are you still angry with me?” Tawan asked. His tearful eyes and trembling voice made me freeze up, but I turned away.

“Phi!” Tay cut in. “It’s been over for a long time now. Why don’t you go your separate ways?”

But Tawan refused to take his eyes off of me. “I want to talk to Kinn for a moment. Please?” Tawan’s slender hand wouldn’t let go of my arm. He held on, trembling slightly and practically begging me. I went still for a moment. Then I turned to look at my friends standing guard behind me.

“Talk about what? There’s nothing to talk about… Kinn, let’s go,” Tay said, glaring at Tawan and refusing to back down.

“Give me a moment,” I said to Tay, my voice calm.

“Why are you talking to him?! Time, let go of me!”

Mew and Time helped drag Tay into the elevator as he continued to yell.

“We’ll be waiting downstairs,” Time said in concern, his voice strained. I nodded as the elevator doors closed.

“What is it, phi?” I asked, pulling my arm away.

“Treating me so coldly… You’re still angry with me, aren’t you?” Tawan closed his eyes, exerting great effort to keep his voice from trembling.

“…No,” I said, trying to act as naturally as possible.

“I missed y—”

“When did you come back?” I cut Tawan off before he could finish his sentence. I knew what he was going to say. There were no more tender feelings left in my heart for him, but the scars were slowly becoming more noticeable.

“…Three or four days ago. I was going to come and see you. Won’t you give me a chance to apologize, Kinn?”

“It’s been a long time. I don’t even think about it anymore.”

“Don’t say that, Kinn…” Tawan pursed his lips, his eyes pleading as he tried to convey the feelings he still had for me.

“Enjoy your time here. If you’ll excuse me…”

The elevator doors opened just in time. I quickly stepped in, ignoring his begging, as well as the hand that tried to grab my arm.

“Kinn…please listen to me. We’ll see each other again, right?” Tawan asked, his voice trembling. I pressed the button for the ground floor and then the one to close the elevator doors, giving him a faint smile without saying anything else.

“Kinn…”

When I arrived downstairs, I separated from Time, Tay, and Mew to head home. They looked concerned and clearly wanted to know what happened, but I was quiet and somber enough that they didn’t dare to ask. I closed my eyes and let out a long sigh, leaning back in my seat as the car drove away.

I needed to let my thoughts and feelings work themselves out. I didn’t feel the same way I once did for Tawan, but seeing him again only intensified my fears. The image of Tawan in the past overlapped with the image of Porsche in the present until my head spun in confusion.

When I got home, I told my bodyguards to go get some rest. I wanted to be alone with my thoughts for a while. I entered the house, but just as I was about to head up the stairs, Porsche came out of his room. He made a noise of greeting, and I had to stop and smile back.

"Did you just get back?" he asked, walking over to me.

I turned toward him. "Yeah... Have you been back for a long time?"

"A while now," he replied.

"And where were you going...?"

"I was going out for a smoke... Oh, do you want me to finish the paperwork left over from yesterday?" he said, his eyebrows raised. "I can go upstairs and..."

Although he had the day off, we'd been spending nearly all of our time together. In fact, I was usually the one begging him to stay close to me. But I wanted to be alone right now. I needed to think, to sort through my feelings.

"Kinn, are you okay? Why are you making that face...?" Porsche took a step toward me and I unconsciously stepped back, making him freeze in surprise.

"You go and rest, Porsche. You're not on duty, so you don't have to do anything." I stood there motionlessly, trying not to look at him. It seemed like he still had questions for me.

"...I see."

"I'm going upstairs," I said. I turned away as soon as I finished my sentence; I couldn't bear to look at Porsche's quivering eyes. Although I wanted to pull him into a hug and kiss his cheeks like before, something was stopping me. I liked him, but I didn't know if I could be serious with him. I was so afraid of using him as Tawan's replacement.

I needed time to sort out this confusion in my heart before it was too late—before Porsche or I could get hurt.

When I got to my room, I collapsed onto the couch, my head in my hands. If Tawan hadn't shown up at dinner, it would probably have been easier for me to make my decision. But seeing him

tonight… It was like the feelings I'd worked so hard to bury had come back to haunt me.

I might not be ready to love anyone right now…

Do I have to start over from the beginning?

What am I really feeling?

Chapter 27:
Enough

PORSCHE

“WHERE ARE WE GOING after this?” Tem asked. Still in my judo uniform, I sat wearily on a wooden bench in the sports hall with my friends.

“What are you making that face for? Aren’t you happy that you won?” Jom asked, hooking his arm over my shoulder and swaying us from side to side. I sighed for the hundredth time today.

I hadn’t thought I’d be miserable like this, but just a simple change in Kinn’s attitude was enough to make my thoughts run wild. I didn’t want to be like this, but it was too late; I’d already caught feelings for him.

We’d barely spoken to one another these past few days—just small talk, and no teasing or playful touches. It was a bit confusing how quickly Kinn had changed.

It began two days ago when I accidentally found a video on Kinn’s old phone. I didn’t find the album Kinn was talking about, but instead came across myriad photos and videos he’d kept of his ex. My heart had dropped at the sight of Kinn smiling freely, acting sweet and annoying in the video. He was a little crazy but still fully himself with Tawan. I’d thought maybe I was the only one to see that side of him. I was wrong.

Seeing him so happy with his ex… His affectionate gaze and his actions were no different from how he was with me. My feelings were a mess: On the one hand, it meant that he trusted me like he trusted Tawan, but on the other hand, it wasn’t exactly the same… When Kinn was with his ex, his face and his eyes seemed to sparkle with joy, but with me, it was like an invisible line separated us. How was I supposed to feel about that?

I knew he must have deeply loved his ex-boyfriend; after all, he’d kept those memories after all this time. But what about me? The gaze he looked at me with wasn’t any more special than the way he looked at his ex. I was confused, I couldn’t get a handle on

my emotions, and I didn't know why Kinn was avoiding me. He hadn't dared to look me in the eye the last few days…

How do I deal with this?

I cursed under my breath. I should have been focusing on other things: my brother, my studies, my work, or those people targeting me. But I couldn't stop picturing Kinn's face in my mind…

"Tem," I whispered, turning toward him. Tem raised his brows and went still. Even the hand holding onto his ice cream froze.

"Did…did you try following Madam Yok's advice?" I asked, lowering my voice so only the two of us could hear.

"Wh-what are you talking about?" Tem stammered out, his face reddening. I squinted at him. I was pretty sure that Tem was seeing someone—he just gave off the vibe that he was in love. I didn't want to pester him about it; I knew he'd tell me in his own time. But if he was acting like this, then he probably did what Madam Yok told us, right?

"Have you tried? Did it work?" I repeated my question, trying to figure out what was wrong with Kinn. Maybe he didn't like what I did the last time we slept together. That night was so embarrassing for me.

"N-no." Tem didn't really answer, but I could still catch him out.

"Tell me the truth, Tem. I have something to ask you…" I continued to question Tem until he couldn't sit still.

"Why? Did *you* try?" he asked.

I quickly shook my head. I stared at him a little threateningly, trying to force him into answering, until he looked down and stuffed his face with ice cream.

"Mm… Ask away," Tem hesitantly said, not looking at me. I smirked at the sight of Tem—who was just about as tall as me—trying to act all tiny and cute.

"What are you two talking about? Let me join you," Jom butted in, frowning as he looked between Tem and me.

"Nothing," Tem and I said at the same time.

"You bastards are keeping secrets from me! That hurts, man," Jom angrily grumbled before getting up to go to the bathroom. Tem

and I sighed.

If we told Jom what we were talking about, he'd lose his goddamn mind. He might say he didn't mind it, but I was pretty sure he still needed a bit of time to adjust.

I turned back to Tem. "Then…did he like it?"

Tem made a face but eventually nodded. "Maybe…I think."

"You didn't ask?"

"Do you have the guts to ask Kinn?"

"Nope," I answered without thinking. I immediately froze at my own words and glanced at Tem, who was smiling wickedly at me.

"Shit, Tem, you asshole!" I cursed, making him howl with laughter.

"Hah! You're a bottom, you bastard! Ha ha, you can't fool me!" he crowed until I had to kick him.

"Shithead!" I yelled. I rubbed my face, angry that I'd been tricked by my friend. Why did I blurt it out like that? I was so fucking stupid! I wanted to go hit my head against the wall!

"That hurt… Hah. Why? Did he not like it?" Tem asked. "What's gotten into him, anyway? I haven't seen him around here for a while. Did you guys fight?"

I didn't know how to answer him. I should've been worried—I'd developed feelings for him, and I'd found out about his past.

Kinn's behavior had suddenly changed, so much that it made me question myself constantly. I tried to act like nothing was wrong and not dwell on the photos and videos I found. I didn't have the right to demand answers from him; he and I weren't anything special to each other. I didn't understand what was going on in his head. The whole situation was baffling to me.

"What's wrong? Tell me," Tem said.

"I'm gonna go change." I got up from my seat, ignoring Tem, and grabbed my bag to head to the bathroom. Just when I was about to step away from my friend, I stopped to look in surprise at a newcomer.

"Congratulations, Porsche," Vegas said with a smile. "P'Beam told me you won, but I couldn't make it in time to see you."

I nodded, not really knowing how to act. I was at a loss for what to do every time I ran into Vegas now. What happened with him in the car had made me jumpy—and I kind of wanted to punch him.

Tem could probably sense the tension, so he hurried over and nudged my arm. “Porsche, you should go get changed.”

“Porsche, please don’t make that face,” Vegas said. “I’m sorry. Please don’t hate me.” He must have been remembering that day too. It really was an unnerving experience. “I really didn’t mean it, Porsche.”

He stepped toward me. I took a step back. Shit, he really did look like he regretted it. When I really thought about it, he *did* try to help me escape from those crazy thugs, even if his words made me uncomfortable and that shit he pulled in the car made no sense.

“Forget it. I don’t even think about it now,” I dismissed him, schooling my expression to look like I didn’t care.

“...I’m truly sorry.” Vegas didn’t look so good. He kept staring straight at me, too.

“Excuse me.” Not wanting to get involved, I quickly waved goodbye to Vegas and hurried to the bathroom to change back into my university uniform. Vegas didn’t follow me or pester me again.

I’d competed in the qualification round for athletes today—they were selecting people to compete against other universities in the upcoming sports meet. I had secretly hoped that Kinn would come find me at the gym like usual, but there was no sign of him...

Although I’d won today’s judo match, it still felt like I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. P’Beam practically paraded me around the campus, but I still wasn’t satisfied with my performance. I couldn’t focus at all during the match. I hadn’t been able to think of anything but Kinn these last few days.

Although I’d gone to Kinn’s room a couple times, I hadn’t been sleeping over like I used to. His odd behavior made me uneasy; I wanted to know what the hell was going on with him, but he never gave me the chance to ask. As soon as he saw me approach, he would pretend to be playing games or showering or going

downstairs to eat. And he was going out by himself more often lately…

What was I to Kinn? Was I just another boytoy, like Big said?

I tried to get going on my bike, but it wouldn't fucking start. Why was it acting up on me right now? It'd been running just fine this morning. Shit, my life was just endless bad luck. "What the hell?" I muttered to myself.

Vegas walked over to me, looking concerned. "What's going on, Porsche?"

I stepped away from my bike and squatted down on the ground to see what the hell was making the engine act up like this. Just when I was in a bad mood, too. Nothing was going my way.

Vegas sat down beside me, helping me check. "I think the battery is dead," he said after inspecting my bike. I'd also guessed as much. I didn't waste any time dialing Tem's number for help. Vegas was still walking around my bike, fiddling with various bits and pieces.

"Where are you, Tem?" I asked. We'd split up at the gym, so Tem was probably still somewhere around the building.

"The pool," Tem replied. "I'm warming up. What happened?"

"You're still swimming?" It was already getting late.

"I've got a match tomorrow," he explained. "What's going on?"

I quietly sighed. I didn't want to bother my friend. Tem was serious about his swimming, too, so I thought I shouldn't interrupt him.

"What about Jom?"

"Didn't he leave already? I think he's got a peer mentor gathering. His peer mentor aunt just came back from America.[3] Pretty sure he's only going for the souvenirs."

I rolled my eyes. Neither of my friends could help me at this point. "It's nothing. Bye," I said, hanging up and turning to look at my bike. *What do I do now?*

Vegas appeared to have finished making a phone call and walked over to me with a small smile. "Porsche, I'll have one of my men take your motorcycle to a repair shop."

“You really don’t have to. I can get my friends to help,” I declined, not wanting to be a bother—or to owe him a favor.

“I’ve taken care of it,” Vegas said, being a perfect little boy scout. “If it’s nothing serious, it should be fixed by tomorrow.”

“Really, it’s not—”

“Think of it as an apology for upsetting you, Porsche.” He quickly cut me off before I could refuse him again. I thought about it for a minute. When these mafia motherfuckers wanted something and didn’t get their way, did they ever back down? The entire extended family was like this—they never listened.

“Really, you didn’t have to bother,” I insisted. But no matter how much I argued, I couldn’t win against these mafiosi. Just look at Kinn and Khun.

“The mechanic will take a quick look. I’ll call you as soon as I’ve got an answer from him.”

I sighed internally, a little annoyed. “But…”

Argh! If Kinn knew that Vegas was meddling again, he’d be pissed off at me for sure. But…that might be a good thing. I wanted to see the kind of face he’d make.

“So it’s settled, then…” Vegas trailed off. I sighed and nodded, making him smile widely. “And I want to do one more thing to apologize,” he insisted. “Let me drop you off.”

I immediately shook my head in refusal. “It’s fine. I’ll get a taxi.” I still thought he was a good person, but what happened in the car still nagged at me. I didn’t feel safe around him now. I had no idea what was going on inside his head.

“Porsche…I know what I did was wrong,” he said somberly. “I don’t have any ill intentions toward you—please give me the chance to prove it.”

“It’s fine, really. I can go by myself.”

“I can’t be at ease seeing you like this. Let me drop you off. I won’t do anything to make you uncomfortable.” He sounded even more solemn, like he was begging me to believe him.

“But…” *I’m not at fucking ease, Vegas.* Although I was tempted to see if Kinn would get angry or not, I was still a little wary.

He kept trying to persuade me. “Porsche, you said you don’t think about it anymore. So let me drop you off for my own peace of mind. Let me be sure you don’t hate me.”

I let out a long sigh. Vegas looked at me with sad eyes, like he was trying to earn back my trust. I didn’t know how else to refuse. When I thought about it, he *had* helped me quite a lot in the past, and he didn’t seem that dangerous. If he tried anything, I still had my wits about me—he wouldn’t be able to mess with me.

It was getting late, so I ended up in his car. I tried to convince myself that he wouldn’t dare try something like last time, but I needed to be careful. If Kinn found out about this, he’d probably fly into a rage again. Or would he not care? It was because of Vegas’s actions that I’d ended up sleeping with Kinn that night, but would Kinn react the same way now? Ultimately, my curiosity about Kinn’s potential reaction outweighed my distrust of Vegas.

“You want me to drop you off at my uncle’s house?” Vegas asked as he pulled away—he meant Mr. Korn.

“Mm-hm.”

“This late, there’ll be traffic,” Vegas remarked as he reached to turn on the radio. I sat there playing on my phone, looking up every so often. Vegas didn’t bother me much, only making small talk about the weather. I replied apathetically.

We were about halfway to the house when Vegas spoke up at a red light. “Are you hungry?” he asked.

“No,” I answered curtly. He smiled and turned the radio up, humming and tapping his finger along to the music. He looked completely relaxed. I snuck a glance at him acting silly and realized I was probably worrying too much. That day he tried to overpower me in the car, he’d probably been drunk—he seemed pretty normal right now.

“*Though it seems there’s no chance, no matter how many times I mess up romance, love is still asking me to act like this…”* Vegas burst into song as he gazed out the window.[4]

I smiled, remembering how the day I got mad at Kinn, he’d sung a stupid song like this. Kinn’s off-key singing voice replayed

over and over in my ear for a while. I kept smiling and thinking about Kinn until Vegas turned to look at me.

"What are you smiling about? Do you like this song?" he asked me, surprised. His eyes had a strange glint to them. I immediately stopped smiling, looking out the window instead.

"Heh... *I'll give it to you until you give in to me, I'll tell you I love you until you love me*," Vegas kept singing.

I scrolled through my phone, opening up my chat history with Kinn. What was he doing right now? We hadn't texted since the day he told me he overslept and I said I had to go to the university early. He'd said "okay," and after that, there were no more messages.

Was he bored with me? The thought got stuck in my head, swirling around and around. When we were lost in the forest, he told me he didn't like having the same thing twice. I didn't know then that those words would come back to haunt me.

He must have really been bored. Would someone like him feel anything for me? Wishful thinking on my part...

We turned into the driveway. The security guard saw that it was the big boss's nephew, so he opened the gates with a wai. Vegas parked by the garden.

"I'll go now," Vegas told me. "Oh, and can I have your LINE?" He handed me his phone. I raised my eyebrows. "So I can tell you when the bike is ready. I'll have the mechanic deliver it to you."

I thought for a moment before deciding that it was necessary. He'd volunteered to help with so much—plus, he had my bike. I needed to be able to get in touch with him. I typed in my LINE ID and added myself as a friend before handing back his phone.

"Just tell me when it's ready...and thank you for dropping me off," I said. Vegas grinned and waved goodbye.

I stepped out of the car and lugged my backpack onto my shoulder, spinning around to head inside. I froze when I saw a tall figure leaning against his car with his arms crossed.

I stood there in stunned silence as Kinn, still in his university uniform, glared at me. *What do I do? Do I act normal? Should I get angry?* How was I supposed to act?

“Meet me in my room,” Kinn said gravely. My heart raced wildly, a confused sort of happiness hiding deep within me.

I dropped my backpack off in my room, washing my face and looking at myself in the mirror. *Why am I smiling? Just act normal!*

Was I crazy for *wanting* him to get angry? I wondered if Kinn would scold me or start shouting. He might get so pissed off that his face would turn red. He’d probably start throwing things, too. When it involved me and Vegas, Kinn always lost his temper. If he got angry, then at least I’d know that he still cared about me…

I opened the bathroom door to find Chay packing his bags.

“Hia, can I stay over with a friend this weekend?” he asked. *If you’re already packing, you probably don’t have to ask me for permission.*

“Who?” I asked him.

Chay looked startled. “Oh, uh, just Tee and the rest.”

“Oh? That’s quite a long sleepover,” I remarked, wiping my face and squinting at him in suspicion. “How are you getting there?”

“I’ll go see them at the dorms,” he said.

I had a feeling that my brother was not actually planning to hang out with friends. He might be seeing someone if he was acting like this. Should I tease him and say he couldn’t go?

“You can’t go,” I said sternly. Chay immediately paled.

“Why? You’ve never stopped me from going before,” he protested. Suddenly, my mood was lifted, and I tried not to laugh.

“You’re acting suspicious… Have you got a secret sweetheart?” I asked, raising an eyebrow. He sputtered so awkwardly that I was certain my guess was spot-on.

“What *sweetheart*?!” he grumbled, still stuffing his bags.

“Fine, fine, just go. Remember to message me when you get there,” I said, putting my hands in my pockets and turning to leave. “And be careful—don’t get her pregnant.”

Chay stood there completely horrified as I shut the door. What? I didn’t want to be an uncle just yet!

I knew that Kinn was going to yell at me when I got upstairs, but I was looking forward to it. The gloom from the past few days

was slowly dissolving. I had to be going insane.

I opened the office door to the smell of cigarette smoke. Kinn stood with his back to me, looking out the open window at his desk and blowing smoke from his lips. I barely ever saw him smoke. What kind of mood was he in now?

The one thing I could sense with certainty was the tension in the air. We were usually so at ease when we were alone with each other. I started to feel anxious as confusing thoughts rushed back into my head.

I stood in front of the desk and Kinn turned around. I wasn't sure what kind of face I was making, but this Kinn looked so much sadder than the man I was used to.

"Where have you been with Vegas?" he asked, his voice void of emotion as he stubbed out his cigarette in a crystal ashtray. He glanced at me once before quickly looking back out the window.

I was taken aback. This wasn't the reaction I'd expected at all.

"I…" I started to speak, but the words got stuck in my throat. I didn't know what to do with this version of Kinn. Should I be glad that he wasn't angry? I felt a strange pang in my chest.

"So?" Kinn prompted me in that same indifferent tone.

"My bike wouldn't start. He happened to be there and offered me a lift," I replied, my voice equally calm.

"I told you to have nothing to do with him, don't you remember?" he said without even looking at me. His cold demeanor further confirmed my worries: He didn't really care about me. My bike had broken down and he didn't even bother to ask about it. I kept my mouth shut and didn't say anything back.

"Let me say it one more time," he said. "Stay away from Vegas. Don't get so close to him."

"Why?" I asked, my mind spinning with unanswered questions. It seemed like Vegas was the only thing Kinn cared about, and his reaction was ripping my heart in two.

"I already told you. It'd be inappropriate if people see you with him. They might spread rumors…"

“Is that all?” I asked quietly. *Well, fuck me for getting so attached to him.* I didn’t know where I’d gone wrong, but this should have been enough for me to realize that this was it—that Kinn didn’t care about me at all.

“No,” Kinn said, tossing the cigarette butt into the ashtray. He turned to look at me, still expressionless.

I took a deep breath, feeling my heart sink. Just a few days ago, he would have hugged me tightly. He would have kissed my cheeks and teased me until I got flustered. But now—now, he had returned to that cold, calculating version of himself before we became close. He was that man with his walls up high, the cruel and heartless Kinn I used to hate.

I wanted to hear what he was going to say next. I still hoped that he might have some feelings for me, but my heart shattered when he said, “Bring me the 2019 folder you organized for me. I’m going to show it to my father.”

He dropped into his chair and returned his attention to his computer. I stared at him blankly and wondered why he had changed so drastically. Why had he made me fall for him? Why did he need to play with my heart like this?

I pursed my lips tightly and forced myself to do as he asked. I wanted to yell at him and ask what the fuck his problem was. However, he had already put on headphones and started a game. He never gave me the chance.

Everything became clear to me now. It was like Pete, Vegas, and Big had told me—a man like Kinn had people lining up to sleep with him. There was no reason for him to care about someone like me. I was just another man stupid enough to fall for him, no different from any other guys he slept with. I’d been so fucking gullible. What more could I expect from him?

Finding the folder Kinn requested from the shelf took me a while. The text in front of me was all in Thai, but I still couldn’t focus enough to read what was written on the folders. I wasn’t sure how much time had passed, but I didn’t want to face Kinn. The room was completely silent, unlike my mind, which was screaming in confusion.

“Porsche… Porsche.”

Upon hearing my name, I snapped out of my thoughts and quickly snatched the folder Kinn wanted from the shelf. It was right in front of me, but I'd been too blinded by emotion to see.

"Here," I said flatly, putting the folder on his desk. "If there's nothing else, I'll leave now."

Kinn grabbed my wrist the second my hand lifted off the desk. I looked down to find him staring at me.

He looked contemplative for a moment before saying, "I've been feeling tired lately."

I let him hold my hand while I tried to figure out what he meant by that. I should have been delighted that he spoke to me, but I only felt anxious and lost.

I waited to see if he would elaborate. I wanted to know why he was tired. I'd been with him almost all this time, and I didn't notice anything that should have worried him except that old cell phone of his that I found. That didn't seem like a big deal, though, unless...

Knock, knock.

"Mr. Kinn, someone is here to see you," one of the bodyguards in front of Kinn's room announced. The door cracked open, and Kinn released my hand so abruptly that I had to look and see who his visitor was.

When my eyes fell upon a slender man with a familiar face, my heart skipped a beat. Kinn's sudden release of my hand when he saw this man further clarified the situation.

"Kinn, I brought you some souvenirs from England," the man said, smiling sweetly at Kinn before glancing at me.

Was this Kinn's ex-boyfriend, Tawan? Did he want to get back together with him?

Kinn seemed stunned to see him, so I wondered whether Tawan was the reason he'd been acting so strange lately.

No one said anything, and the silence was deafening. The atmosphere was so unsettling that I wanted to leave.

I studied the man in front of me. Tawan was strikingly beautiful, and he held himself with impeccable grace. It was no

surprise that he had been Kinn's lover; the two were perfectly matched.

"Am I interrupting you?" Tawan asked.

The way he spoke was overly polite, practically aristocratic. I wanted to pull my hair out in shame for even entertaining the thought that Kinn would want a lowlife like me. I was fucking delusional—I couldn't compare to this Tawan guy in the slightest.

"Thank you," Kinn finally replied to Tawan. He got up and went to accept the souvenir from his unexpected guest. I watched them closely, noticing that Tawan seemed a bit nervous. Kinn didn't dare to look him in the eye.

Still, from their shared glances, these two seemed to know each other very well. Tawan followed Kinn's every movement with his eyes, while Kinn tried to restrain himself from showing any emotion. I could tell Kinn still felt strongly toward his ex-boyfriend—he wouldn't have looked this nervous if he didn't.

Despite maintaining some distance, Tawan accepted Kinn's invitation and sat beside him on the sofa. There seemed to be a bubble surrounding them, and the spacious room suddenly felt cramped. Kinn wasn't paying a shred of attention to me.

I finally understood what sadness felt like. I hated myself for suddenly becoming so weak. I felt so fragile, like I was slowly shattering apart. Damn it! Why was I letting this get to me?!

"Can I talk to you in private?" I heard Tawan ask Kinn. The way he glared at me from the corner of his eye screamed that I did not belong here. I wanted to leave, but my legs refused to budge.

Kinn didn't answer right away. He almost turned to look at me, but he stopped and answered Tawan instead. "What do you want to talk about?"

It hurt to know that this was no longer my place. It would be even more painful if Kinn made the point to ask me to leave. The thought of it made my heart fall to my feet. I wouldn't be able to cope if he did.

"Well, I—"

The door suddenly swung open, and we all turned to look.

Tankhun stormed inside. “What the hell are you doing here?!” he yelled, completely obliterating the tension in the room.

“Khun,” Tawan greeted the newcomer. He stood up from the sofa and forced a smile at the man swearing profusely at him. However, his smile faltered when Khun ignored him and continued complaining.

“Kinn, why did you let this asshole in our house?” he demanded.

“Don’t do this, Khun. Just leave us alone, all right?” Kinn asked, holding his brother’s arm in an attempt to pacify him.

“I have a souvenir for you as well, Khun,” Tawan interrupted. It was obvious that Tawan was trying to calm Tankhun down, too, but Khun angrily pushed the bag of souvenirs away, scattering them all over the floor.

“Khun!” Kinn snapped.

I frowned. Maybe Kinn was pissed at his brother because he still felt protective of Tawan?

“What? Why do you want to talk to him?” Tankhun scoffed before continuing to yell at Tawan. “Why did you come back? Don’t you remember what you did to my brother?!”

Kinn stood up in front of Tawan when it looked like Tankhun was about to hit him. He turned to me and yelled, “Porsche, get Khun out of here!”

I was surprised at how harshly he shouted at me. I had never felt this hurt before. Although Kinn didn’t directly cast me off, he wanted me to leave. I didn’t know why I’d stayed in the first place. Kinn had wanted me out of his room from the start, and Khun’s unwelcome arrival was the perfect excuse to get rid of me. I couldn’t know for certain, but I really believed that Kinn didn’t want me here.

“Mr. Tankhun,” I said, turning to grab the enraged man and dragging him out of the room. Tawan kept his eyes on me instead of Tankhun. Kinn didn’t even look in our direction.

Tankhun continued to rant and rave until we reached his room. “Why did you stop me, Porsche?!”

I opened the door to find Pete and the other bodyguards waiting there, looking embarrassed.

“Will you help me with him?” I asked them, still holding Tankhun in a body lock.

“We can’t,” Arm replied, his voice slightly shaken.

“Why?” I barked, trying to get Tankhun inside. My fellow bodyguards surrounded me with sullen faces, afraid to go near Tankhun.

“He forbade us from touching him,” Pol whispered. “He said he’d trample us if we did.”

I rolled my eyes, fed up with Tankhun’s antics. Once I managed to get him inside, one of the bodyguards swiftly locked the door. I threw Tankhun onto his couch. I wasn’t being that forceful, but he still fell face-first.

“Why did you stop me, Porsche?!” Tankhun yelled, pushing himself upright. “I was trying to help you!”

I was already angry with Kinn, and now I had to deal with his crazy brother. I wanted to bite my fucking tongue off and die.

“Please cut it out, Mr. Tankhun,” Pete said, blocking the door with his body. “Others might think that our clan is barbaric and violent.”

“Why are you all stopping me?” Tankhun whined. He turned to me. “I’m on your team, Porsche! Hashtag Team Porsche!”

So Tankhun knew about me and Kinn? *Fuck.* Exhausted, I dropped onto Tankhun’s sofa without asking his permission. I suddenly felt so worn out, I couldn’t help myself.

“You can’t let that bastard meddle with your relationship!” Tankhun insisted. “I know he didn’t come here with good intentions. You knew what he did to Kinn, right?” His ramblings were starting to give me a headache.

“Mr. Tankhun,” Pete warned him.

“What? I’m going to say it! That man cheated on Kinn while they were dating! He was the reason they broke up. Now he’s acting like he wants to redeem himself. *Pfft!* Someone probably told him Kinn moved on to someone new. It’s been over a year—he should get over it.”

Now I could finally piece everything together. I knew why and how long it had been since Kinn broke up with Tawan—although just over a year wasn't that long ago.

"Don't worry too much," Arm cut in, trying to comfort me. "He might just be here for a visit."

"Someone like him only coming for a visit?" Tankhun scoffed, glaring at Arm. "Do you even know that man? I used to be his friend. He is pure evil." He turned to me, still visibly fuming. "Don't give in to him, my future bottom-in-law! Never surrender! I don't want my brother to live in that hell ever again!"

"Bottom-in-law? Really?" Pete muttered in disbelief.

Tankhun turned to him. "What the hell is your problem?"

I watched as Pete and Tankhun bickered. Tankhun's head bodyguard seemed to be getting cocky these days, not afraid to talk back to his boss anymore.

As I listened to their argument, numerous thoughts spun through my head. I couldn't admit how weak I had become. I didn't know what Kinn thought of Tawan now, but I was sure he still had feelings for him. I wondered if he'd suddenly distanced himself from me because he knew Tawan was coming back. Had Kinn been waiting for him? Did he want to get back together with him? What was he even thinking right now?

Kinn might never have remembered Tawan if I hadn't reminded him. The day I opened that drawer and found his memories tucked away inside that phone may have reawakened everything he had been trying to suppress—including his feelings for his ex.

I knew dwelling on these thoughts wouldn't do me any good. I knew that Kinn didn't give a damn about me, and I didn't have the right to worry about him like this. I didn't even know what we were to each other.

"Tawan is just his ex," Tankhun told me. "Don't worry too much about him. But if you want to attack him, I'll be your backup."

I hadn't known Tankhun was so opinionated about Kinn's ex. He probably still held a grudge against Tawan for what he did to his

brother. Surely Kinn wouldn't return to Tawan if he'd cheated on him...?

A part of me was still uncertain, though. People who kept memories of their exes might still love that person in a way. Not to mention that Tawan was precisely the type of guy Kinn preferred.

"Let's go have a smoke," Pete whispered to me. I nodded at him and said goodbye to Tankhun. He still yelled at me, but his words became nonsensical, and I didn't have the energy to listen.

As I headed to the stairs with Pete, I saw Tawan emerge from Kinn's room. We stopped and let him go down the stairs first. He glanced at me, the corners of his lips lifting slightly as he walked past.

I sighed and tried telling myself not to think about him. There seemed to be some sort of silent hostility between us. I didn't like him, and he didn't like me.

"Looks like something's been tossed aside, Kom," came Big's voice from behind us, clearly intended for me to overhear. I clenched my fists tightly in anger.

"Like a piece of trash?" Kom replied.

"Yup. I feel sorry for such a worthless piece of garbage. Can't even reuse it."

Before I could fight back, Pete quickly yanked my neck and dragged me to the garden. I was furious at Big, the bastard. That shithead loved riling me up. I wanted to beat him to a pulp and wash his blood off my shoes.

I knew Big was just hopping on an opportunity to aggravate me, but his statement wasn't wrong. Kinn treated me like I meant nothing to him—like a piece of trash. I guess it served me right to get mocked by Big and his goons.

"Don't mind them. They're a bunch of smart-mouthed douchebags," Pete said, trying to calm me down.

I huffed, pulling out a cigarette from the pack, hoping the nicotine would calm me down. It was a temporary feeling, but I'd take what I could get.

We smoked in silence for a while.

“You fell in love with him, huh?” Pete asked out of the blue, not looking at me in the eye. He exhaled, smoke curling in the air.

I couldn’t answer him. I knew I had feelings for Kinn, and our relationship had changed me—he’d changed who I was, what I felt. He made me brave enough to accept the conflicting feelings in my heart. I never thought I would accept that part of me, but Kinn could.

But now I was the one left carrying these feelings. I meant nothing to Kinn, and he didn’t care how I felt at all.

Pete looked at me with concern. “No matter what happens, you still have us,” he said.

I couldn’t help but think about what Pete had told me earlier. He’d warned me not to climb up to high places, because it would hurt when I fell… And he was right. This fucking hurt.

“I’m no different than his boytoys, am I?” I asked, lighting up a second cigarette.

Pete pursed his lips, still looking troubled but saying nothing. I waited until I’d finished my third cigarette of the night before parting ways with Pete.

I returned to my room, figuring Kinn wouldn’t ask for me. He hadn’t for the last few nights. Some quiet time alone in this room might help me stop thinking about him.

Night came and went; I didn’t sleep a wink. I couldn’t get Kinn out of my head, and I’d been doing everything in my power to distract myself.

Today was Saturday, and my shift was supposed to start at ten. But since it was apparent Kinn didn’t want to see me, I felt no need to show up for work on time. I was also fed up with getting pitiful looks from his other bodyguards.

Damn you, Kinn! Why can’t I stop thinking about you? I hope what you did to me will come back to bite you, you bastard!

Exhausted from the overthinking and lack of sleep, I alternated between napping and playing games on my phone all day. Even though I was absent from my post the whole time, Kinn didn’t bother to tell me to come to work. If I’d known, I would have gone to the university to cheer Tem on during his tryouts.

I didn’t feel hungry at all, only drinking some water before going back to bed. Pete, Pol, and Arm had all stopped by to tell me to eat at the mess hall, but I just didn’t have an appetite. I really hated myself right now.

In the evening, I was startled awake by someone knocking at my door. I thought it was my friends coming to check on me again. I drowsily got up and went to answer the door.

“P’Chan,” I said, quickly greeting him with a wai when I saw him standing at my door.

“You didn’t go to work today?” he asked. His expression was severe, and he sounded like he was reprimanding me.

I looked down slightly and replied, “Yes. Please consider that I asked for a leave of absence.”

I’d done nothing all day, and I didn’t give a damn if he wanted to deduct it from my wages. When he didn’t answer, I looked up and saw him shaking his head in disapproval.

P’Chan handed me a folder. “Take this to Mr. Kinn and check on him. The bodyguards posted in front of his room have reported he has neither eaten nor left his room since this morning.”

I reluctantly took the folder, shutting the door after P’Chan left.

I didn’t want to see Kinn at all right now. I wondered why P’Chan hadn’t asked the other bodyguards to check on Kinn, but he probably figured it was my job since I was his head bodyguard. It was also my sole responsibility to take care of his paperwork. I threw the folder on my bed, contemplating asking Pete to take it to Kinn instead.

I wondered why Kinn hadn’t left his room or eaten anything today. Did I pray for his demise too strongly, and it came true? Was he dead? I pulled at my hair in frustration and went to wash my face in the sink.

I returned to sit on the foot of my bed for a while before I built up the courage to check on him. I just wanted to see if he’d starved himself to death so I could plan the funeral. I wearily swiped a hand across my face, furious with myself for letting him get to me.

I quickly took the stairs leading to Kinn’s room, cursing at him internally. Once I reached his room, I opened the door without

knocking—I never knocked; he knew this—and stopped dead in my tracks. The activity inside Kinn's room also came to a halt.

My eyes widened in shock at what I saw, and my hand around the doorknob suddenly felt cold. My breath hitched, a shiver running through my entire body and pain flooding my heart.

What I saw in front of me confirmed the worst of my fears: Kinn was cuddled up with another man on the sofa. If I recalled correctly, his name was March. He was sitting on Kinn's lap with his clothes all rumpled. This was even more shocking than the day I found out Kinn was gay.

I saw Kinn quickly push March off him, but my mind had already short-circuited. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't bear looking at them a moment longer. I wanted to leave, but my legs wouldn't cooperate.

Yesterday it was Tawan, and today it was March. Just my fucking luck. Why didn't I remember who it was who made me feel so miserable? Why did I come up here just to have my heart ripped open again?

Damn it, I'd had enough! I couldn't take these feelings anymore!

Chapter 28:
Questions

THE SIGHT IN FRONT OF ME made me lose any patience I had left. I stormed out of Kinn's room, slamming the door shut. Kinn made to get up from the sofa with a concerned expression, but in the end, he didn't follow me out.

I walked all the way to the front door of the house, my heart aching and my strength depleted.

Fuck…

It felt like getting hit with a brick.

I didn't break down or cry like some soap opera heroine; I just walked out of there, struggling to get my emotions under control and make sense of what the hell I just saw. If Kinn had hurried after me to explain that it wasn't what it looked like, maybe I would have stayed to listen to him. I tried reasoning with myself. I knew things weren't always what they seemed…

But shit had already hit the fan. Kinn didn't try to explain a single thing, and he didn't even follow me out. So I definitely saw what I thought I saw. Who knew that it would hurt so fucking much?

When I really thought about it, Kinn didn't need to explain anything to me. I was the one who'd misinterpreted my place in his heart.

Fuck! You're a fool, Porsche! You're pathetic. How can you compare yourself to Tawan and March? It's not surprising that Kinn used you and threw you away. How could you believe that Kinn felt something for you? Why did you give in to him like that?!

I hated myself! I hated myself so fucking much!

It was already humiliating enough realizing that I cared for Kinn; trying to move on from that motherfucker was going to be nearly impossible.

I walked past the garden and out the gates when Arm called out to me, "Porsche, where are you going?"

I ignored him. I couldn't stay here any longer. I couldn't endure those images replaying in my mind over and over—it was pure

torture. I wanted to give up and sink down onto the ground, wanted the lump in my throat to go away. I kept my legs from buckling and held everything inside, unwilling to let my heart dictate my actions. It would have been too shameful and pathetic.

I waved down a taxi, leaving the house with only my phone in my pocket. I really wanted to go home, but at this point, I needed to stay with someone—anyone—so I wouldn't sink deeper into my misery.

I couldn't fight my thoughts any longer.

Why? Why did I give in so easily with Kinn? What I felt for him was so real that I could almost taste it!

Kinn was the first man to touch my body and my heart. Although I'd had girlfriends before, I'd never loved anyone the way I loved him.

I'd lost everything to my treacherous heart.

Kinn broke down my walls, and I'd managed to seal all the exits and lock him inside. He was the only person to penetrate the protective barriers I'd built; I cared for him more deeply than anyone else. It hurt so much. It felt like someone beating my heart into a pulp…

I soullessly walked up to Tem's dorm and knocked on his door. I was lucky that the taxi driver was chill and let me transfer money using my phone instead of insisting on cash.

I'd forgotten to tell Tem that I was coming over. I didn't know if he would actually be in his dorm room or not.

Knock, knock.

I knocked again, a little disheartened. Maybe I was just meant to drown in despair today.

Tem opened the door with a smile, which disappeared the moment he saw my face. "Ah…"

"Are you busy?" I asked Tem, peering into his room curiously.

Tem went still for a moment. "What's wrong?" he asked, concerned. I took the opportunity to brush past my friend and collapse onto his sofa, completely drained.

“Can I crash here tonight?” I asked quietly, leaning back onto the sofa and closing my eyes.

Tem sat down beside me. “Of course. What happened?”

I didn’t say a word because I didn’t even know where to start. What was wrong with me? Was I sad? Upset? Heartbroken? What did I even have the right to feel? I was sad when I thought about Kinn. I was upset to see him with someone else. And heartbroken… because our love was only my wishful thinking.

The more I thought about it all, the stupider I felt. *Fuck!*

“Make yourself at home. I’ll hang up my clothes first,” Tem said with a gentle pat to my shoulder. He went to the balcony to hang his clothes up to dry, occasionally glancing back at me.

I was exhausted. *What do I do now?*

I checked my phone, part of me hoping that Kinn would try to contact me, but there was nothing—only Chay’s messages updating me on his whereabouts. I was lucky that my brother was hanging out at a friend’s place this weekend, because I’d be so worried if he was staying at Kinn’s house all by himself…

And what should I do now? I didn’t want to go back to that place again…

If I went back, I wouldn’t be able to forget these shitty feelings. I didn’t want to see that motherfucker’s face ever again. My thoughts were all a jumbled mess.

Fuck it, I should just go back to my place. Maybe those people targeting me only wanted me because I was involved with Kinn’s family. There might not be anything to worry about now.

“You want to drink with me?” I asked Tem as he bustled around his room.

“Sure, where do you wanna go?” Tem agreed easily.

“I want to drink, but I don’t want to go anywhere,” I said, leaning back dejectedly on the couch.

“Then…I’ll call Jom over and we’ll drink here,” he suggested, and I nodded in agreement.

Tem called Jom over with instructions to bring booze and mixers up to his room while he got some glasses ready. I sat there

silently without lifting a finger to help him, totally lost in my thoughts.

Jom arrived with the usual amount of chaos. I didn't pay much attention, but from what I could tell, he'd gotten in trouble with the dorm's security guard for bringing alcohol into the building. He'd had to find a black garbage bag to sneak the bottles in.

I zoned out. Jom came to stand right in front of me, waving his hand in front of my face. Both he and Tem saw I had no reaction to anything, so they didn't dare ask questions. Instead, they started mixing drinks and handing glasses over to me.

I'd never known what real heartbreak felt like before. I wanted to fucking die. I'd never been hurt like this. It was like having a weight on my chest that I needed to keep hidden; otherwise, I'd look even more pathetic than I already did.

My friends made sure my glass was always full as I knocked back drink after drink. Fuck, so *this* was what drinking away heartbreak was like. I'd worked as a bartender for so long and seen so many people bawl their eyes out about their breakups. Back then, I wondered if it was really that bad. Now I knew that it felt like dying.

"It's all right... If you want to vent, we're here to listen," Jom said, clinking his glass against mine.

I sighed, blankly staring at the drink in my hand, then gazed into the distance. I couldn't focus. I rested against the backrest, my knees up to my chest and my feet on the sofa.

"I've never understood heartbroken people before. Just because someone doesn't love you back, why do you have to be so miserable about it?" The alcohol was making me ramble. Tem and Jom froze, their glasses held up to their lips as they turned to look at me in unison.

Tem set his glass down on the table. "What did he do to you?" he asked me, his voice serious.

I thought back to what Kinn had done to make me like this, but just picturing his face made me feel a stab of pain.

"I've never seen you like this, Porsche. What the hell did he do to you?" Jom asked sternly.

I pursed my lips. *Of course I've never been like this, Jom. It's all because of him that I've changed.*

I'd gotten too careless. The whole time I was with Kinn, I felt special, important—like I mattered in this world. My whole life, I'd had no one to lean on, but Kinn became that person. He might not have been so reliable at times, but it warmed my heart to have him by my side. Kinn made me open my heart, allowed me to see the world in a new light. He taught me what falling in love really felt like.

The word "love" had meaning to me because of him—but it was that same love that had hurt me so much.

"I did this to myself. I was so stupid. Fuck! Why am I so pathetic?" I poured my heart out to my friends. I stretched my hand out to grab a bottle of booze and poured myself half a glass, cutting it with a bit of water. I swirled it around half-heartedly and drank it all in one go.

Tem's mouth fell open and he tried to stop me. "Slow down, Porsche. What's going on?"

"Don't tell me Kinn's got someone else! Or did he dump you? Tell me—I'll smash the fucker's head in!" Jom cursed.

"Of course he has someone else," I said, shaking my head to clear the dizziness. "He and I weren't anything to each other, right?"

"How?! You two were basically joined at the hip," Tem said. "What did he do? And what do you mean, he's got someone else?"

"I'm no different than the other guys he's slept with. He gets bored, throws you away, and finds someone new. What's so difficult to understand about that?" I glanced at my friends, who were starting to look blurry. I poured myself another glass and gulped it down.

"Shit! Did he hit it and quit it?" Jom asked, stunned. Tem knocked him on the head to shut him up.

"Hah! Something like that," I sneered at myself. Jom wasn't wrong. He had witnessed Kinn's behavior, so there was no need to explain. He could figure it out himself.

Kinn's tastes were far above me. He was probably only playing around with me because I was something new and exciting.

I wanted to forget everything that had happened, but my mind replayed those images on a loop, making my heart ache just for the hell of it. I drank glass after glass of alcohol—if the booze would help me forget even for a moment, then I wanted to forget. Being numb to my feelings temporarily was better than nothing.

I wanted to wake up to my old self, the one who didn't care about anything but me. The old me didn't have to miss anyone, didn't have to feel these feelings.

I was so fucking tired. *I should probably stop drinking…*

***

I woke up with a splitting headache. I was dizzy as hell and my head felt like it weighed a million pounds. My lips and throat were absolutely parched.

I pushed myself up from the sofa, stepping over Jom's body where he was out cold on the ground. Glasses, plates, and bottles littered Tem's floor—it looked like a warzone in here.

I opened the fridge to grab some water before I looked at the clock on the wall. It was already late in the afternoon, almost evening. Shit! How fucked up had I gotten last night? I'd completely blacked out!

I carefully waded through Tem's room, stealing one of Jom's cigarettes out of the pack sitting next to him. I headed to the balcony to fill my lungs with smoke and welcome the new day. It was a good thing today was Sunday, otherwise we'd be screwed.

Now that I thought about it, I hadn't seen Tem since I woke up. Where the hell was he? I grabbed my phone from my pocket, intending to send him a LINE message. The bathroom door was open, so he wasn't in there—he'd probably left the room.

Before my fingers could slide over to LINE, my Facebook notifications rapidly pinged. That was a surprise—I barely ever used Facebook. Why did I suddenly have so many notifications? I didn't wait, checking my feed immediately.

Huh? What did I do?!

I furrowed my brows, staring at my phone. When had I changed my status?! Fuck!

Porsche Pachara: Love that's fallen apart will not depart, no matter how much I drink. Living like death, I've got no more strength left...[5]

I'd also posted a blurry picture of a glass full of booze.

Oh, shit! What have I done? I'm an idiot!

I couldn't even blame Jom and Tem for playing tricks on me: The both of them were sitting there in the background, which meant the photo was my own handiwork. *Shit, Porsche! What the hell did you do?!*

[Comments:]

Pete Pongsakorn: Where are you??? Call me back!!

Arm A-Arm: So sad

Beam Udo Do: Sometimes you have to fuck up your liver to heal your heart. Keep fighting!

T-Team: Sending positive vibes your way <3

Boss Busi: Talk about booze and you want to stop, talk about love and then bottoms up!

Fuck! My friends and classmates had all piled on to like and comment on my status. This was fucking stressful. My only status update in a year and it was some corny bullshit? Why the fuck was I like this? Shit! It was so embarrassing!

I exited Facebook and opened LINE—it had just as many notifications. I froze, unable to tear my eyes away from the name of the chat...

Kinn had texted me. My brain tried to tell me to stop paying attention to him and delete his messages, but my stupid finger tapped on the chat to read it anyway.

KINN: Where are you?

KINN: Porsche! Where are you?

KINN: Do you think you can just leave?!

KINN: What is this?

KINN: *[attachment.jpeg]*

KINN: …

KINN: *[missed call]*

Kinn had sent me a screencap of my humiliating Facebook status. *Shit!* This was utterly mortifying. I didn't want him to know what I was feeling right now at all! He must've felt so smug that he could affect me so deeply.

But why should he care? What the hell was he messaging me for?! Did he finish fucking March and finally remember that I'd walked in on them, so he wanted to shout at me for interrupting him?

Motherfucker! I've had it, you bastard. I'm going to stop thinking about you. You've toyed with my feelings for long enough!

I went back into the room to see Tem opening the door with three takeout boxes in hand. "Where did you go?" I asked.

"I went to get food, dipshit. Go wash your face," Tem said as he walked over to kick Jom awake. After I washed my face and took a piss, I saw Tem picking up the trash scattered on the floor. Jom, however, was still fast asleep in the same exact position.

"I got you fried pork and rice," said Tem. "Go ahead and eat."

"Aren't you eating?" I asked.

"I'm cleaning up your mess first."

I nodded and opened my takeout box. Although the food didn't go down as smoothly as last night's alcohol, I tried to swallow it. I needed to act as normally as possible—I didn't want to be stuck in this shitty headspace for too long.

But I couldn't stop thinking about Kinn's message and seeing him with March, with Tawan… I couldn't forget about it, even after I'd come to my senses.

“Are you feeling better now?” Tem asked, sitting beside me with his own takeout box.

“Mm,” I answered without looking at my friend.

“I don’t know what advice to give you. This is the first time I’ve seen you like this.”

“No need. I’ll get over it soon.” I was shocked at the way my bottled-up feelings had exploded last night—it was probably just as shocking for Tem.

“…You love him, don’t you?” Tem asked hesitantly, pushing his food around. I frowned at the mention of Kinn. “I shouldn’t have said that, but you were a mess last night.”

Even if Tem hadn’t said it, the state I’d been in made things pretty clear.

“Define ‘mess,’” I said, prying for details. I glanced at him warily, afraid that I’d blurted out something to do with Kinn.

“It’s just… You kept cursing him,” Tem said. He was handling me with kid gloves.

I still didn’t remember what I’d said. “Can you be specific?” I asked anxiously.



"...You kept saying 'how could Kinn do this to me?' over and over."

I let out a long sigh. I fucking hated myself right now. Why did I have to be so pathetic? What did I have to do to stop thinking about that motherfucker?

"If you don't want to think about him, then you don't have to," Tem said. "Just forget him."

I didn't say anything. If it were that easy to forget, I'd have already done it. I wouldn't be in pain like this.

"Y'know, people say that if you want to forget an old love, you have to find a new one," Tem suggested. It was almost like he could read my mind.

"...And how do I find a new love?" I asked stupidly. I didn't know when or how I'd started feeling things for Kinn, so how was I supposed to love someone new?

"You have to try to open your heart... If you start to think about someone else more than you think about him, that's how you know you've forgotten him."

"Who am I supposed to think of?" What kind of stupid questions was I asking? Shit, I felt like a dumb kid experiencing his first puppy love and his first heartbreak.

"N'Ploy in first year is a cute little sister type... Or maybe you should go for N'Som—she's a spitfire," Tem suggested.

I put down my spoon before leaning back onto the chair and slumping down. I was reminded once again how I couldn't look at women the same way. It didn't feel the same as before at all—I'd tried so many times, but it was like I didn't feel that kind of desire anymore. It was fucking crazy!

"I don't think I can't go for women anymore," I confessed, making Tem pause for a moment. Now that I'd felt something far stronger with Kinn, the difference was too stark to ignore.

"Then go for a man," Tem said. I made a face at him. Although I liked Kinn, I really couldn't picture myself with any other guy. Just thinking about it was giving me the shivers.

"I can't," I said.

“Don’t be so melodramatic,” Tem scoffed. “You’re saying you can only like Kinn and no one else? This isn’t a soap opera. If you say you don’t feel the same way about women, then you’ve felt something for men. You need to keep an open mind and heart.”

“Nah,” I said, shaking my head. I wasn’t being dramatic—I just hadn’t accepted my situation yet!

“I’m being serious, Porsche! If Kinn can find someone else, so can you.” Tem made a face like he was planning something evil.

“As revenge?” I asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Not exactly, but…why would you let that smug bastard see how much he’s affected you? Wouldn’t it be more fun to go out with someone else and make him regret what he did? That way, you can show him he has no impact on your life, that you can’t be taken for granted.”

I went still at Tem’s words. It wasn’t *that* different from revenge. And what good would that do? If he didn’t pay attention to it, I’d just feel like a failure.

“Wouldn’t it be better for me to just try to forget him?”

“Wouldn’t it be better to have someone to help with that, so you can forget him sooner? What about that is so hard to understand?” Tem asked, slamming his spoon down on the table. I furrowed my brows.

“Then who do I go for?”

“Hmm… Why don’t you try looking for someone close by?” Tem mused. He said it like it was so easy.

“You?” I pointed to him. Tem was interested in guys, after all.

“Fuck no, that’s gross,” Tem grumbled, rubbing his arms like he’d gotten goosebumps. I made a face at him. *I should be the one saying that!*

“So who?”

“How about Jom?” Tem said with a laugh.

“Nah, he doesn’t fucking shower enough,” I said, completely fed up.

“Then…how about Earth? My next-door neighbor who likes to be loud,” he said, pointing to his wall. I shook my head and snorted.

The guy who liked to bring people home and make a lot of noise with them? He was probably a psycho.

“Then what about P’Beam? He’s decent, but kinda bossy,” Tem continued.

“This isn’t like picking fish out at the market. It’s not like I can go for just anyone…” I wasn’t like Kinn, who’d fuck any guy in front of him if he was in the mood…

“You don’t want this one, you don’t want that one… What’s your type?” Tem pressed me. His crazy advice wasn’t going to work.

“Rich,” I joked, thinking of what I liked about Kinn. That rich bastard was good at paying for everything, at least. Fuck, I was thinking about him again! My brain kept going back to that motherfucker!

Should I find someone like Tem said?

My phone started vibrating from an incoming LINE call. Tem leaned over to look at my phone.

“Oh! This one’s your type,” he remarked.

I held my phone up and saw Vegas’s name on the screen.

“Hello,” I said.

“Hello, Porsche… Are you busy right now?” he asked.

“What is it?”

“Your bike. Where should I tell the mechanic to deliver it?”

Shit, I’d completely forgotten about my bike. If Vegas hadn’t called, I wouldn’t have even thought about it.

“Uh… Would the dorms next to the university be convenient?” I asked politely.

“Of course. Send me the location. I’ll take care of it for you.”

I ended the call and sent my location to Vegas. I borrowed some of Tem’s clothes so I could look like an actual person and not a disheveled disaster, but Tem and I wore different sizes. He managed to find a large, loose t-shirt and gym shorts for me to wear. I kinda looked like I was wearing pajamas, but I was only going downstairs to get my bike, so it should be fine.

I helped Tem tidy up his room for a bit before we woke Jom up and finally managed to get him to shower and eat. After a while, Vegas called me to get my bike from downstairs, just as Jom sleepily asked me to take him down to get a taxi home.

When I got downstairs, Vegas was standing there next to the mechanic with a wide smile. I excused myself to stuff Jom into a taxi, telling the driver his destination. Once I got rid of Jom's dead weight, Vegas took me to a nearby parking lot. I hadn't expected him to tag along—I'd thought it would just be the mechanic delivering my bike.

"I had the mechanic swap your bike's engine for the newest model. It's also been washed and waxed," Vegas said. I stood there speechless when I saw that my beloved bike—my baby, which was on the verge of breaking down before—had been given a complete makeover. Freshly painted and cleaned, with an all-new, super expensive engine.

"You...didn't have to do that." I scratched my face to hide my embarrassment. Vegas had gone a little overboard. I felt guilty about the lengths he'd gone to, but damn—I was secretly overjoyed to get a new engine. It was like getting a brand-new bike!

"It's nothing much," said Vegas. "The old engine had a lot of problems. The mechanic said that you'd probably need to be constantly fixing it soon, so I was proactive and swapped it out for you. I hope you won't take offense, Porsche." He looked ashamed for acting without my permission. He hadn't discussed it with me first, but that was the kind of person he was.

I did feel that he was being a little overbearing, but it wouldn't be right for me to make a big fuss about getting a new engine. Was he the one paying? If I was paying, I'd tell him to take it out right away.

"How much is everything?" I asked, testing the waters.

"I've taken care of it." Vegas smiled. I raised my eyebrows at him. "As an apology for upsetting you," he said.

How many lifetimes was he gonna spend apologizing? But still...I secretly smiled, satisfied. If it was free, I wasn't going to complain! I'd been eyeing a new engine for a while but never had the money for it. I'd politely accept this personal indulgence.

“I had the mechanics at the shop replace some things, so it took longer than I thought. For example, this is a new battery charger…”

The mechanic, who had been standing there with a fawning smile, jumped in to explain all the details and maintenance instructions. Vegas made the occasional comment but otherwise listened attentively to the mechanic. Eventually, the mechanic tested out the engine, revving the bike and shifting gears for me until I was satisfied.

“If you have any problems, Mr. Porsche, you can bring your bike back to our shop at any time,” the mechanic said. “If there’s nothing else, please excuse me…”

The mechanic had Vegas sign a few documents before getting into his car and driving off.

“Porsche, do you want to take it for a test drive?” Vegas turned to ask me. I looked down at my own sorry state.

“I’d rather not right now,” I said. Although I was trying to act normally, I was hungover as all hell. My head was still pounding, not to mention my clothes… *I really shouldn’t ride my bike right now.*

“Did you have too much to drink last night?” Vegas asked. “How about this, Porsche—I’ll drive it and you can sit behind me. I want you to feel how powerful the new engine is.”

I immediately shook my head. *Please look at the state I’m in, Vegas. You’re dressed like it’s fucking fashion week, and I’m wearing Tem’s rags.*

“Maybe next time,” I said.

“What, can’t I try? I really want to ride that bike. It’s so cool!”

“I really shouldn’t…” I spread out my arms and gestured to the clothes I was wearing.

“You look fine. Actually, I was going to mention that you look super cute today.” Vegas looked me up and down and smiled warmly. What? Was he shitting me?!

“If you want to take it for a test drive, then you can go ahead. I’m not up for it.” I handed Vegas the keys, and he immediately pouted. He was lucky he was cute when he pouted. If it was Jom making that face, I’d kick his legs out from under him.

“Come on, please? I really want the bike’s owner to ride with me.”

For what reason? Tell me, Vegas. I was supposed to be the one taking it out for a test drive. He wanted me to test it as a passenger? What kind of ass-backward logic was that? It was more like he just wanted to drive my bike.

I stood there scratching my head, trying to find a way to avoid this crazy motherfucker. I really wanted to head up to Tem’s room and go back to sleep. Forget driving, at this rate I’d probably fall off the bike even if I was the passenger.

My phone vibrated in my pocket. I pulled it out and answered when I saw that it was Tem.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“Duuude…are you going to be done soon?” he asked hesitantly.

“Yeah, I’m about to head back up.”

“Oh… What do I do…?” Tem sounded worried. I frowned, wondering what my friend wanted.

“What’s up?”

“It’s just… Can you go hang out at a mall for a couple of hours or something?” he mumbled. I smiled, beginning to guess what was going on.

“Why? What are you going to do?” I asked, wanting him to say it outright.

“I’ve got something to do… Is that okay with you?”

“Heh, is a couple of hours enough? Are you going one round or two?” I teased, making him shout curses at me from the other end of the line.

“You bastard! I just have someone visiting! Can you stay out or not?”

I looked at my clothes and let out a long sigh. “Fine. Can I stay over again tonight, or should I go sleep at Jom’s place?”

“Yeah, it’s fine. I’ll be alone tonight anyway. Just give me two hours. You can go for a walk or something.”

Tem was really getting sluttier by the day.

“Just tell me when you’re done.” I got the last word in before I hung up. I didn’t ask who it was. Even though Tem’s secretive behavior piqued my curiosity, I’d wait for him to tell me when he was ready. I didn’t want to pester him too much.

“How about it?” Vegas asked me, his eyes glimmering with hope.

“Where can I go, looking like this?” I stood there with my hands on my hips, resigned to the situation. It seemed like I had to agree to go with Vegas because he’d been so damned persistent, and Tem was too fucking heartless to notice the state I was in when I left his room. What was I supposed to do for two entire hours? If I walked around like this, it’d be majorly embarrassing. At least with Vegas around, I wouldn’t get as many stares.

“How about the mall? There won’t be too many people,” Vegas said with a chuckle. Didn’t he just say I looked cute? Why did it feel like he was making fun of me? That was a blow to my confidence. And could I really believe Vegas?

I ended up sitting behind him as he drove my bike. Vegas’s eyes sparkled as if he’d found a shiny new toy to play with.

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” I asked as I swung my leg over the seat.

“I do,” he replied, handing me a helmet. “I asked my father for a motorcycle once, but he wouldn’t allow it. So I secretly rode my friends’ bikes a lot.”

Since I had only one helmet, he asked the guy parking his bike next to us for an extra helmet, and the stranger was kind enough to lend us his.

I looked at Vegas fumbling around and got a little nervous. A tall bike like this one had a pretty steep learning curve. Someone who’d never ridden one would find it challenging. “Careful,” I warned him. “The engine is more powerful when you’re starting off.”

“Okay… Hold on tight,” Vegas said, twisting around to smile at me. I nodded, waiting for him to shift gears and pull away.

“Hey!” I fell forward, hitting his back as soon as he revved the throttle. I quickly put my hands on his shoulders, holding on anxiously. Vegas laughed at himself and tried again. He looked so

awkward that I had to tell him when to pull in the clutch and shift gears and when to rev the engine. He got the hang of it pretty quickly, though, and soon he was driving without a problem.

I looked at Vegas in the rearview mirror. He looked cool like this, a well-dressed and handsome young mafioso riding a sports bike. He drew a lot of looks from people on the sidewalks.

Vegas was pretty cool in my eyes, even if looking at him was different than looking at Kinn. Kinn made my heart tremble even when he was just sitting there. And now I'd circled back to Kinn again... However, I felt a lot less despondent now compared to the first time his image appeared in my mind. Or was it really like Tem said—that I should open my heart to someone new so I could forget Kinn? Though it'd only been a short time that I didn't think about his stupid face, I was more relaxed. I didn't feel that chaos raging in my heart.

"Do you want to eat or just walk around?" Vegas turned to ask when we got to the mall and parked my bike.

"I'm fine with whatever," I answered indifferently.

"Then let's find something to eat. I haven't eaten anything yet today," Vegas said, sending me a smile. I nodded in return.

"Mm-hm."

"How about this one?" Vegas pointed to a rather nice Italian restaurant. I glanced at the restaurant and looked back at his face.

"Your treat?" I joked. That restaurant looked ridiculously expensive. If Vegas wanted to take me there, then he'd have to pay. Otherwise, you couldn't drag me in if you tried.

"Of course it's my treat," he said. "Even if it was more expensive than this, I'd gladly pay."

I'd forgotten I came here with a high roller. These rich kids loved to show off how much money they had.

"Sure, then," I said.

Vegas waxed poetic about all the dishes he was going to order, so he was clearly hungry for real. As my foot was about to cross the threshold of the restaurant, a familiar slim figure suddenly rushed up to greet Vegas.

“Vegas!”

The owner of that bright, cheerful voice stopped in front of Vegas, who looked bewildered for a moment before smiling widely.

“P’Tawan! When did you get back?” Vegas said, greeting him with a wai.

I stood there speechless as I stared at the sweet-faced Tawan. He looked abnormally happy, compared to the last time I saw him.

“I’ve been back for over a week now…” Tawan furrowed his eyebrows, his piercing gaze staring straight through me. I felt a chill run down my spine. Kinn and Tawan really were well-matched—that hostile look reminded me of him. He eyed me from head to toe and smirked.

The fuck does he want, staring at me like that?

Tawan crossed his arms and continued to glare at me. “Why is someone from Kinn’s house with you today, Vegas?”

“Oh, Porsche is my friend. Have you two met before?” Vegas asked innocently. I glanced away, not really wanting to clash with Tawan. He looked at me with so much contempt that I was starting to get uncomfortable.

“Oh? He’s your friend? Yesterday I saw him with Kinn, and today he’s with you… How is Kinn’s family okay with this?” Tawan sounded like he was intimately familiar with the conflict between the two rival clans. He acted like he was talking to Vegas, but he kept staring at me. It was starting to get annoying.

Why was he like this? What did he want? He was playing like he knew what happened between me and Kinn, but why would he care? I wasn’t Kinn’s boyfriend, and his personal affairs were none of my business.

“I don’t see anyone having a problem with it. You’re here taking a walk, P’Tawan?” Vegas seemed to have caught on to the weird vibe between us and tried to shift Tawan’s focus away from me.

“Indeed, I’m here for a stroll. Is it just the two of you? Why didn’t Kinn come along?”

I sighed, furtively rolling my eyes. This lunatic was clearly trying to get a rise out of me. He was being too obvious—what

exactly had he found out about me and Kinn? What did he hope to accomplish?

Kinn wasn't interested in me. Tawan should have been able to see that. If he really wanted Kinn back, wouldn't it be better for him to go make trouble with March or one of Kinn's other boytoys? He was wasting his time with me.

"Why would Kinn be here? I'm just taking Porsche out for a meal," Vegas answered with a smile. He looked between Tawan and me, his expression turning sour.

"And where is Kinn…?" Tawan leaned in next to me, trying to goad me into answering him. I was itching to kick him in the face.

"Home, maybe. We're not glued together," I answered, tired. If it weren't for the people walking past us, I'd have had his ass on the ground in a second. He deserved a swift kick in the nuts for that obnoxious attitude.

"If Kinn is at home, then I could drop by to visit him today," Tawan said.

What was he telling me for? He could go die for all I cared—what the hell did it have to do with me? I felt a strange lump in my throat, but I kept it in and tried to act natural.

"Sure, you can call Kinn and ask if you can visit," I said. "Does he not answer your calls? You want me to call him for you?" I stared back at Tawan, one eyebrow raised, the corner of my mouth pulling up. I had the upper hand here. Although I would never call Kinn for him, Tawan's actions annoyed me, and I wanted to piss him off. Someone like him should be afraid of losing face. Just a few verbal jabs were enough to make him freak out. It was intensely gratifying to watch. *Serves you right for looking down on me, asshole.*

"It's all right. No matter what, Kinn always answers my calls," he replied testily.

"That's good, then," I said, smiling. "It'll give him something better to do than bombarding my LINE with messages begging me to come home."

No matter how confident I acted in front of Tawan, I felt a stabbing pain in my heart when I thought of that bastard Kinn. He hadn't sent me another LINE message since last night.

Silence fell between us as we glared at each other, neither of us backing down.

“Ah… P’Tawan, please excuse me… Let’s go, Porsche. I’m starving.” Vegas pulled my arm to drag me into the restaurant, nodding at Tawan in farewell.

He coaxed me into a seat and tried to distract me, changing the subject and ordering a bunch of stuff for us to eat. He kept asking if I had tried this dish or that one, but I could barely focus on the food in front of me. I felt so stupid. I’d just argued with my lover’s ex. We were literally fighting over a man. Was it really appropriate for me to act like that?

I didn’t feel like myself. How was I supposed to forget Kinn if his business kept revolving around me? Motherfucker! I had to get a fucking grip!

My past self would’ve never let Tawan look down on me for more than ten seconds. If it happened again, I’d knock the bastard’s lights out!

Enough with that shithead Kinn! If I was so worthless in his eyes, then I had to stop him from affecting me like this. *Enough already! Stop thinking about him! Stop being hung up on him! Man up, Porsche!* Why the fuck did I have to be so heartbroken over someone who was never really mine? He wasn’t worth it!

“Try this, Porsche, I love it. It’s so good!” Vegas held up a piece of the most expensive wagyu beef on the menu to my lips. I reached out to take the fork to eat it myself, but he wouldn’t let go. He kept trying to feed the piece of meat to me until I relented and opened my mouth. “Isn’t it delicious?”

I hummed my assent as I chewed. I tried to come back to my senses, but I could barely taste anything. Although I was putting up a good front, inside I was fucking depressed.

The lump in my throat came and went, but I tried to focus on other things. I walked around the mall with Vegas as he tried to keep a conversation going, making small talk. I occasionally replied to him with one-word answers. Vegas looked so happy, shooting me smiles the entire time, but I only felt worse. The more I tried to bury my thoughts of Kinn, the more clearly he appeared in my mind.

The more I loved him, the more foolish I felt. The more foolish I felt, the more it hurt.

I had Vegas bring me to P'Beam's dorm. I had my first judo match of the inter-university sports meet tomorrow, and all my judo shit was at Kinn's house. I didn't even want to think about going back there to get my equipment, so I called P'Beam to borrow his stuff—as well as a university uniform, because I definitely couldn't stuff myself into Tem's.

"How come you two are here together?" P'Beam asked when he brought an armful of things downstairs for me. He looked between me and Vegas with a sly smile.

"Have you eaten yet, phi?" Vegas dodged the question, asking P'Beam something else entirely.

"I was wondering why you've been asking to come to the gym so often these days. So it's like that..." P'Beam smirked knowingly at me, but I kept my expression carefully blank as I quickly took his things.

"Thank you, P'Beam. See you tomorrow." I quickly said my goodbyes and sat at the back of my bike. As for Vegas, he turned to waggle his eyebrows at P'Beam before starting the bike and pulling away.

"How do you know P'Beam?" I asked, leaning over Vegas's shoulder.

"Hmm? What did you say?" Vegas lifted his visor and turned his head slightly toward me.

"I said, how do you know P'Beam?" I raised my voice against the wind rushing at us, leaning closer to his ear.

"Oh. P'Beam tried to chase after Macau. He kept showing up at my house, so we got to know each other," Vegas said with a laugh. I was speechless. *P'Beam?! Don't tell me he's... Fuck!* Why did everyone around me seem to swing the same way?

"What?! P'Beam? *Really?*" I asked, still in disbelief.

"Indeed. But he wasn't successful," Vegas laughed.

Shit! P'Beam, chasing after that bitchy kid Macau? Didn't I threaten to punch his eyeballs out of his head? Small world...

“What about now? Has he stopped?” I asked, suddenly curious. Vegas leaned back even closer to listen to me.

“Nope!” Vegas said with a chuckle. “He’s still trying.”

Ooh, I had dirt on P’Beam now! But wow, him and Macau? That kid was such a spoiled brat. And wasn’t he way out of P’Beam’s league?!

“You’re joking,” I said, laughing.

“I’m serious! Macau took him to task so many times, but he still hasn’t had enough.”

I tried to imagine the story Vegas was spinning; he talked about P’Beam so candidly. I rested my chin on his shoulder without realizing it.

“I really don’t want to believe you,” I said.

“P’Beam is quite the gentleman, I’ll have you know. He brought gifts for Macau every day.”

“I still can’t believe it,” I said, really trying. He gave me the play-by-play until I had goosebumps all over. I had no idea P’Beam was like this!

“Where else do you want to go?” Vegas asked, stopping at a red light and turning around to smile at me. His helmet knocked into mine. I came back to myself and pulled away, keeping my distance like before.

“You can rest your head on my shoulder; I don’t mind…” The way Vegas looked at me had me kicking myself. I’d been listening so intently to his story about P’Beam that I got too close.

“We can just go back to Tem’s dorm,” I told Vegas.

He shifted gears as he waited for the light to turn green. “Can I stay?” Vegas asked with a chuckle, glancing at me through the reflection of the rearview mirror.

I acted like I hadn’t heard him and looked away. “Thanks,” I said as we returned to the dorm parking lot. I removed my helmet and got down to stand next to my bike.

“If you ever need a driver, you can always call me.” Vegas locked my bike and arranged my helmet neatly on it.

“If you like it so much, why don’t you buy one?” I joked, handing him the helmet that he’d borrowed so he could return it to its owner.

“If I buy one, would you still sit behind me like this?” he countered. *This motherfucker!* He smiled warmly, looking at me flirtatiously.

I’m not stupid. I know what you’re doing, Vegas.

“I’m going. Thanks a lot.” I hurriedly said my goodbyes and turned around to head into the building. Although Vegas wasn’ttoo bad in my eyes, it wasn’t like I could just order my feelings around. Suddenly falling for someone else would be too insincere…

A Facebook notification pinged on my phone, and I pulled it out of my pocket to check.

[Vegas Korawit sent you a friend request.]

I turned to look at the parking lot through the building’s clear glass wall. I saw Vegas holding up his phone to confirm that he’d sent me a friend request, so I accepted it without thinking.

I scrolled through my feed as I waited for the elevator to arrive.

Vegas Korawit: Can I stay a little longer? Don’t let me go. You should know right now that my heart is all yours[6] :)

I smiled at Vegas’s status. It clearly showed how he felt without me having to waste my time guessing. But my smile immediately disappeared when I saw someone had liked that status…

[Kinn Anakinn likes this.]

Kinn had disappeared from my thoughts for a while, but now he was back, circling into the same loop in my head. I walked into

the elevator and pressed the button for Tem's floor before a LINE notification popped up on my phone. I didn't know why I felt the need to hurry and read the message, but I felt my blood boil when I saw what he had written.

KINN: Why did you run back to the dorm so quickly? Why don't you stay and mess around with him?

PORSCHE: I'm not a whore like you!

I wanted to chuck my phone out of the elevator.

I stalked to Tem's room, the same questions circling in my mind. Why did he care? What was he messing with me for? Before this, he acted like I was worthless, but when I took a step back, he pulled this shit? What did he want from me?

KINN: Come downstairs! I'm here.

I knocked on Tem's door. He opened it and I brushed past him with a scowl, throwing the clothes I'd borrowed from P'Beam onto the sofa. I took out my phone again and texted Kinn back, typing furiously.

PORSCHE: Stop ordering me around. What are you, my dad?

KINN: Come quietly or I'll drag you down here!

PORSCHE: Why? Are you afraid that Vegas and I will plot the downfall of your family? Why don't you fire me? Actually, you don't have to fire me. I quit. You won't have to deal with me anymore.

I wasn't sure when Kinn had arrived at the dorm building, but he probably saw Vegas and me being friendly and couldn't bear it. I'd wanted Kinn to shout at me yesterday, but I didn't feel happy about it at all right now. Instead, my heart felt heavy. Someone like Kinn was probably only worried about one thing: his men betraying him. He didn't care about anything else.

My phone kept ringing as Kinn barraged my phone with incoming calls. I turned it off and sank down onto the sofa, feeling lost. If he really did plan to come up here, I wasn't ready to see him. I still hadn't been able to get a hold of my feelings. If I saw Kinn now, would I accidentally let out the emotions I'd been trying to keep in all day? Would I blurt everything out like some pathetic loser and have to watch his smug, satisfied reaction?

I jumped at the sound of someone banging loudly on the door. Tem looked between me and the door like he could already guess who'd come knocking.

"Tem...I really don't want to see his face right now," I said.

"You go wait in the bedroom," Tem said. He looked disgruntled. "I'll handle this."

I nodded at Tem and went into his bedroom, locking the door and collapsing onto the bed, exhausted.

What was I supposed to do? Although I could temporarily chase away my feelings for Kinn from my heart, how long would it be until I stopped missing him for good? Why had he followed me here—was it because he was angry about Vegas, or was he just lonely because Tawan and March weren't available?

So he finally remembered I existed—was that it?

Chapter 29:
End

"P'KINN, PLEASE LEAVE."

"Porsche! Come out here, *now*!"

Tem and Kinn's voices sounded out sporadically. Tem tried to stop Kinn from entering his room, and I heard the familiar sound of Kinn screaming my name. Only not so familiar now, I supposed, since I hadn't heard him scold me like this in a long time. Knowing that he was near me was enough to make me weak, that lump in my throat forming once again.

It was just his voice—why was my heart going crazy?

BANG! BANG!

The pounding on the bedroom door made me jump. My lovelorn thoughts vanished, instantly replaced by fear. I really wasn't ready to see him right now.

I don't want to see his face.

I don't want to hurt any more than this…

"Porsche! I know you're in there!" Kinn's enraged shouting echoed through the room. I bit my lip hard and took a heaving breath, trying to bury my emotions as deeply as possible.

"Kinn, I'm going to call security! Get out!" Tem yelled, just as furious.

Kinn kept pounding on the door. "Come out here and talk!" he yelled. "You think you can leave the house whenever you want without telling me, huh?!"

Why did he care? Last week, he didn't give a rat's ass what I did or where I was. He didn't care, not even a little.

"I told you to leave!" Tem shouted.

"And you ran away with *Vegas*! Really? Did you listen to a word I said about him?!"

I got up from the bed and stood at the door in frustration.

"What's going on, Tem?" came the sound of a third voice.

"Earth! Come help me! Kinn, that's enough! Get out!"

Kinn kept pounding on the door. I was starting to feel worried for Tem, but I still didn't feel brave enough to open the door.

BANG! BANG! CRASH!

"What did you do with Vegas?!"

"Kinn, you bastard! If you do anything to Tem, I'll go out there and kick your ass!" I shouted through the door, my patience wearing thin.

"Then come out here!" Kinn demanded.

"What do you want?!" Our voices were so close. I swallowed thickly, my heart trembling, turmoil raging within. If there wasn't a door separating us, I probably wouldn't know what to do with myself.

"Come home!"

"I'm not going back! I quit!" I shouted each word clearly.

"I'm not letting you quit!" Kinn snapped back.

"I fucking quit!"

I didn't know why he kept insisting on making me stay. He'd made things perfectly clear the last time I was there.

"Kinn, I already called the security guard. Get out!" Tem yelled.

"Hey! The room's owner said to leave, so leave. Don't make me fight you," a deep voice threatened Kinn.

For an absurd moment, I wanted to go out to check on him...

"Are you for real? You wanna fucking go?!" Kinn goaded, no longer afraid of anything.

I didn't know who the other person was, but the way he spoke was so confrontational that it made me worry. "Kinn! You get out of here!" I yelled out before they could fight. I wanted to chase him away as soon as possible. If Kinn waited out there any longer, I wouldn't be able to stand it—I'd end up opening the door.

"No! Not until you agree to go back with me," Kinn insisted.

"Porsche, don't come out!" Tem yelled. "Let him go crazy and die!"

I stood there, indecisive. I wanted to go out to face Kinn, but my legs were frozen in cowardice. I was too fucking weak.

“I told you to go!” I shouted.

“I won’t leave!”

“I hate you, you bastard!” I kicked the door in frustration. Kinn was not listening to a single damned word out of my mouth. “I fucking hate you! I don’t want to see your face! What are you trying to force me back for, huh? Why do you care whether I quit or not?!” I yelled myself hoarse. I put all of my emotions into my words until I exhausted myself. I felt like a fucking lunatic! A crazy fool shouting at a fucking door!

It was no use. I felt no different. No matter how heartbroken I was or how much I thought about it, the walls between us were too tall to overcome…

“What is going on, nong?” a much older male voice called from the outside.

“Take him away, phi. He’s trespassing and destroying other people’s property.”

“You’d better leave, nong. If you keep making trouble, I’ll call the police.”

“Keep running while you can, Porsche! You can’t escape me. Remember that!”

I sighed in relief when I heard footsteps stomping away. Kinn must’ve finally relented and left.

After a while, I opened the door to meet Tem’s worried gaze, as well as that Earth guy Tem had called over to help. He was currently speaking with the security guard.

“I’m so sorry about this,” I immediately apologized to Tem. The books on his desk were a mess, and some of his belongings were scattered across the floor. I felt so guilty that I’d put my friend in this position in the first place.

“Does he think he’s a mad dog?!” Tem cursed, bending down to pick up his things from the floor. I hurried over to help him.

“Did he break anything?” I asked anxiously. If Kinn had damaged anything, I would pay for it—I was the cause of this commotion in the first place.

“If you don’t plan on pressing charges, I’ll go. If you need anything, you can call me. I’ll be downstairs,” the security guard said. He nodded once in farewell and walked out of the room.

“Trouble in paradise, huh? Why did you have to interfere, Tem?”

I whirled around to face the unfamiliar figure, vaguely remembering that we nearly came to blows in front of Tem’s place a long time ago. Earth, the next-door neighbor whom Tem constantly had problems with, was now leaning casually against the wall with his arms crossed, looking between me and Tem.

“Don’t be such a busybody. You can leave now.” Tem continued picking up his things without paying attention to Earth.

“Your friend should speak with his husband properly. Or is it his wife?” Earth said, snickering. *What’s with this fucker?!* Maybe I could let out all my pent-up frustration on this bastard instead.

“Watch your mouth, Earth! Get out of here.” Tem put his hands on his hips as Earth leered at me. I strode up to him with a scowl. My feet were itching to kick someone.

“If it was his wife, then your friend has guts. But if he wants a new husband… I’m still available,” said Earth, winking at me.

I was at my limit, ready to kick his face in, but Tem dragged me away. He then marched over to Earth and slapped the back of his head as hard as he could.

“Shit, Tem! That hurt!” Earth rubbed his head.

“Quit perving on my friend and get out!” Tem shouted, pulling Earth along by his hair. He lifted his foot to shove Earth’s butt outside. As Tem closed the door, I saw Earth spin around and make a heart gesture at me. Motherfucker! Did he want me to go out there and kick his ass?!

“Don’t pay attention to him. He’s crazy,” Tem said, letting out a sigh.

“I really want to kick his face in…but if he hadn’t shown up, I would probably have come outside when Kinn was still here. I was so worried about you,” I admitted. Although Earth was annoying, he still had enough of a conscience to protect Tem. He really did seem as crazy as Tem said.

“Kinn’s scarily possessive… By the way, did you go out with Vegas this evening?” Tem walked around, picking his things up from the floor. He raised his eyebrows at me when I came over to help and plopped down next to him.

“Mm-hm… I don’t know what Kinn thought he saw that made him lose his shit like that,” I said, without thinking.

Tem went still. “So he was jealous?”

“He’s not jealous. He’s probably afraid I’m teaming up with his rival clan to burn down his house. He’s suspicious of everything Vegas does.” I pursed my lips, suddenly feeling paranoid about everything I’d just said.

“Oh… I guess I can believe that,” Tem said. “So what are you going to do next?”

“I’m going to quit,” I vowed. My heart dropped for a moment, but quitting was what I truly wanted. After this, I wouldn’t be able to stay near Kinn and trust him like before.

***

I went to the university early today because we had a sports meet with another school. It was more crowded than usual, with the polo shirts in my university’s colors and the other university’s mixing together in a dazzling display. There were market stalls run by students and outside vendors alike, busy with customers. Classes were canceled and there were parades, enthusiastic spectators, and cheerleaders showing off against each other. The Sports Science school was quite busy—we were the hopefuls of all the sports competitions.

I was competing in taekwondo, judo, and kendo. Although I had very little time to prepare, my seniors trusted me enough to be the main competitor. Tem was competing in swimming, and Jom was on the soccer team.

We had a lot of free time during the opening ceremony in the main stadium. We went to take a walk around and look for something to eat, since we’d be busy from noon until evening.

“Nice!” Jom remarked, leering at the girls from the other university walking past. It was definitely a spectacle, and seeing new things was good for the heart.

I opened my mouth for Tem to feed me a meatball on a skewer as I swept my eyes around campus. I was a little surprised at the differing reactions from the crowd—I used to be a chick magnet, but now men kept eyeing me. If they’d been looking at me normally, I wouldn’t think anything of it, but they kept smiling sweetly and gazing at me. It was a little strange.

“Porsche’s top energy is spreading everywhere,” Jom said. “Look at that babyface over there! He’s ogling you like he wants to eat you alive.” He still believed that I was a top. Tem could only smile and hold in his laugh.

I glanced out of the corner of my eye in the direction Jom pointed. He was clearly gay, probably a bottom—he was petite and cute and looking at me flirtatiously. If I could switch from liking women to men, could I flip from being a bottom to a top?

Tem suddenly looped his arm through mine, leaning his head onto my shoulder and rubbing against me affectionately. It grossed me out and made my hair stand on end. “What are you doing, Tem? You’re giving me goosebumps, you shithead!” I hurriedly pulled my arm away as Tem grinned.

“I’m killing your dreams!” he laughed. “You’re a total bottom, Porsche! Why even try to become a top?”

“How did you know what I—”

“Your face said everything, Porsche. Stop staring at that twink or you’ll give him false hope.”

I sighed. Truthfully, I didn’t even realize that I was looking, but my eyes *were* pointed in that general direction… I’d just been lost in my thoughts for a moment.

“Jealous, huh?” I teased. “You want me to top you?” Tem acted like he was going to throw up.

Jom came back from buying drinks just in time to hear that, and he paled. “Ew, no. I can’t deal. Nope! You two…”

“Argh! Stop talking, please, I’m really going to puke,” Tem said. He nodded to someone waving at us from afar. “Look…our co-star is

coming over here. A mere extra like me has to make way for the main cast."

"Vegas is just the co-star?" Jom turned to look at Vegas, then turned back to Tem. "Who's the lead, then?"

"Shush," Tem said, shutting Jom up by stuffing his mouth with a meatball.

Vegas came to a stop in front of me. He was wearing the competing university's polo shirt. "Hello! You're here early."

"Hi, Vegas. You're looking handsome today," Tem teased. Vegas had gelled back his hair today; he admittedly looked pretty good.

"I have to be, or else I wouldn't be able to compete with the people here," he laughed.

Jom smiled playfully at Vegas. "Who are you cheering for, your university or ours?"

Vegas turned to look at me. "Doesn't matter where my body is, my heart will always be here." He smiled widely, seeming proud of his sappy words. I couldn't help but smile at the corniness of it. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Tem and Jom pretending to gag.

"Have you eaten? Do you want to grab a bite with us?" I invited Vegas, who looked surprised. *It's nothing like that, Vegas; I'm just embarrassed for you.*

"Of course I'll go with you!" Vegas agreed at once, his eyes sparkling. He seemed satisfied by my invitation—grateful, even.

We browsed the market for a long while, looking for things to eat. Once we got everything we wanted, we headed to a wooden table and started laying out the food.

"What do you want to drink? I'll go get it for you," Vegas offered.

"I can go by myself," I said, not wanting to bother him too much. Actually, I shouldn't have been worried about that, considering he paid for all my food. Whenever I pulled out my money to pay for myself, he cut me off, flaunting how rich he was.

"Don't worry about it. It's better if I go."

“…Anything’s fine,” I said. Actually, I was feeling too lazy to walk. Vegas might as well do it, since he was so blatantly indulging me.

“Damn, you barely even have to lift a finger. Must be nice,” Jom said, making a face at me.

“Vegas is all right… He’s good at spoiling you,” Tem said as he watched Vegas walk away.

I shrugged helplessly. I wasn’t saying Vegas wasn’t a decent guy. I knew he was trying to get in my pants—he was so obvious about it that I had no doubts—but I didn’t feel anything for him at all. My heart didn’t race, I didn’t feel restless. I just felt neutral.

I didn’t feel anything remotely resembling what I felt when I was with Kinn. Kinn threw me off-balance so much that I didn’t seem like myself, but I knew that my feelings for him were genuine.

Suddenly, Tem looked frantically around the market, making an uneasy expression and furrowing his brows. He called out to Jom and I and gestured toward the crowd. “Look…”

“That’s Kinn’s posse over there…”

I felt a chill spread through my body when I spotted Time, Tay, and Mew walking around the market. Kim was tagging along, wearing the same university polo shirt as Vegas. Although I didn’t see Kinn anywhere, just seeing his friends was enough to make my heart race. I was afraid that bastard would jump up out of nowhere! I leaped out of my seat in the same instant that Vegas walked over with our drinks.

I was about to take a step back and turn around, focused on getting out of here, but I didn’t see Vegas behind me. I bumped into him with a thump, and the drinks in his hand spilled all over the uniform shirt that I’d borrowed from P’Beam.

“Ack! Porsche! I’m so sorry!” Vegas put the half-empty cup down on the table before reaching into his pocket and procuring a handkerchief. He tried to wipe the drink off my shirt. I slowly looked down at the dark brown liquid that was soaking my entire right side.

“It’s okay. I was the one turning around without looking,” I said, batting Vegas’s hand away. I pulled at my shirt so I wouldn’t get any colder or stickier.

“I think you should go wash up in the bathroom. I’ll go buy you some tissues,” Tem said before heading straight for the convenience store.

“I’ll take you to the bathroom,” Vegas said, tugging me toward the restroom. I relented, letting him drag me over while Jom volunteered to watch over our belongings at the table.

I just had to be wearing a white shirt today, too. Fuck, it wasn’t even my shirt! Although there were no rules saying we *had* to wear the university polo shirts today—in fact, we could wear anything from our uniform to our sportswear—most people tended to wear their polo shirts to this event. But I couldn’t go home, so I didn’t have much of a choice in uniform. *I left it up to fate, but karma caught up with me!*

The nearest bathroom was really crowded, but I didn’t care. When we got to the sinks, I immediately started unbuttoning my shirt. Vegas looked at me in alarm, staring at me without blinking. He grabbed my hand as I was unbuttoning the last button of my uniform shirt.

Vegas looked around as people started staring, probably wondering why I was taking my shirt off. “There are a lot of people watching,” he remarked.

“What? We’re all men here,” I dismissed him. What did I have to be shy about? When I swam I wore a speedo, showing nearly my entire body to half the university.

“It’s not right. Come here,” Vegas chided as he dragged me into a stall and locked the door. *Wait! Why the fuck is he coming in with me?!*

“Er... I’ll change, but can you leave first?” I pointed to Vegas, trying to pressure him into leaving. I didn’t mind changing outside, but in a cramped stall with Vegas staring at me? No fucking way!

“We’re all men here,” Vegas said with a smile, but I wasn’t laughing. *Asshole!*

I’d have been more at ease if I was changing by the sinks. This was dangerous—I’d been in this exact situation with Kinn before! I didn’t trust Vegas not to try something.

“Get out,” I repeated calmly, glaring daggers at him. I didn’t dare take my shirt off. It was one thing if it was Tem or Jom, but Vegas had designs on me, and I’d been burnt by what Kinn did. I promised myself that I’d never let it happen again!

“All right, all right,” Vegas said with a laugh, putting both hands up in surrender. I held my unbuttoned shirt closed and watched him unlock the door.

“Keep this to clean yourself up,” Vegas said, handing me his handkerchief. I stretched out my hand to take it from him. He snuck another glance at me, so I raised my voice to chase him out.

“You can get out now!” I said. Vegas nodded and was about to leave when he suddenly stopped mid-step, calling out a name that made me freeze in shock. Did I hear him wrong?



“Kinn…”

In that moment, Kinn appeared in front of me, his hands wet and holding tissues. It looked like he’d come here to take a piss and accidentally bumped into me and Vegas.

“What were you doing together…?” Kinn whispered, his voice ice-cold and his expression dark. He looked me up and down, from head to toe. I gripped my shirt tightly. My clothes were in disarray, and I knew with one glance what Kinn was thinking.

Neither Vegas nor I said anything.

“Porsche!”

Bang! Before Kinn could step inside, I quickly shut the stall door and locked it. I leaned back against the wall, feeling my heart hammer wildly in my chest. I’d tried so hard to act normal all morning, and now this fucker had to show up!

“Open up!” Kinn roared.

“Brother, we’re in public,” Vegas cried out, trying to stop Kinn.

“And what were you two doing in there?”

“Why do you have to be so angry?”

“I’m asking you—what were you doing in there?!”

“It’s…whatever you want to think,” Vegas said. His voice hardened so suddenly that even I was taken by surprise. I furrowed my eyebrows.

“Vegas!”

“Hey, hey, Kinn… This is a university! Calm down.” I recognized the sound of Time’s voice as Kinn’s friends rushed into the bathroom.

“Vegas…is this really how you want to play with me?”

“I don’t know, Kinn, are you having fun?” Vegas retorted. His voice was defiant, so different from his usual carefree tone. I frowned, listening intently to the words being exchanged outside the stall. Neither man was willing to concede to the other.

“Enough, enough. Come out, Kinn,” one of his friends said.

“Bastard!” Kinn shouted. “It isn’t over between you and I!”

“…You better keep up, then.”

“That’s enough, Vegas. Let’s go, Kinn!”

I could sense the chaos outside the stall. I heard everything clearly, but I didn’t understand a single word. I wanted to go out there and see what was going on, but I was afraid that things would end badly.

After a while, the bathroom was quiet again. It seemed like everything was back to normal. I sat there on the toilet lid for a long time before I was able to calm myself down and get my emotions under control.

When I came out of the bathroom, Tem, Jom, and Vegas were all standing there waiting for me with grim faces.

“Are you okay?” Tem asked.

Jom came over to gently pat me on the shoulder. “You should head to the gym.”

“If you need anything at all, you can call me,” Vegas said, concerned. “I’ll be there to cheer for you in the afternoon.”

I nodded and parted ways with him. Tem handed me my bag, and we headed to the gym.

I was all fucked up from what happened earlier. Kinn still had a massive influence on my mental state, and the more I held back my feelings, the more stressed out I got. I was afraid that my emotions would affect my performance in the competitions today…

I changed into my kendo uniform before closing my eyes and trying to focus. I wanted to purge the images of Kinn’s face from my head. I wanted to apologize to myself a hundred—no, a thousand times. *I’m sorry for getting hurt again and again. I’m sorry I’m so weak. I’m sorry I only think about him. I’m sorry for lying to myself and saying I was fine…*

I was hurting so much that I couldn’t stand it. I’d been bottling up my emotions for so long, it was only a matter of time before I exploded. I could only hope that it wouldn’t be any time soon, because the people cheering me on from the sidelines were pinning all of their hopes on me.

“From the home team, Pachara Kittisawasd!”

When I heard my name, I entered the arena and tried to clear my head.

From the moment the competition started, I knew I wasn't performing at my best. Although I tried not to think about him, Kinn's face kept surfacing in my mind, refusing to go away.

"Focus!" P'Beam shouted at me. The matches continued. Although I won, I wasn't very satisfied with my scores. The whole day, I alternated between competing and warming up between matches. There was no match where I won by a wide margin—I only barely scraped through most of them.

"Focus, Porsche," said P'Beam, handing me a water bottle and a cold towel. "You're so absent-minded today. Did you get any sleep last night?"

My last competition of the day was a judo match. I changed and warmed up next to the competition area. Judo was my best sport, but once again, I was doing a mediocre job. I was losing my touch, unable to focus on what was right in front of me.

I glanced over at the stands. Vegas waved at me, along with Jom and Tem, who had finished his swimming competition. They were here to cheer me on for my last match. When the referee gave the signal, I faced my opponent, bowed, and began.

Everything went as I predicted—there were openings where I could have pinned my opponent and quickly ended the match, but my opponent was skilled. I had to really focus, eliminating all distractions from my mind and quickly going on the offensive.

But in that crucial moment, I saw a flash out of the corner of my eye. I turned to look, and my focus flew out the window as soon as I recognized the tall figure walking into the gym with his friends. Kinn stood there with his arms crossed, watching the competition with a scowl. My lapse in focus gave my opponent the opportunity to grab me and toss me flat on my back, a complete ippon that allowed my opponent to immediately win the match.

I lay there with my eyes closed, panting from exertion. In the end, I lost. I lost because I allowed my emotions to get the better of me again…

"I'm sorry," I apologized to my seniors as soon as I walked out of the arena. P'Beam and the other seniors came over to give me encouragement, even if they did look disappointed.

I felt terrible. I was the one who fucked up because I couldn't handle my feelings. Everyone must have been disappointed with the results of my shitty performance.

I knew that my seniors had placed a lot of hope in me, and that this was supposed to be a source of pride for the Sports Science majors and for our entire university, but I lost. I lost so stupidly, too—all that bastard Kinn needed to do was walk through the door, and I couldn't control myself at all!

After all the pressure I'd been under today, I sat alone in the locker room with my head in my hands, completely drained. Other people began to filter out from the gym to go watch the soccer match, which was the main attraction of the sports meet. Both my friends excused themselves—Jom had to go prepare as a player. I sat there in my judo uniform. I didn't even have the will to get changed.

"Porsche!" A harsh voice sounded from behind me. I spun around in alarm when I recognized who it was. Kinn stalked over to me with an impassive face. "Pack up and come home," he ordered.

I didn't say a word as I shot up from my seat, standing there and staring at him in shock. It was like time stood still. My legs wouldn't budge, even when Kinn reached out to grab my arm and tug me toward him.

"What are you avoiding me for?!" Kinn snapped at me. I gathered all my strength to shake his hand off of my arm, pulling away from him.

"Let go of me!"

"Why are you running away from me?!" he demanded, stepping closer. I automatically backed away from him, my back hitting the lockers.

"Back off!" I yelled, pushing at his chest as hard as I could. Why did it feel like I barely had any strength left?

"Why? Am I not allowed near you anymore?" Kinn snapped. "Oh! Does it have to be Vegas? You'll let *him* touch you, huh?"

I glanced up at Kinn, frustrated. The lump in my throat was back, and my heart dropped to my feet. Hearing Kinn's voice and

seeing him up close for the first time in days made the turbulent feelings I'd been bottling up this entire week come rushing back.

"What the hell are you talking about?!" I spat back. I wondered how desperate my gaze must have looked as I stared at him.

Kinn never cared if anything else was weighing on my mind. He didn't give a rat's ass what I felt, always focusing on other things. If he still thought I was messing around with Vegas, then I had nothing to say to him.

Kinn laughed humorlessly. "Do you think I'm stupid? I know what you two were doing!" he bit out.

I clenched my fists. In the end, Kinn was still the same ignorant asshole. He never really knew me at all. Did he even know what kind of person I was? He was making all the wrong assumptions! A man like him would never care about my feelings.

I gritted my teeth, staring back at Kinn's disdainful sneer.

"Was it so hard to keep it in your pants that you had to do it on campus?!" he said, leaning toward me. His mouth curled up in a smile, but his eyes looked so cruel that I could barely stand it.

"Kinn!" I pushed at his chest again, no longer afraid.

"You keep telling me there's nothing going on between you and Vegas! Do you think I'm an idiot?!"

"Yes! You're a fucking idiot! Don't assume other people are like you!" I yelled, my control snapping in half. I grabbed the collar of Kinn's polo shirt with trembling hands.

"What am I?! Say it!"

Just the way Kinn was looking at me right now sent pain straight into my heart. *Bastard! How can you hurt me like this?!*

Kinn stood there, unmoving, not even lifting a hand to push me away. Instead, he let me yank his collar with all my strength. Those vibrant eyes that used to always stop me in my tracks looked so hollow now... It was frightening.

"I don't go around fucking everyone like you!" I shouted into his face, my voice shaking uncontrollably.

"I didn't say you were fucking everyone, I said you were fucking Vegas!" Kinn's voice was so full of contempt that I almost

exploded. He was going too far.

“Why do you want me to fuck him so bad, huh?!” I threw him down to the ground, climbing on top of him and pulling my fist back, ready to knock his goddamn lights out. I needed to let out the anger I’d kept locked inside my heart.

“You’re already fucking him!” Kinn kept on yelling, his eyes watching my fist as it hovered in the air. “Go on, Porsche. Do your worst!” he goaded me, jutting his chin forward and pulling at my clothes to press us even closer together.

“Fine! I’ll fuck him! Will that make you happy? Will you be satisfied enough to stop screwing with me?!” I bit my lip when I was done shouting. No matter how much I wanted to get up and run away from him, I couldn’t find the strength to push my shaking body up off the floor.

“Oh, I’ll stop! You don’t have to worry about that,” Kinn said.

It felt like my chest was being squeezed, crushing my heart. My fist clenched tighter. I hated that I didn’t have the guts to punch Kinn’s face in. Instead, I vented my fury by punching the floor, missing his face by a hair.

I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t hurt him, even after he’d hurt me so badly, hurt me more than I’d ever been hurt before. How many times?! When would I learn?! Fuck!

Since I’m going to get hurt, let me get hurt. Maybe my body and my heart can finally realize what the fuck they’re doing and stop this pathetic act already!

“Stop screwing with me.” I couldn’t bury my emotions anymore. The lump in my throat that I’d tried so hard to swallow slowly went away as tears welled up in my eyes. Kinn’s face went blurry as my fist hit the floor again and again. I felt something wet seep out from my knuckles, but I was strangely numb to it all; the pain wasn’t even close to the agony in my heart.

“Porsche! What are you doing?!” Kinn cried out in alarm, hurriedly grabbing my hands and stopping me from punching the floor.

“Why do you care?!” I tried to shake him away, but Kinn held on tight.

“Porsche! The fuck are you doing?!” Kinn stared at me as tears spilled down my face. I was so ashamed!

“You stopped…with me, because you saw me with Vegas,” I said. “Or was it because of Tawan coming back? Or March? Or maybe you just got bored of me…”

It felt like I was being stabbed by countless knives. I didn’t want it to come to this. I didn’t want to see Kinn face-to-face when I’d gotten so weak. It felt like he was stepping all over me; I kept losing again and again.

I didn’t want to see him. I didn’t want him to see me like this. I always knew what was going to happen to me if I confronted him.

That was why I kept avoiding him…

“Porsche…”

“I’m done, asshole! You can fuck whoever you want, Kinn, you can hurt my feelings, but you can *never* look down on me. Don’t say I’ll go fuck Vegas or someone else… Don’t look down on me like that!” The tears that I’d tried to hold back for so long flowed in front of the man I least wanted to see them.

I slumped against his chest, unable to fight any longer. I buried my face into his shirt, letting the tears fall. I didn’t want Kinn to see me crying pathetically, so all I could do was keep my head down to hide. I’d barely cried my whole life—why was I sobbing over such a stupid thing? I couldn’t stop if I wanted to…

“Porsche… I…” Kinn brought up his hands to loosely hold me. Although I didn’t want him to touch me, I couldn’t push him away. All my strength disappeared the second I saw his face. I couldn’t control myself anymore.

“If you’ve gotten bored of me…would it kill you to just tell me? Just one word?” I asked, my voice quavering. I tried to swallow my sobs so I wouldn’t sound any more pitiful than I already did.

“I wasn’t bored,” he said.

“What the hell do you mean, not bored? I’m asking you, Kinn… Why did you trick me? Why did you trick me into falling for you?! Does it get you off to see me like this?” I mumbled into his chest, my body shaking with the force of my emotions. “Everything that happened between us… What was it? What… What was I to you?”

Each word was harder to say than the last. It hurt so much that I couldn't bear it. It was pure torment. Instead of feeling relief at letting it all out, the pain constricting my chest only seemed to intensify as Kinn kept his silence.

"Was I just a cure for your loneliness…a way to pass the time until Tawan came back? Is that it?"

In the end, I had to accept the situation. From the start, Kinn was just trying to chase away the loneliness and pain from what Tawan did to him. I was just someone to pass the time with, a means to an end. When Tawan came back, I'd have to leave…and here we were.

I'd thought Kinn had feelings for me, but I was nothing more than a temporary amusement.

"…No," Kinn whispered, hugging me tighter.

I didn't say anything. I let my emotions flow, because this was the last time I'd let myself feel anything about this shitty situation.

"Porsche…let's go home," Kinn said, reaching over to gently stroke my hair, but his touch couldn't heal my heartache. I breathed in deeply, gathering my courage to ask what I most wanted to know…

"…Did you ever love me?" I asked, then bit my lip. What a stupid fucking question. The answer had been clear since the day I decided to step away. I didn't know what I hoped he'd say, but his silence told me everything I needed to know.

"…Then let me go. I'm begging you. Don't come near me, don't pay attention to me, just stop. *Please*." My pleading only made me sob harder. It was time for me to stop being so weak and pathetic. I hated this version of myself, the one driven mad by something as stupid as love. I was a fool.

Kinn flipped us over to straddle me and pulled me back into a tight embrace. I kept my face buried against his chest.

I didn't want to be near him. I didn't want to feel his touch or breathe in his scent. It only made me feel more dejected. Kinn had hurt me again and again—when was it going to stop? I'd dared to open my heart to him, to really feel what it was like to love someone. My whole life, I'd had no one by my side except my

brother. I was lonely and found someone I thought I could trust with my heart, but he betrayed me. Any belief I had in the concept of love faded away.

"Let's go home and talk, please…"

"No… That's enough, Kinn. Please…" I tried to get my shit together and push myself away from Kinn's arms. His was the touch I'd longed for, and now I hated it. I couldn't feel his warmth, or whatever the fuck else he was trying to convey. I was already numb, and I doubted I'd regain the ability to feel any time soon.

"Porsche…let's go talk about this at home," Kinn repeated, pulling back to look at me. For a moment, his gaze faltered, and I couldn't tell what he was feeling. He bent down to softly press a kiss to my forehead, and I struggled harder to get away.

"Let go!" I insisted. "Let me go! I've had enough."

If he was doing this out of pity, then I didn't want it. I didn't know what Kinn was thinking as he looked at my pathetically tearstained face, but the damage was done. I'd been wounded deeply, and I was terrified to put myself in a position to get hurt again.

"Brother! What are you doing?!" Vegas's voice echoed through the locker room as he hauled Kinn off of me. I was still crying, no matter how much I tried to stop. I pushed myself to sit up before using my sleeves to hastily wipe away my tears.

"This doesn't concern you, Vegas!" Kinn tried to pull me toward him, but I shook his hand away.

"Porsche, are you all right?" Vegas asked, sitting down beside me and putting his arm around my shoulder.

"Vegas! Get your hands off of my man!"

"I'm not your property," I snapped at Kinn before turning back to look pleadingly at Vegas. "Vegas, take me out of here."

"Let's go…" Vegas didn't wait any longer, helping me up from the ground. Kinn surged up to push Vegas's shoulders and sent him tumbling to the ground.

"Just fucking try and take him," Kinn snarled, his once-gentle voice enraged once more.

“Yes, I’m taking him! Brother, do you even see the way you’re acting?!” Vegas shouted back. He looked fierce and frightening—vastly different from his usual easygoing self.

“Don’t you dare interfere, Vegas,” Kinn warned him, not backing down. He pointed his finger in Vegas’s face.

“Why can’t I?” Vegas scoffed. “You said he was *your man*, and this is how you treat him? No matter how terrible a person I am, if he was the one I loved, I would never hurt him like this.”

“What would someone like you know about love?” Kinn spat.

“What about you, Brother? Do *you* know what love is? Get your shit together before you try to teach me about love.”

“Vegas!” Kinn pounced on him, yanking him up by his collar. Vegas didn’t even flinch; he smirked up at his cousin with a teasing look.

“You better hurry up, Brother, because I like him. And I think I can take much better care of him than you!” Vegas yelled, then headbutted Kinn. I looked between them, seeing Kinn in a familiar rage, and Vegas… Vegas’s violent demeanor made me oddly apprehensive.

“You’re not hearing a word I say, are you?!” Kinn shouted, his fist colliding with Vegas’s face, making him stumble with the force of it. He swayed backward, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

I slowly got up from the floor, my brain still trying to process what I was seeing. I was shocked at Vegas’s actions. He brought a hand up to his lips, smearing his fingers with blood, and looked at his hand with a quiet laugh. “You’re no different from Tankhun, Brother. You two only know how to use force to get your way.”

“Don’t you dare call me your brother!” Kinn seethed, unable to control his temper.

“And don’t *you* dare, either!” Vegas brought up his fist and punched Kinn hard in the face.

“Shit! Stop!” I called out to them. But Kinn wasn’t going to let it go, striking Vegas’s face with another blow. I hurried over to pull Kinn away, standing in front of him so Vegas couldn’t get his hands on him.

“Fuck, Vegas!” Both were still poised to jump each other. I exerted all my strength to push them apart with my hands, Vegas in front of me and Kinn behind me.

“Enough, Kinn!” I grabbed hold of Kinn and flung him into the wall, moving to stand in front of him. “Calm the fuck down!” I shouted. “Stop screwing with me!”

“Porsche, come back home with me.” Kinn tried to seize my wrist, but I resisted.

“Stop trying to force me, you bastard!” I peeled his hand off of me and pushed him away. “I quit! And you can stop screwing with my life, because I won’t have anything to do with yours!”

“Don’t say that, Porsche.” Kinn tried to approach me again, but this time Vegas blocked his way.

“Stop it!” Vegas shouted in annoyance.

“Vegas!” I hurried to pull Vegas back, preventing Kinn from surging forward to restart the fight. Kinn stopped in his tracks, staring at my hand tightly holding onto Vegas’s arm, his eyes unreadable. His gaze faltered for a moment before he looked away.

“Let’s go, Porsche…” Vegas slid my hand off his arm and grasped it. I allowed him to hold my hand—right now, I wanted someone to help me through my emotions. Kinn’s words and his silence shook me; his answer was as clear as day. It was enough for me to walk away from him entirely. I didn’t want to get hurt any more than this…

Before leaving the locker room, I walked over to pick up my bag. Kinn was still frozen in place, and Vegas kept tightly holding my hand in his.

I wanted to say something to Kinn before I left, because I was still hung up on his spiteful words. I wanted him to know that I would never go back to him.

Never.

“You were accusing me and Vegas of…” I gestured with my head at Vegas, then turned back to Kinn. “We didn’t do anything together. I didn’t even consider it. But now, I’m starting to.”

Chapter 30:
Too Late

KINN

"W*E DIDN'T DO ANYTHING* *together. I didn't even consider it. But now, I'm starting to."*

I leaned against the window in my office, lighting my third cigarette after coming home from the university. I kept sighing, Porsche's words churning through my head. What had happened today had me frozen in shock. I couldn't think; my mind was blank, and I had no idea what I was supposed to do…

"I fucked up my friend's life," Pete muttered.

"What do you mean, Pete?" Arm asked.

Pete stood there restlessly, pulling at his hair. "I deserve to die. I'm so stupid. This is all because I'm so fucking stupid!"

"Pete! Shut up!" I yelled at him, blowing smoke out the window. Every little noise irritated me right now, my thoughts in disarray.

"What?" Arm asked, still curious about Pete's behavior.

Pete sobbed. "I'm sorry, Porsche," he whispered, saying the name of the man who'd turned my life on its head. I couldn't believe how much of an impact his every move had on me.

"Spit it out! I want to know!" Arm kept interrogating Pete. I had my back to them, looking into the distance through the open window, unable to focus.

"Well, two days ago, I was tailing Mr. Vegas. I saw him and Porsche eating out at a mall…and I managed to get a picture of them feeding each other. I was just going to tease Porsche about it, but I accidentally sent it to Mr. Kinn. Fuck! I'm so. Fucking. *Stupid!"*

"What?! Why didn't you unsend it?"

"I don't know how to," Pete mumbled.

"Ah. You *are* stupid," Arm said.

I could hear every word out of their mouths, no matter how quiet they thought their whispering was. But everything was as Pete

said—I'd recently had him tail Vegas and look out for suspicious behavior, but he'd snapped that fateful photo that agitated me deeply. I drove over to them as fast as I could. The sight of Porsche sitting behind Vegas on his motorcycle made me even more certain what the confusing feeling inside me was:

Hurt.

It hurt so badly to see them laughing together. They were pressed so close that I felt an indescribable pang in my heart. Just that image alone made me want to pull Porsche back into my arms.

What I'd done to Porsche was a result of my own selfishness. I'd chosen to act distant, spending too much time engrossed in my own feelings to even consider his. What had I done?

I was the asshole who wanted answers, but I didn't realize how much my actions would hurt him. If I could go back in time, I wouldn't make him cry. I wouldn't hurt him ever again.

Porsche must have reached the limits of his emotional control, because today he'd let it all out and begged for assurance from my mouth, but I'd been too stubborn to say out loud what Porsche wanted to hear. I tried to organize my thoughts, finally realizing what Porsche felt for me all this time. I was the one who had destroyed everything…

I didn't answer his question, not only because I was stubborn, but because seeing Porsche like that had left me speechless. I hated myself for hurting him, the man I wanted to open my heart to, the man I wanted by my side the most…

I didn't know if he still wanted to hear my answer. Every question he asked me, I didn't know if the answers still mattered to him…

It was too late… Too late to confess my feelings.

I felt so foolish.

"Pete, say what you need to say." I threw my cigarette butt into the ashtray and turned to my subordinate. He stood there looking downcast, as if he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

I'd been asking for help from Tankhun's bodyguards lately, because I had a sneaking suspicion that I couldn't use my own men.

There was a feeling I couldn't quite put into words—I just couldn't trust my own people.

"Yes?" Pete startled and stood up straight, clearly nervous. He opened his notepad and took a deep breath, acting like a nervous kid about to give a presentation in front of the class. He began to read his notes out loud, slowly and carefully, his eyes clearly wary of me.

"On the morning of Monday the thirteenth, Mr. Vegas left his house and headed to university. It was the day of the sports meet, and he was required to attend the event.

"On the way, Mr. Vegas went into a Starbucks to buy an Americano and a cookie, same as every day, except on days when he wakes up late and heads straight to class. On this day, he had plenty of time.

"Before getting in his car, he spotted a stray dog, so he went to buy a grilled pork skewer from next door and fed it, petting it before getting in his car. He arrived at the university and parked in front of Building C, still not accompanied by his bodyguards, and threw his coffee cup and cookie bag in the trash nearby.

"After a while, Mr. Vegas took a call from someone. He perked up and quickly headed to the market on the other side of campus, and just like that, Mr. Vegas met up with Porsche, who was speaking with Tem and Jom. All four greeted each other.

"Porsche looked the same as usual, but Mr. Vegas looked overjoyed. Tem and Jom looked uncomfortable, like they couldn't bear to listen to something, but all four went to buy food from the market stalls. Mr. Vegas paid for everything Porsche wanted, and Porsche didn't protest—in fact, he looked pleased. Then, when they found a table..."

"Wait, wait." I stopped Pete, annoyed. "Do you really have to record his life in so much detail?"

Pete's smile immediately fell. "You said to follow his every move, Mr. Kinn," he said hesitantly, looking at the ground.

"I don't want to know how decent he is, whether he was feeding stray dogs, paying for people's food, or helping the environment by sorting his trash," I said icily. These days, everything

around me pissed me off, and my temper flared easily. I kept snapping at anyone who displeased me until my men were all left spooked and tense.

“Keep going…just not in so much detail,” Arm said, nudging Pete.

“Yes… After that, Mr. Vegas came over with drinks and spilled them on Porsche, so they went to the bathroom together…”

“What did you say? He spilled drinks on Porsche?”

“Yes, it was soda. Porsche and Mr. Vegas hurried to the bathroom… After that…uh…you confronted them, Mr. Kinn, and Mr. Kim and Mr. Time had to step in.”

I waved at Pete to continue talking, knowing full well that I’d been stupid and stubborn.

Porsche had always told me the truth, but I’d never listened. This only confirmed that what he said was true—I just didn’t listen to what he said. All I did was yell and blame him every time, from that first night we met until today…

“Mr. Vegas separated from Porsche and went to join his friends, watching the sports competitions. I observed no unusual behavior until the afternoon, when he headed to the gym to watch Porsche compete… And, uh…he fought with you. After that, Mr. Vegas dropped Mr. Porsche off at Mr. Tem’s dorm and headed home. That is all…”

“He just dropped Porsche off?” I asked. “He didn’t go up to his room?”

“Yes, he just dropped Porsche off downstairs.”

“Is that so…” I trailed off, thoughts swirling around my head.

What Porsche said was true—he didn’t have any thoughts about messing around with Vegas. When was I going to start believing him? And now that I did, could I even tell him that?

I knew now that everything Porsche told me was true. I was the one who didn’t trust anyone, not even myself.

“Mr. Kinn… Uh… C-can I say something?” Pete stuttered.

I didn’t reply.

“Porsche may seem rough around the edges, but he’s someone you can trust,” Pete said. “If he opened his heart to someone…believe me, he would never intentionally hurt that person.”

I tried to swallow the lump in my throat that formed at Pete’s words. Although I’d said I didn’t suspect him, my actions made it seem like he was a suspect.

“I didn’t say Porsche did it,” I said evenly. I sighed, taking in everything I was currently facing.

Tensions had escalated significantly, and it was troubling me. Right now, I didn’t just have to deal with the pain in my heart: I also had the family business to consider. I’d been incredibly uneasy because a large number of our confidential documents—revenue reports, expenses, and purchase orders—had gone missing. The Minor Clan had somehow got access to that information, allowing them to undercut us in certain product categories. Some of our long-standing business partners had even switched to partnering with the Minor Clan.

I knew there must have been someone on our side leaking information, throwing our business into disarray. The one who was most suspicious would be someone close to a member of the Minor Clan. But I didn’t believe that Porsche would betray me. I’d never believe it…

“What about Big? What has he been up to?” I asked Arm. I had Arm on Big’s tail because I’d felt for a while that he had secrets. He acted strange sometimes. I wasn’t sure if he was involved or not, though, because I had no solid evidence. Everything was guesswork based on my own intuition.

“He played games at the house all day today. He received several calls and quickly went into his bedroom and locked the door, so I don’t know what he talked about…” Arm frowned in suspicion, and so did I, carefully considering the behavior of my trusted bodyguard. It was because of things like this that I couldn’t use my own men, as most of them greatly respected Big.

Big often disappeared from the house at night. As for Vegas, I was intimately aware of his backstabbing nature. It wouldn’t be

strange for Vegas to pay off someone in my house to dig up our secrets.

This wasn't new—it'd been going on for a while. But Vegas never left any evidence behind for us to catch him; only my men had ever been caught.

"You two can go now..."

"I know it's hard to say, Mr. Kinn, because Porsche is close to Mr. Vegas—but please believe that he didn't do it," Pete insisted. I didn't think it was Porsche, but like Pete said, it was hard to say given the current situation.

I chased both Arm and Pete out of the room and collapsed on my sofa. There were a multitude of worries to mull over, and I didn't know where to start: the business, or the confusion in my heart.

I really never suspected Porsche of leaking our clan's secrets. In fact, that was why I warned him not to get too close to Vegas. If anything happened as a result of the leaks, I feared Porsche would be caught in the crossfire. And my worry did come true—Father and P'Chan had summoned me earlier to discuss the various problems with our business, including the mole. They knew that Vegas had approached Porsche and that they'd gotten friendly. Although I was confident Porsche was innocent, I couldn't stop anyone else from feeling suspicious.

Somewhere along the way, though, I realized that it wasn't just how it could be perceived from a clan loyalty standpoint that made me uncomfortable with Porsche and Vegas getting close—it also just pissed me off to see them getting so close. I was jealous and easily riled up, and my feelings were becoming more and more apparent. Especially today, when the person standing next to Porsche was Vegas and not me—it hurt to see the two of them together. But what could I do? I was the one who'd let everything get to this point. It served me right.

I'd distanced myself from him, but I didn't want Porsche out of my life. I just wanted to step back for a moment to be sure of my feelings. I wanted to be sure that I didn't just see Porsche as another fling to distract myself from Tawan. I forgot to consider how Porsche would feel...

What happened today made me realize how deeply I'd upset him. I wanted to apologize and tell him how I felt, but I was unable to put it into words. I hadn't realized that I could hurt Porsche as much as I had.

This was all my fault.

The day he opened the door and found me with March, nothing had happened—even if it *almost* did. I wanted to be sure that my feelings for Porsche were real, that he wasn't a replacement. I didn't think of Tawan, and I didn't want to have sex just to forget my troubles or for quick amusement. What happened that day made me certain that I only wanted Porsche.

The entire time I looked at March's face—even when I thought about what happened with Tawan—I realized it was only Porsche who occupied my mind...

As a man so afraid of getting his heart broken, it was difficult for me to be brave and fully admit to seriously falling for someone. It truly was a challenge to accept my own feelings. I was terrified to get hurt again, because it was torture. And it was even more torturous to admit I'd fallen in love with Porsche. When I had the chance to say it today, I failed. It was too late.

It felt like the old wound in my heart was burying me alive... It hurt more than anything to know that I'd missed my chance.

I poured myself a drink and downed it all at once. I wanted to forget all my problems, even just for a split second, because I couldn't think straight. I had no idea how I was going to get Porsche to forgive me and come back. My mind was so blank and disoriented that I couldn't find a way out. I needed a release from my frustration. But if I went to apologize to him right now, he wouldn't forgive me so easily. Just seeing him with Vegas had me spiraling out of control.

I'm sorry... I'm sorry I never trusted you.

I'm sorry I let you get hurt.

I was furious with myself for letting my foolishness blind me. I wanted to be sure of my own feelings, but I ended up hurting Porsche's feelings instead. I shouldn't have called March to come over, and I shouldn't have let myself keep dwelling on the past. I

should've believed my heart. I wanted Porsche by my side. I should've realized a long time ago that I couldn't live without him; he'd always held such power over my emotions. I should've realized sooner. I shouldn't have done such a stupid thing.

I really was in the wrong, and I needed to accept the consequences.

He can be as angry as he wants, but why does he have to leave? Please don't tell me he's going to be with someone else; I can't take any more torment.

My phone started to vibrate. I raised my brows, knocking back another drink before I picked up my phone to see who was calling me at a time like this.

Tawan's name lit up the screen.

Tawan had wounded me so deeply that I didn't dare let anyone else in. The past came back to hurt me again and again, up to this very moment. I'd lost all sense. The man I loved left me because of my own stupid obsession with the past.

I clenched my phone in my fist, angry at myself—how could I be so selfish?—and at Tawan for coming back into my life and bringing all this pain with him. I'd allowed the past to wound the present. Just when everything was going so well...

I threw my phone at the wall, furious and fed up with everything. I'd let Tawan hurt me for so long—why couldn't I let it go? I liked myself when I was with Porsche. I could play around with him and let loose. I loved seeing his annoyed face when I teased him. I didn't know when I'd started to like him so much, but he'd become important to me. So important that I wanted him beside me always.

Whenever Porsche was with me, it was like I could step outside the box I'd put myself in. I wasn't the second son of the Major Clan, the put-together workaholic, the son of a successful businessman who could handle any challenge. I wasn't shouldering the responsibility of anyone's hopes for the future. With Porsche, I was merely Kinn, a man who just wanted to live his life. Porsche never dreamed for me to be anything else, only looking at me gleefully whenever I did something stupid.

I was happy with Tawan, and I could still be myself, but there was our social status to consider. He went out with me partly because I was well matched for the son of a successful man like his father. When we met each other's friends, there was always a sense of maintaining perfection in our social circle.

It was different with Porsche—we could just be normal people, living like everyone else. I could tell he wanted me for who I really was, not just because of my status. If I didn't care about how people saw us, he wouldn't care, either.

But everything had changed. I'd seriously hurt him, destroying everything for the sake of my ego and because of my fear of the past. I wanted Porsche to come back, but I truly didn't know how that could happen now.

I picked up the old phone that had started this spiral, that made me think of such stupid things and brought back my old feelings. I threw it at the wall and smashed it to pieces. I destroyed my recorded memories of Tawan to remind myself that I wouldn't live in the past ever again...

"Mr. Kinn!" Big hurried inside. I was several drinks deep and beginning to feel dizzy. I knew it was the alcohol that was making me lose my self-control.

"Let me go!" I shook Big off, sweeping everything off my desk and sending it crashing to the floor. I was at the end of my rope, readily exploding into a rage.

"Mr. Kinn... Mr. Kinn, please don't do this," Big said, pulling me down onto the couch.

"Let go!" I kept struggling against Big, but the more I moved, the worse my headache became. I was confused and dizzy—I'd drunk almost an entire bottle of liquor at this point.

"Mr. Kinn, are you all right? Why are you so distressed?" Big managed to push me down onto the sofa, holding tightly onto me as he sat down next to me.

"Let me go," I demanded. "Porsche... Porsche..."

I drifted in and out of awareness. My eyelids felt so heavy that I had to close my eyes. In my head, I kept seeing the image of Porsche crying in the locker room today. I didn't know what the man

next to me was saying; I couldn't hear clearly or make sense of anything anymore.

"Sorry… I'm sorry, Porsche… Come home, please," I rambled, pouring my heart out as I called for Porsche.

"Why does it have to be him?" the man next to me said.

"Porsche… I won't let you get hurt again. I promise." My head felt so heavy that I couldn't hold it up anymore, so I slowly leaned onto the shoulder beside me. The warmth radiating from this man reminded me of Porsche—when we would tease each other and I could pull him into my arms.

"What's so great about him? What does he have that I don't?"

I could feel someone squeezing my hand, then lifting up my face. Warm breath ghosted over my cheek.

"You've come back to me, right? Porsche…" This man next to me had to be Porsche, right? My heart felt at ease knowing that he'd come back to me.

"Can't it be me…?"

Lips brushed against mine, pressing close and wet. I lifted my arms to reel him in closer as he began to nibble gently. My pining for Porsche made me yearn for this familiar touch so desperately that I couldn't control myself.

I responded to the tongue that invaded my mouth, entwining it with mine. I was sure that this was Porsche, but the kiss felt so different. It wasn't warm, wasn't familiar. I couldn't feel the bond between us.

It was strange. Even the hand reaching into my polo shirt was different. The hand gently pressed against my chest, but I wasn't feeling the usual heady rush of pleasure. My heart didn't race like it always did. If Porsche ever took the lead like this, my heart would be trembling to see him try something new, to see him clumsy and out of his depth.

I was thinking too hard, and my mind went vacant; the alcohol was making me horny. The hot tongue tangled with mine for a while before the man in front of me began to nose at my neck, making me tilt my head back to receive the touch, unable to stop…

The door opened with a *creak*.

“Big! What are you doing?!”

I thought I heard Tankhun’s voice echoing far away. The person in front of me stopped in his tracks.

“Porsche… Where are you going? Porsche…” I called out for the man still on my mind.

“Er… Mr. Tankhun, I…”

“Whoa, Kinn, you’re really drunk… Big! You get out of here!”

“But Mr. Kinn is…”

“My brother. I can look after him. Now scram!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Kinn, Kinn, you dumbass! That was close. And Big! Motherfucker clearly took advantage of you. It’s a good thing Arm saw him heading into your office, or else I’d have Big as a sister-in-law! I’m not putting up with that!”

“Porsche… Where are you going, Porsche?”

“Argh! Kinn, what the hell are you hugging me for? Pete, come help me…” I grabbed the person next to me, knowing I would never let him go again.

“Mr. Kinn, you’re intoxicated. Let’s get you to bed.” I felt myself being lifted and held by someone else’s hands.

“Kinn, don’t nuzzle my neck, you fucker, it’s ticklish!”

“Porsche… I’m sorry.”

“I’m not Porsche! I’m your brother. Your *brother*! Don’t lose your senses, now!”

It was like I was floating. I was being carried somewhere else, but I didn’t want to be apart from Porsche. I burrowed close, seeking his warmth. I wanted to kiss him and hold him. I missed him to death—did he even know?

“Mr. Kinn, sir, this is your bed. Go on…”

“Kinn, you traitor of a brother! Asshole! The fuck are you sucking my neck for?! Pete! Help me!”

My back hit something soft, but I didn’t forget to pull Porsche into my arms.

“Argh! Bastard! Don’t you dare! Help me, Pete! What are you laughing at?!”

“Porsche… I’m sorry. Let’s go back home together,” I said, holding him tightly. This had to be Porsche, because he was struggling with all his might. He always struggled just for the sake of it before he submitted to me.

“I’m not your wife, I’m your brother! Let go of me! Argh! That’s my neck, Pete! Help me!”

I heard someone laugh. “Mr. Kinn, that’s your brother.”

“Don’t—ha ha!—lick my ear!”

“Stay still,” I said.

“Kinn! I don’t wanna offend the spirits! Father’s gonna kill you! Pete, hurry up!

“Kinn, don’t! Eww! That’s disgusting! I can’t take it anymore!”

I suddenly felt something hard hit my face.

“Phew! That was close—he nearly got me!”

“Hah! Did you really have to punch him, Mr. Tankhun?”

“You didn’t help me at all, Pete! Die, you shithead!”

My consciousness faded away, and I knew nothing more.

***

PORSCHE

I WENT BACK TO THE DORM with Tem and sat on his sofa for a long while. I wasn’t in the mood to stay and support Jom at his soccer game. Vegas saw that I wasn’t looking great, so he dropped me off here and left, not bothering me any further.

I sat there with my head in my hands, all the lights and appliances in the room turned completely off. I left my feelings to work themselves out in darkness and total silence.

Silence…was Kinn’s answer to my question. I didn’t want to stay stuck in this mindset any longer. The way I exploded in the

locker room, letting out everything that I'd left bottled up for so long, gave me a sense of relief.

My tears might make me look weak right now, but this will be the last time. After this, I will never cry again.

I poured everything out through my tears, letting them wash away the hurt in my heart. It felt freeing, like a lock snapping open. I had no more regrets; the last thread keeping me tied down had finally snapped.

I'd made it to rock bottom, and it was a moment of perfect clarity. I realized how stupid I'd been to get into this mess in the first place.

Well, I wasn't going to stand for it anymore. Life had thrown a massive clusterfuck at me in such a short time, but I wouldn't let my emotions fuck me over like this again.

No more, Kinn, you bastard! Go die in a ditch somewhere! I'll count whatever happened before as karma!

My phone started vibrating. I picked it up and frowned at the unfamiliar number. I silently took the call, because people didn't call me often.

"Porsche! Where are you, huh?!"

I jumped back at the sound of Tankhun shouting into the phone at the top of his lungs. I gingerly held my phone away from my ears.

"Do you know how drunk my brother is? And Big was trying to snatch up Kinn just now!"

"And what's it to me?!" I spat, my mouth working faster than my brain. I'd spoken so harshly that Tankhun was stunned into silence for a moment. Kinn's business didn't concern me at all anymore. What was this dipshit calling me for?

"Porsche, I am your boss!" Tankhun insisted.

"So what? I'm gonna quit soon. Why did you call me?!"

"I don't know why you two are mad at each other, but why don't you talk to him? Aren't you worried about your husband?!"

"Tankhun! Watch your mouth or I'll knock your teeth out!" I got even angrier hearing Tankhun refer to Kinn as my fucking *husband*.

What a fucking lunatic.

“You ungrateful little shit! I’m Team Porsche, or else I would’ve let Big have his way with Kinn!” Tankhun sounded like he was shaking with fury right now.

“That’s his problem! When he has a go with a dog, then you can call and surprise me!” I hung up without listening to Tankhun’s shouting any longer. I’d already vowed not to let Kinn have any sway over my life. He’d hurt me until I went numb, and now there was no trace of the bond we once had.

But… Kinn had really gone beyond my expectations this time if he’d made a pass at Big. Kinn was such a manwhore, he’d chase anything with a heartbeat. What a waste of my time. What a fucking waste of my tears. Why did I have to suffer for a guy like that for so long? The day wasn’t even over, and he’d already gone home and found Big! Should I really give someone like that a place in my heart?

It’s over, you fucker! Enough is enough! Just thinking about it makes me want to puke!

I took a shower and washed my body with the promise that this would be the last day I thought about him. After this, there would be no more pathetic Porsche. Let him die; I’d bury him at the bottom of my heart. He wouldn’t be able to come back and bring all his stupid feelings with him…

***

“Porsche… Porsche! Porsche!”

“What?!” I shouted back at Tem when he leaned in close to my face.

“Are you okay?” Tem squinted at me contemplatively.

“Of course I’m okay,” I said, looking back down at my phone.

Jom stared at me suspiciously. “You better be telling the truth, shithead.”

“I am! Where are we going after class?” I asked them, wanting to invite them out for drinks.

“It’s strange,” said Jom. “Usually when classes end, you rush back before us…”

I shrugged. “Well, I’m free now.”

“And what are you going to do next? What about Chay?” Tem asked anxiously.

“I’m spending the next couple of days packing up to leave… As for Chay, I left him with Pol,” I said, a little uneasy. If I quit now, I’d probably be fined for breaching my contract, so I might have to borrow money from Tem and Jom. I hoped Mr. Korn would let me pay in installments.

“Did he not ask why you weren’t going home?”

“Chay asked me, but I told him I had stuff to do on campus. As for Pol, I just asked him to look after my brother and ended the call.”

“Are you serious about quitting this time?”

“I’ve been serious every time, motherfucker! If anyone tries to stop me this time, I’ll stomp them into the ground!” I muttered darkly. If Mr. Korn and P’Chan tried to buy more time by spouting more of their philosophical bullshit, I’d go on a rampage like a second Tankhun. *Those bastards!* Did they really want to hold onto me that badly? I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to stop myself from killing Kinn if I stayed there any longer.

“Fine, fine, just tell me when. I’ll go help move your things,” Tem said, still looking uncertain.

I’d made up my mind to leave that place and go back to living my life at my own house. Now that I’d quit working for Kinn’s family, I doubted anyone wanted to hunt me down and shoot me. If anyone did, I’d catch them and use the blood from their heads to wash my feet as punishment for fucking up my life. And after that, I’d probably go ask Madam Yok for my job back. Hopefully she wouldn’t decide she couldn’t forgive me after her place got destroyed so many times.

“Let’s go find something to eat behind the university,” Jom offered. I nodded in agreement, and we headed to Tem’s car.

I felt a lot better today—it was hard to believe that exploding at Kinn like that yesterday could give me so much relief. I’d been

thinking of him less and less, until he was barely a presence in my head. Unless something reminded me of him, like…

"Hello, Porsche. Your classes have ended rather early. I was hoping to catch you around."

A familiar figure walked over to us. I immediately turned to face him.

"Who's that? Do you know him?" Tem leaned toward me to whisper.

"Huh? What is it, Tawan?" I asked, expressionless. "Do you have something to say to me?"

"I do," he said in a sweet, clear voice. "Do you have some time, Porsche? I just want to chat."

"Who is this?" Jom asked.

"Kinn's ex," I said, to my friends' shock. I tried to cut the conversation with Tawan short. "Just say whatever you need to say."

"Hmm… It isn't very convenient to talk here. How about this? You've just finished classes, so you must be very hungry, Porsche. Why don't we have a meal together and chat?"

No matter how normal his face and voice appeared, Tawan's fierce gaze made it clear that he was out for blood.

"That's a waste of time. You can say it here," I said with a sigh. It was irritating to look at him. Didn't his face get tired of all the fake smiles and pretend pleasantries?

"Aww, don't you want to be friends?" he said. "I can pay for you, Porsche. Speaking of which, Kinn did say that you liked free things. That you'll eat whatever someone else pays for, whether it's him or Vegas. Oh, and there's more as well…"

Hah! You just can't help yourself, can you? Why did he reveal his motive so easily? It was so obvious that this asshat was here to stir up trouble. What a load of shit.

"Look! I'm telling you that I have nothing to do with Kinn anymore," I said. "If you're here to find trouble, don't waste your time." I made a face, fed up with his behavior. He looked like he was emulating a soap opera villain. This shithead had to be crazy, too! *Can't stay in your lane, can you?*

“But I want to clear the air. Can we not talk for a moment? My mind simply cannot rest when Kinn is still hovering around you like this,” Tawan said sternly, frowning. His glare looked serious, but he wouldn’t meet my eyes.

“Then tell Kinn to stop bothering me. Bye!” I made to walk to Tem’s car again.

“Why?” he insisted. “What are you afraid of, Porsche? Afraid of little old Tawan? I won’t do anything to you. I just want to clear things up and put the whole matter to bed. Or are you biding your time and waiting for Kinn to take you back?”

I was running out of patience for this crazy little shit. He was one of those stuck-up bougie brats whose parents spoiled him rotten—no different from Tankhun, Kinn, or Kim.

“Fine! But this is the end of it! If you don’t stop messing with my life, don’t say I didn’t warn you.” I pointed at his face and glared at him.

Tawan smiled in satisfaction. “It will be the end of it,” he replied. “The matter won’t drag on any longer than it has to.”

Fine! Once this was over, he wouldn’t have any reason to bother me again. I’d just go along with him—I could tell that if I said no, he’d pester me until I relented. It was written all over his face.

I had Tem follow Tawan’s car. At first, he wanted me to ride with him, but neither of my friends would hear any of it. They insisted on joining us, too. If Tawan really only wanted to talk, it couldn’t be considered ganging up on him if I brought my friends.

“Which soap opera did Kinn get his ex from?” Tem shook his head. “He’s so fucking melodramatic and full of himself. Bastard!”

“He’s got that bratty rich kid look,” said Jom. “His eyeliner is so thick, I’m itching to kick it off with my cleats.”

“Yeah, yeah, don’t say anything, you two,” I warned them. “Just sit there quietly, or that motherfucker is going to complain that we’re ganging up on him!”

“Like ripping off a band-aid, right?” Tem said, squinting at me. “Get hurt once and get it over with.”

“What do you mean, hurt? I’m not hurt, I’m annoyed!” I told him the truth. If I didn’t talk to Tawan now, who knew how long he’d

keep harassing me? If the matter with Kinn could be settled quickly, I'd put up with the heartache for a little bit longer.

Which fuckwit was going to show up on campus next? March? Big? Fuck!

When we turned into the alley, I finally realized why he kept insisting on getting a meal with me—it was the Japanese restaurant that Kinn liked. I knew what Tawan wanted now... He was so immature. This was the best his tiny brain could come up with?

"Go ahead and order, Porsche. Don't be shy..." Tawan passed the menu to me and my friends, but we sat there and only ordered water.

"Let's get straight to business. What do you want?" I asked him directly, wanting to settle this quickly.

"What's the rush?" Tawan asked cheerfully. "If no one wants to order, I'll order for you... This restaurant has so many delicious things. Has Kinn ever brought you here, Porsche?"

I could only sit there silently with my arms crossed, watching his ridiculous performance. He obviously knew the answer to that question.

"You must have been here before," Tawan continued. "Mek said he met you and Kinn here... What would you like to eat?"

"Excuse me, your order," the waiter said, placing platters of uni sushi on the table. I stole a glance at the plates before looking away. It didn't have much effect on me, but it still reminded me of Kinn.

"This is my favorite, did you know? I hope you like it, Porsche, because I ordered extra for you."

I immediately turned to look at Tawan when he said that uni was his favorite dish. I was starting to put things together. Every time Kinn had a reaction to me eating these damned sea urchins, he'd been thinking about his ex.

I didn't reply to Tawan.

"You can go ahead," he said. "It looks like we have the same tastes, hm?"

Tem turned to me with a smirk. “This creep smiles like an offering doll,[7] don’t you think?”

“Mm-hm,” I agreed.

I was starting to wonder if Tawan had invited me here because he wanted to antagonize me or because he was actually hungry. The fucker ordered a shitload of food and happily ate without paying attention to the three other people sitting with him.

“The salad here is good. Try some!”

“He’s a little like Tankhun, if you look at it that way,” Jom whispered to me.

“Are you really not going to eat?” Tawan asked. “If you wait too long, you’ll be eating my leftovers. Or...maybe you like my leftovers.”

I smiled at the childish remark. He was clearly trying to hurt me with his words—had he thought this through at all? *Sorry, but I don’t feel anything. The three of us think you’re batshit insane!*

I’d had enough. “Just say what you want to say and stop wasting my time,” I said. “You can stop your babbling, too. It makes you look stupid.”

Tawan put down his chopsticks and stared at me in displeasure. “I just wanted to talk. I can’t believe Kinn would like someone without any manners.”

“Game on,” Tem muttered under his breath.

“I just wanted to tell you that no matter how hard you try, Porsche, Kinn won’t commit to you,” Tawan added.

“And?” I asked, tired.

“Your social standings are just so...different.” Tawan’s gaze was full of disdain. “Kinn is no ordinary man, you see. In the future, he will have to take over his father’s business. Do you really think you can stand beside Kinn when he gets to that point?”

“You make him sound so high and mighty,” I said indifferently. “What is he, a god?”

“Porsche, I’m trying to help you. Kinn has a certain status in society. What about you? Don’t you think Kinn would be embarrassed to have you on his arm at events?”

“In case you didn’t know,” I told him, “Kinn and I aren’t anything to each other, and we never were. You might want to take the time you’re spending on your soap opera speech and use it to check if he’s hooking up with anyone else right now. Might be March, the upcoming TV star, or Peem, the cover model, or…” I started counting on my fingers, making a big show of thinking hard, hoping to annoy the fuck out of this lunatic.

“Porsche! I mean it. If you don’t want to get hurt later, get out of Kinn’s life!”

“Didn’t want to be in it in the first place,” I retorted. Seeing Tawan lose his temper gave me a strange sense of vindication.

“Hah! Make sure of it. The one by Kinn’s side needs to be able to help him with his family’s business. An uncultured brute like you can’t help Kinn at all, can you?”

“So you’re useful to him? Is that what you’re saying?”

“Indeed.”

I huffed out a laugh. “You know he only wants to use you, and you *still* want to stay? So that’s why you like salad—it reminds you of chewing the cud. You can keep eating,” I taunted him, glancing pointedly at his salad. I was on a roll today, irritated at Tawan’s bullshit and feeling like I’d already wasted enough of my time.

“Porsche!” Tawan slapped the table in anger. Tem and Jom struggled to hold in their laughter.

“Seriously, Tawan, do you really have this much free time?” I asked, completely fed up. “Or did you just run over and annoy me like this because you’re lonely?”

“I had to speak with you because right now every other word out of Kinn’s mouth is ‘Porsche’! Kinn is like this because of you!”

“Well! He’s the one he likes,” Tem remarked casually, sipping his water.

“Disappear from Kinn’s life, Porsche!” Tawan ranted, his voice taking on an edge. “Or do you want me to *make* you disappear? Don’t you dare think you’ve got the upper hand. Kinn is miserable because of you. Soon, Kinn will come to his senses and realize what he’s doing!”

“Oh, I’m disappearing from his life, believe me. Even if you hadn’t told me to, I still would.”

“You think my friend leaving Kinn will get him to take you back?” Jom piped up. “Doesn’t that depend on what Kinn wants?” I had to stop him with a glare. I didn’t want people to think the three of us were ganging up unfairly on one man.

“If you don’t stop bothering Kinn, I won’t stop here,” Tawan said, fuming. I knew he must have been feeling cornered to say the things he was saying to me. People who felt trapped spewed stupid shit like this. If I had to guess, Kinn wasn’t interested in him anymore, so he was trying to get rid of everyone else around Kinn in hopes of reclaiming his place. Well, he could have him! I was sick and tired of him.

“...If Porsche leaves him, but Kinn refuses to let him go, then what do we do?” Tem asked placidly.

Silence enveloped the table. Tawan went still for a moment, then smiled.

“Porsche, your brother... Porchay, was it? How has he been?”

I shot up from my chair and grabbed Tawan by the collar. Jom and Tem tried to hold me back.

“Get out of Kinn’s life. Don’t go near him anymore!” Tawan shouted, glaring fearlessly into my eyes.

“Oh, you don’t have to tell me twice! I’m not messing with your ex and his toxic bullshit any longer,” I said. “But if you lay a hand on my brother, you’re dead!” I gritted my teeth and pushed him away, hard.

“You better do as you say!” Tawan shouted after us as we marched out of the restaurant.

Tem tried to comfort me as soon as we got into his car. “He’s crazy, like a cornered animal. He probably didn’t know what else to do, so he threatened you.”

“He was obviously trying to provoke you. Is he nuts? That motherfucker Kinn sure can pick ’em,” Jom grumbled.

“Tem, take me to Kinn’s house,” I said. “I’m moving out today.”

I wasn't leaving because of Tawan's threat, but because I couldn't be bothered to keep dealing with all this shit. There had been no real substance to our conversation just now, just Tawan giving me a headache with his insanity.

I was leaving and Kinn still didn't want Tawan—how could that be my fault? Was Tawan fucking smooth-brained or something?

I wanted everything to be over as quickly as possible. I needed this shitstorm out of my life.

I went to tell the guard to open the gates for Tem and told my friends to wait in the car. The memory of the last time I left this place came flooding back to me.

I walked into the house without caring if people stared, but as soon as I was about to head to my room, Mr. Korn and P'Chan passed by. I greeted them with a quick wai.

"Porsche, you've been gone for a while. Mr. Korn has something to talk to you about," P'Chan said, looking rather strained.

I nodded. "I also have something I want to talk about."

"Mr. Korn is taking a call right now, so you can meet him a little later. Don't go anywhere," P'Chan said.

I nodded and went straight to my bedroom.

"Chay, pack up. We're going home," I told my brother.

Chay was lying down on the bed reading comics. He looked up at me in confusion, but I didn't explain anything. I went to grab my bag and started tossing my things into it.

"What is it, hia?" Chay frowned.

"We're going home!" I snapped.

"Wait, wait. What's going on? Tell me." Chay walked over to me, looking at my bag and then up at me.

"We're going home! What's so hard to understand?"

"Who said you could leave?" a voice cut in. The newcomer pushed past my door and set my temper ablaze.

"Butt out, Kinn!" I snapped back, packing my bags faster.

"Chay, leave us," Kinn said.

Chay looked at Kinn and me before sighing and brushing past Kinn to head outside.

“What right do you have to chase my brother out like that, huh?” I hardened my voice and glared at Kinn. I didn’t even want to look at his face. The more I looked, the more I felt my control slipping away.

“Where are you going, Porsche?” Kinn asked miserably as he took a step toward me.

“What are you coming in here for?! Get out!” I shouted, hurling my bag at him.

“Ow, Porsche! Do you have to go this far?” Kinn cursed softly.

“Yes! Now get out,” I said harshly, glaring daggers at him. I wanted to show Kinn that I wasn’t the same man from yesterday. I wasn’t a pathetic weakling who’d let him screw with my feelings.

“Will you listen to me first? Please listen to me…please.” Kinn took another step toward me and pulled me into his arms.

“Let me go, you fucker! Let go!” I struggled as hard as I could, but Kinn held on with all of his strength.

“I’m not bored of you at all, Porsche… I was stupid not to make my feelings clear. I-I’m sorry,” he stuttered out, holding onto me all the while.

I couldn’t struggle out of his grasp. “Let go!”

“I’m sorry… Please listen to me… I’ll admit my wrongs.”

I kept struggling against him. “Admit what? I’m done, you asshole! No more!”

“Porsche, I’m sorry… I’m begging you, listen to me.”

“Kinn!” I gathered all my strength and wrenched myself free, pushing him off as I grabbed the collar of his shirt and used the momentum to slam him into the wall.

“Porsche, you have to listen to me,” Kinn said, his voice trembling. I pinned him against the wall, holding him in place with both of my hands.

“What more do I have to listen to?! I’m done, Kinn. I’m tired of your shit! Why are you bothering with me now? Did I ever mean anything to you? Huh?” I shoved his body into the wall again in my

rage. “Why do you want me back all of a sudden? Is it because you’re lonely or horny? You had to come to beg me for a lay?!” I cursed, completely furious. Could a man like him ever love me? I wouldn’t let him hurt me ever again.

“It’s not that… I’m sorry.”

“Stop bothering me! And tell your ex to stop messing with me, because you and I will have nothing to do with each other ever again!” I lashed out, venting all of my anger. I gripped his collar tightly, hands trembling.

“What did Tawan do to you?”

“He’s been trying to mess with my head! I’ve had enough of this, Kinn. You can tell Tawan that if he touches even a hair on my brother’s head, I’m going to kill him!”

“But Tawan and I—”

Knock, knock.

“Porsche. Mr. Korn is asking for you,” P’Chan said, stopping the commotion between us. I let go of Kinn’s shirt and sighed, glancing at his stunned face, before I left the room to meet with Mr. Korn.

Mr. Korn casually greeted me, setting his pen down and eyeing me curiously. “How are you doing? You disappeared for quite a while… Did something happen?”

The door creaked open and Kinn entered, his face tense as he came to stand behind me.

“Kinn… Did something happen between you two?” Mr. Korn turned his gaze to his son.

“No. What did you call Porsche here for, Father?” Kinn asked seriously.

“All right… I’ll get right to the heart of the matter. You’ve been close to Vegas lately, haven’t you?” Mr. Korn asked me. My eyebrows rose in confusion. Did he call me here just to talk about my friendship with Vegas?

I didn’t say anything in response.

“I’m asking you directly like this because I believe you’re not involved, but I need to hear the truth from your mouth,” Mr. Korn

said. He looked uneasy, his eyes seeming to search mine for some sort of answer.

"What happened, sir?"

"I don't typically wait around to ask questions like this, but as I've said before, I see you like one of my own," Mr. Korn said. "If you are responsible, you can admit it and we can talk about your reasons. If you are not, I'm willing to believe you."

Mr. Korn and P'Chan pressured me with their eyes. I looked away to glance at Kinn, but he was also making an awkward face.

"All right. What happened?" I asked, furrowing my brows. The air in the room was so tense it was suffocating me.

"Did you have anything to do with the business's missing documents?" Mr. Korn asked.

I was startled into silence, confused at Mr. Korn's question. I didn't even know there were documents missing.

"Documents, sir?" I asked.

"There are certain documents that have gone missing from the premises, and now our competitor has our confidential information. So, I was suspicious that…"

"That it was *me*?" I cut Mr. Korn off, frowning. I could put the pieces together. No matter what happened in this house, good or bad, it was always my fault, huh? Just because I was close to Vegas, that was enough for them to think I could do something so terrible? Someone like me wouldn't resort to that kind of underhanded crap.

"Hmm… If you say it wasn't you, I'll believe it," he said.

Did he *really* think of me as his own? If he did, why didn't he know I was the kind of person who would never do such a thing? Did these people ever trust me? Mr. Korn had the right to be suspicious of everyone, but he was just more suspicious of me than everyone else—was that it?

"If that's what you think, then you can keep thinking it," I said.

Kinn didn't seem to understand. "Porsche, what are you saying?"

"I'm still friends with Vegas, so I'll still look suspicious. If I say I didn't do it, it'll just look like I'm making excuses. So, let me show my

sincerity by quitting. I quit," I said firmly.

P'Chan stopped me. "Porsche, calm down. Everyone in this house was called to be questioned by Mr. Korn."

"Is that so? Well, whether that's true or not, I was already planning to quit."

"Porsche... Don't do this." Kinn's voice softened as he took a step closer to me, but I took a step back.

"You're being unreasonable. I told you I would believe you," Mr. Korn said.

"I'm quitting. Do I need to sign anything? Oh, and I'll transfer the money I owe you for breaching my contract later." I didn't care what anyone felt. The whole room went silent. Both P'Chan and Mr. Korn eyed me with exhausted expressions.

"If there's nothing to sign, I'll go. Thank you very much," I said, giving a wai gesture to Mr. Korn and then to P'Chan before turning around and leaving the room.

I came back to my bedroom and saw Chay sitting at the end of my bed, upset. I bent down to grab my bag, continuing to pack. This time I only took the essentials, planning to leave behind anything I could replace and get out of there as fast as possible.

"Get on with it, Chay. What the hell are you sitting there looking so gloomy for?"

"What is with you, hia? Coming and going as you please, not explaining anything to me?"

"We'll talk at home!" I said, dragging him off the bed and walking him outside. Kinn jogged over to me from the direction of Mr. Korn's room. I quickly threw my bag at Jom and opened the passenger door of the car, managing to get inside, but Kinn caught my arm.

"Porsche, if there's anything you need to say, let's talk it over," he said.

"I'm not talking!" I shook his arm off forcefully. The bodyguards around us were starting to panic.

"Listen to me before you jump to conclusions!" Kinn kept trying to grab me, not seeming to care about everyone staring at

us.



“What conclusions? Don’t touch me!”

“I believe you about the documents, Porsche,” Kinn said. “Can we please go back inside and talk properly?”

“Hah! Would someone like you ever believe me, Kinn? Have you ever believed a single thing I’ve said? Let go!” From that first day until now, had there ever been a time he chose to believe me first? He must still have been suspicious deep down—he was no different from his father or P’Chan.

“I’m not letting go! Get back inside the house!”

“Kinn!” I thrashed out of his grip and punched him as hard as I could, so many sources of anger blending together in a chaotic blur in my mind. The force of my punch turned his head as he stumbled backward and fell to the ground.

“What the hell are you doing, Porsche?!” Big ran up to us and pulled out his gun, aiming it at my head.

“Go on! I dare you!” I snarled, my fury burning until I couldn’t control myself. I took a deliberate step toward the muzzle of the gun.

From dealing with Tawan’s bullshit to seeing Kinn—and now becoming the prime suspect for stealing documents—why was everything piling up on me today?!

“What is going on?!” Kim yelled. He had just pulled into the driveway in his car and was now hurrying over to assess the situation.

“Big! Stop!” Kinn yelled, but Big clearly wasn’t listening, his pistol still aimed straight at my forehead.

“Big?! What are you doing to my brother, huh?!” Chay ran up to Big and shoved him hard enough to knock the gun out of his hand.

“The fuck are you doing?!” Big pushed Chay’s chest, sending him flying into the hood of the car. I watched in stunned silence, my hands shaking with rage. I almost jumped forward to punch Big myself, but Jom and Tem quickly held me back.

“Big! What do you think you’re doing?!” Kinn started yelling in my stead, getting up in Big’s space and shoving him. He then pulled me toward him. “Are you all right, Porsche?”

“I’m fine, but if my brother isn’t, you’re all *dead*!” I shook Kinn off and pushed him away once again. I turned my attention to Kim, who was straddling Big and beating the shit out of him.

“Kim! That’s enough!” Chay pulled at Kim’s waist from behind until he stopped.

“That’s weird,” Tem muttered under his breath.

“Yeah, kinda weird,” Jom agreed, watching the show in front of him with a shocked face.

Kim turned to hug Chay tightly, and I felt my breath catch in my throat. I didn’t want to think too much of it, but…was I seeing what I thought I was seeing? I walked over to pull Chay’s wrist as I dragged him away from Kinn’s younger brother.

“Get in the car!” I barked.

“Where are you going?” Kim asked, confused, still staring at Chay.

“Don’t do this, Porsche… Let’s talk things through, I’m begging you,” Kinn said.

“Begging, my ass!” I snapped at Kinn as I stuffed Chay into the back seat. I walked over to open the passenger door in front.

“Porsche…”

I pushed Kinn with all my strength so he was out of range of the car door and got in, directing Tem to drive off immediately.

What the actual fuck was going on?!

“Wow… The runaway saga. So touching!” Tem said, glancing at the rearview mirror.

“Hia, why didn’t you stay and talk with Kinn first? Huh?” Chay complained from the back seat.

“Why are you siding with Kinn?! Is he your brother, or am I?” I shot back.

“He does look like he has it bad…” Jom said softly.

Were the things I had to face not “bad”? I was beginning to wonder if this was my unlucky year.[8] I might have to make merit at nine different temples to wash away my misfortune after this. If I left things as they were, I was going to go insane.

Why did I have a feeling that things weren’t going to end here?
Argh!

Chapter 31:
Rectify

KINN

"MR. KINN, why don't you take a break? We can look through the rest," Pol said, bringing me my third cup of coffee of the night. I sat there with a scowl as I combed through documents and the house's security feed, not caring how much time it took. Hopefully I could find some evidence that would successfully implicate the mole.

"Our security cameras were hacked two weeks ago," Arm said, looking tense. "I'm trying to restore the deleted files, but whoever did this knew what they were doing. They took the files and deleted everything."

"Ugh. I'm fucking tired," Kim declared, throwing down a stack of documents. "Going through these files is pointless—only the important documents are missing. I'm telling you, Kinn, for our secrets to be leaking, it has to be an inside job. It's gotta be someone who's been with us for a long time; otherwise they wouldn't have the skills to pull this off."

We were gathered in my office, sorting through revenue, expenses, and product orders from the last ten years. It was a long shot, but maybe we could find additional clues from the clusterfuck of paperwork left behind. I knew that Porsche wasn't a rat, and I was going to be the one to prove it—and expose the real culprit.

This happened far too often. Every time we caught someone spreading our secrets, it always ended up being some lackey we hired who was too far removed from the chain of command to actually get a hold of anything important. I always suspected someone higher up was pulling the strings—someone who'd worked for us long enough to know our weak points.

This time, the missing documents had a significant impact on our operations, because these had to do with our less-than-legal dealings. From arms trade to real estate sales at the borders—all of our illicit orders and payments were plain to see in those files. If that information got out, competitors would try to undercut us, and

our business partners would be livid at the prospect of having their secrets exposed.

When it came to this business, all information exchanged between our company and our partners needed to be kept completely clandestine: names, deeds, even the size of a particular order. Law enforcement could get involved; everyone's continued safety was on the line.

It'd be bad enough if our competitors obtained this information, but if they played dirty and went to the police, we'd all be done for. This was bigger than anything we'd dealt with before. Usually we could pay off the local cops, but if special investigators got involved, if things got too big for our backer to cover us, or if they chose to help the other side, that would put everything we'd ventured to be in this line of work at risk. We would lose our reputation, the trust of our shareholders—who were always ready to stab us in the back if we made a mistake—and our money. We could have our assets seized and need to declare bankruptcy…

I turned to my brother, who was still tearing through piles of papers. "Kim, note down everything about the missing documents," I ordered. "Figure out what type of information is missing and who would benefit from having it."

"Sure. I've got Nont taking notes," he replied.

Since I refused to use any of my own men, I'd asked for help from both of my brothers. Kim and Khun's men were sitting scattered all over my office. The rat had to be sweating bullets right now. All my own men had been left sitting outside the office. I wouldn't allow them inside; I suspected everyone who worked for me.

Most of the content of the missing documents fell under my own purview, so Kim and Khun's men wouldn't know what any of it meant. That left only my men as the potential suspects—the ones standing outside with their heads bent, ready to receive my direct orders. It was in everyone's best interest that they stay out of the way.

I sat there and sighed for the hundredth time. No matter how cold the air conditioning was, sweat still kept trickling down the side of my face. It was getting on toward 5:00 a.m. now.

After Porsche packed up his things and announced his resignation, refusing to hear any of my pleas to stay, I'd immediately called for help to find more evidence. I didn't want Porsche to be the prime suspect, and I didn't want the blame to fall on him. I believed he was telling the truth, but I couldn't stop other people from thinking he was the mole. I had to prove to everyone that Porsche was not involved in any of this.

I believe him. After this, I'll listen to him more. I'll trust him. With everything that had happened between us…no matter our feelings, no matter the situation at home, I could only hope he'd give me the chance to show him how serious I was about us. Could he wait? Could he give me a chance to explain that no matter what, I wouldn't ever wrong him again?

What happened before hurt me as much as it hurt him. I wanted to apologize, to run after him, but there was never enough time. If I went after him now, we'd only end up losing control of our tempers again. If he could calm down and see what I was doing for him… I could only hope it wasn't too late.

"*Not a temple dog*[9] *but I ain't yer pet*

I couldn't catch ya, but I threw a net

No matter what I do, you don't want me.

I lay there cryin', my heart such a pity

But ya don't look mah way

Ya don't wanna walk by

But I love ya so, I love ya so, can ya hear me?"[10]

Tankhun's caterwauling pulled me out of my spiral. He made quite the picture as he lay face down on the floor surrounded by documents, Luk Thung[11] songs blaring from his phone. His singing was punctuated by an occasional cry from Arm, Pol, or Jess.

As for Pete…he'd been studiously helping me organize the documents at first, but he had since piled them up under his head like a pillow and was fast asleep next to Tankhun.

If I wanted to use Tankhun and his men, I had to put up with their ridiculous antics.

“Mr. Vegas… Mr. Vegas is out,” Pete kept muttering in his sleep. I did feel sorry for him; he was tailing Vegas during the day and helping me look for clues at night. If he fell asleep or acted strangely, I didn’t want to blame him for it. He had to be exhausted.

Tankhun kept turning around to pat Pete back to sleep every time he started mumbling. “Aww, shhh. Go to sleep.”

You’re treating him like a baby!

Kim and I shook our heads. The atmosphere was tense, but at least there was Tankhun’s bullshit to lighten the mood. His bodyguards were having fun singing and swaying to the music. *Bastards! I’m being serious here—our family’s about to go bankrupt!*

Kim turned to scold him. “Khun, turn your music off! I can’t focus!”

“Why?” Tankhun yelled back, standing up. “I’m helping you guys relax! What’s wrong with a little music, Kim?”

“Your song is giving me a headache! Can’t you be quiet?”

“Don’t be a buzzkill! Everyone’s having fun—look at your men! They’re singing along!” Tankhun bent down to grab his phone and turned to Nont. “What’s your favorite, Nont? I’ll put it on.”

“I… I don’t have a favorite,” Nont answered hesitantly, shooting a nervous glance at Kim.

“What?! How about this—what region[12] are you from? My playlist has songs from each one,” Tankhun said, proudly holding up his phone.

“The…north,” Nont replied.

“Good! Last week I was at Madam Yok’s bar, and I got this song from her that I absolutely love! Pol, Arm, get ready!”

Kim and I looked at Tankhun with the most exasperated stares we could collectively muster.

“Let me find it… *I learned two whole new Northern words*!”

Tankhun’s music blared across the room.

“When I went up the mountain to pray to Buddha

I got to learn two Northern words.

Two funny little words: Jakkim and Toktoe.

Jakkim is Jingjok and Toktoe is Tokay![13]

I'm this old but I've just learned

That Tokay is Toktoe and Toktoe is Jingjok!

Wait! Toktoe is Tokay.

Wait! No, that's right!"[14]

I held my head in my hands as Tankhun, Pol, and Arm started doing a stupid dance. Tankhun's bodyguards were just as bad as he was. *Are we actually gonna get anywhere with you guys around?!*

"Enough, enough, you bastard!" Kim exclaimed, yanking the phone from Khun's hands and turning the music off. "If you keep dancing like that, I'm gonna fucking puke. Nont, go fetch me a stick."

"Why do you need a stick?" Nont asked.

"To bash my brother's head in!"

"It's bad enough already, Mr. Kim," Arm teased. "You really want to make it worse?"

I had to give credit to Khun's men for being so bold. They'd gotten brave enough to talk back—it was like they were finally spreading their wings. If you wanted to be around Khun, you had to have thick skin and a steady heart.

"Arm, you asshole! I have impeccable taste in music!" Khun snapped, then turned to yank his phone from Kim's hands. "Give it back!"

"*What* taste? Who taught you to listen to these kinds of songs? Fuck!"

"The one who opened my eyes to the world of country music was Porsche, of course," Khun sighed. "Speaking of Porsche, I miss him." He shot me a wicked grin. He knew Porsche and I had fought, but he'd never offered me a word of comfort; instead, he just kept piling shit on.

"Oh! Can I say it? Speaking of Porsche... *Oh... It hurts... It hurts my heart, why do I endure?*"[15] Khun grabbed his chest and dramatically writhed around. I wanted to kick him down right then and there—if he wasn't my brother, I'd have shot him for being such a pain in the ass.

“Khun, my ears are killing me,” Kim snapped. “Aren’t you tired? Shouldn’t you go to sleep, you bastard?!”

“Chay’s only been gone for a little while—do you have to be this irritable?” Khun complained. He crossed his arms and smugly raised his eyebrows at Kim.

“What the hell are you talking about? You’re pissing me off.” Kim looked around at the bodyguards—who were all staring at him curiously—and his glare was enough to make them turn away and concentrate on their work. *Really, Kim and* Chay*? What are they implying?!*

“Just you wait! I’ll tell Porsche you’ve staked your claim on his little brother, and he’ll kick your ass into next week. You’ll die screaming for mercy!”

“Stop talking, dipshit!” Kim yelled, chasing Khun around the room.

“Kim, no! Kim!”

The bodyguards on the floor scurried away to avoid catching stray kicks. I glowered at Kim. *If what Khun says is true, then Porsche has yet another reason to be mad at me. Fuck! Is my shithead little brother making trouble for me on purpose?!*

“Enough, you two,” I chided the two of them. “Be serious.”

Kim halted his scuffle with Khun to glare at me. “Khun’s just spouting bullshit,” he said. “You don’t have to listen to him.”

“Don’t make things more difficult for me.” I pointed my pen at Kim accusingly. The mole problem hadn’t been resolved yet—and if this matter of Kim deflowering Porsche’s precious brother came to a head, I’d really have no way out. I’d probably be even worse off than I was before this whole mess began.

Kim’s excessive anger when Big shoved Porchay had honestly surprised me. I’d hoped it wouldn’t go any further, but I was growing concerned. If Porsche caught wind of this, he’d tear me to shreds. Plus, Kim wasn’t exactly a good person; he was a fucking flirt. He maybe even slept around more than me. *Dead, I’m dead! The cow hasn’t gone, but here comes the buffalo!*[16]

“Relax. There’s no way Porsche will come back to you, anyway,” Khun said cheerfully. I made to throw a folder at his head, but he

just seemed amused: “Don’t throw! You know I can duck in time.”

“Slap him for me, will you?!” Kim groused. “And are you *sure* Porsche didn’t do it?”

“Mm-hm. I’m certain,” I answered immediately.

“Then who do you think it is?” Kim asked, his voice somber. I stilled for a moment.

“Argh! I want to know for real—you two honestly don’t know who it is?” Tankhun looked surprised. Everyone in the room went still and stared at him. “Is it really so hard to guess? You can see the culprit from Mars.”

“Then who is it?” Kim asked.

“Big, of course,” said Tankhun nonchalantly.

All the bodyguards glanced at each other nervously.

“Anyone in here can go ahead and say it, but I suspect Big,” Khun declared, confident and unafraid. “I know it’s him!”

It wasn’t like I didn’t have my doubts. I’d had a sneaking suspicion for a while now, but I couldn’t find the evidence to implicate Big. I needed to catch him in the act—like when he made a move on me last night.

Tankhun had told me everything about what happened, but I acted like I didn’t know. No matter how enraged I felt, I had to keep it under wraps. If Big really was the culprit, I wanted to catch him and the big fish in one go—without tipping my hand.

“Yeah, that’s what I’m thinking, too. However, we still need solid evidence,” Kim said as he turned away to continue working.

“Oh, Kim,” I said, “can I borrow Nont for a while?”

“Sure,” Kim agreed.

“Nont, starting tomorrow, I want you to tail Porsche for me,” I ordered him.

“Didn’t you just say you don’t suspect him?” Kim piped up.

“I don’t. He probably went back to stay at his house. I’m just not sure if he’ll really be safe there. Keep an eye on him, Nont.”

Both Kim and Nont nodded in understanding.

“Yes, Mr. Kinn,” Nont said.

***

Time passed from morning to almost noon. Everyone else in the office had long since headed off to bed, leaving me to scrutinize the pile of potential evidence by myself.

Porsche's face kept reappearing in my mind. We'd just seen each other yesterday—why did I miss him so much? I leaned back in my chair and rested my eyes, trying to ease the tightly wound tension in my head.

I dozed for a moment, on the brink of drifting off to sleep. I couldn't remember the last time I'd had a good night's sleep during this falling-out with Porsche. I kept thinking about what happened, replaying the events over and over in my mind like a madman. I didn't notice when Big entered the room, bending down so his face was next to mine.

"Mr. Kinn..."

I startled a little and shot up in my chair. "What is it?"

Big pulled away and slid a serving tray in front of me.

"Mr. Kinn, you haven't had anything to eat since this morning. I brought you some rice soup[17] and juice." Big placed a spoon in the bowl and poured a glass of juice for me.

"I'm not really hungry," I dismissed him, looking away to stare at my computer screen instead. I closed the windows referencing the documents I was reviewing so I wouldn't tip him off to our movements.

"But Mr. Kinn, you can't just drink coffee and nothing else."

"You can go," I told him sternly, giving him a sideways glare.

"Please eat, even if it's just a little." Big scooped up some rice soup and blew on it, looking concerned. I looked at him in confusion, not sure what he was thinking. Did he truly have no idea that I didn't trust him right now? Although I'd kept quiet about what he did, I wasn't going to treat him the same as before. I'd put some distance between us, and I tried to prevent him from entering my office more than was strictly necessary.

As soon as I opened my eyes and saw his face, I had to stop myself from punching him right in the spot where Kim had left a purpling bruise yesterday. How dare Big take advantage of me when I was unaware of myself. How dare he point a gun at Porsche! He was lucky I didn't add my own fist to that beating.

But like I said, I needed evidence to trace this back to the mastermind. I needed to keep Big close for as long as possible before things got complicated.

"Please eat." Big held a spoonful up to my lips, his other hand carefully cupped under the spoon.

I pushed his hand away. "I told you to leave!"

Big abruptly grabbed onto my hand. "Mr. Kinn... Mr. Kinn, please don't do this." He put down the spoon and held onto both of my hands. I froze, shocked that he'd dare to touch me like this...and feeling that he had crossed a line.

I didn't say a word.

"Mr. Kinn... You can suspect me all you want. You don't have to let me close to you like before," he said with a trembling voice, staring into my eyes like he was trying to prove his sincerity, "but please eat something, Mr. Kinn...please. I'm worried for you. I can't stand seeing you like this."

He brought one of my hands up to his face and leaned into the touch; it made a mysterious chill travel through my entire body. I couldn't take it any longer, yanking my hands back with enough force for him to look bewildered.

Knock, knock.

"Mr. Kinn?"

"Get out, Big!" I snapped as the door swung open.

"Are you busy, Kinn...?"

I closed my eyes and heaved out a long sigh when I realized who had opened the door. Big hurriedly pulled away from me and greeted the newcomer with a wai.

"Get out," I told Big wearily. Tawan's glare flickered between Big and me, clearly displeased.

"Yes, sir," Big sullenly agreed, trudging out of the room.

“I brought you some snacks. Am I disturbing you, Kinn?” Tawan placed a few bags on my desk. *Argh! What is it with today? Why are there so many people trying to feed me? If it were Porsche, I wouldn’t complain, but everyone here just wants to cause more problems for me! I’m going to go crazy!*

“P’Tawan, aren’t you supposed to head back to the U.K.?” I asked as I swept documents off the desk, stuffing them into a drawer.

“You’re saying that like you’re trying to chase me away,” Tawan said, pouting a little. I used to think Tawan looked adorable when he sulked, but today… Why did looking at his face annoy me?

If it were Porsche, forget about pouting—he’d threaten to kick my face in if I said something he didn’t like. We had a completely different dynamic. But now that I was thinking of Porsche, I remembered something he’d said to me.

I glared at Tawan. “phi, did you go see Porsche?”

The man in front of me went still.

“Why did you bother him?” I asked, my voice hardening. The more Tawan avoided my gaze, the more I knew he had something to hide.

“…Did Porsche tell on me?” Tawan tentatively asked.

“That’s not the point. I just want to know why you’re getting involved with him.”

“It was just a coincidence…” Tawan mumbled. His actions were grinding my gears. *What a flimsy excuse. With someone like Tawan, there are no coincidences.* I wondered what he’d threatened Porsche with to piss him off so badly.

I knew that I no longer had feelings for Tawan. The more pathetic and underhanded he acted, the more I felt my affections fade.

“I don’t know what you said to Porsche, but I’m warning you—don’t trouble him again,” I said harshly, staring Tawan down. Tawan bit his lip, slowly revealing his spoiled, indignant attitude. I knew exactly what he was about to do, but I waited patiently for his reaction.

“Why?! I can’t go near him, I can’t touch him… Is that right?” Tawan’s voice turned shrill, his eyes sparking with stubbornness. I was beginning to wonder how I managed to put up with him in the past.

I couldn’t take it anymore. “phi, you need to understand that what we had together is over,” I said. “You can’t force yourself into this and make things more difficult than they already are.”

“So what? I refuse to believe that you’ve forgotten me, Kinn! I’m back now—you don’t need to look for someone else!” Tawan was beginning to sound delusional, emotion bleeding into his voice. He enunciated each word like he was striving to win an argument.

“Everything that happened… Didn’t you bring it upon yourself, phi? What do you want from me?” I didn’t snap at him, didn’t shout; I just let my voice harden enough to try to bring Tawan back to his senses.

“You’re still angry at me, right? But I already apologized. I just want the Kinn from before.” Tawan’s bright voice quavered, his face crumpling like he was about to cry. “If you’re asking me why I’m doing this…I just want you back!”

“Nothing is the same as before. You need to accept the truth…”

Before I could argue further with my ex, my phone started ringing.

Rrrrring.

My heart raced as soon as I saw that name appear on the screen.

I stood up from my chair and immediately took the call, not caring that Tawan was in the room with me. “Hello.”

“Why the hell did you order Nont to tail me?!” came Porsche’s voice through the speaker. He sounded furious, but strangely enough, I could only smile.

“Porsche…”

“Do you suspect me so much that you had to have someone follow me? Are you crazy?! I’m not your prisoner! Go do something useful, motherfucker!”

My heart pounded wildly in my chest as I imagined how annoyed he must look. “No, I’m just worried about you,” I said. “I wanted to make sure you were safe.”

“If you don’t stop messing with my life, I’m going to kill your entire family, you bastard! And you can stop fucking overstepping and getting Nont to deliver your bougie food to my door—it’s in the way!”

I let out a laugh, forgetting how frustrated I’d felt before and ignoring the pair of eyes staring accusingly at me. This morning, I’d had Nont stop and buy some snacks to leave in front of Porsche’s house. I was taking Khun’s advice that if I wanted to make it up to Porsche, I had to coax him a little.

“Yeah, just eat the food. You’re scowling right now, aren’t you? Be careful you don’t kick anything nearby,” I teased. Whenever Porsche got angry, he liked to kick whatever was next to his feet. My sofa often bore the brunt of his ire.

“Mind your own damn business, Kinn. I’m not kidding. If you keep sending your men to follow me, I’ll—”

“Kinn! Who are you talking to?” Tawan asked.

My smile vanished as I turned to glare at Tawan.

“Who are you talking to, Kinn? I want to know.” Tawan marched over and snatched the phone from my hands. I stared at him in shock.

“Phi! The hell are you doing?!” I roared.

“Hah! Take care of your man over there!” Porsche’s voice emanated from the phone.

The other end of the line went dead.

“Porsche, Porsche… P’Tawan, what the fuck?!” I spun around to glare fiercely at him as I tried to call Porsche back. But predictably, Porsche didn’t answer my call. After a while, he turned off his phone entirely.

So that’s how it is.

I threw the phone onto my desk with a *bang*. I was livid at Tawan for snatching my phone away and shouting nonsense. He’d gone too far.

“Phi, get out of my office. Now!” I shouted in Tawan’s face, making him jump.

“Why do you have to be so angry, Kinn?” Tawan whined, his voice stubborn and his gaze relentless. He wasn’t afraid of me, not in the slightest. How ought to know his place! He had no right to be so willful—he had no power to lord over me anymore. I took a deep breath to get my anger in check so I didn’t inadvertently slap the shit out of him.

“P’Tawan… Listen to me. What’s between us is over. I’m not in love with you. I love *Porsche*. Can you get that through your thick skull?!” Although I tried to rein in my temper, I couldn’t stop myself at all. I slammed the table with my first, finally at my limit. Admittedly, I’d played a part in Porsche’s misunderstanding of the situation, but things wouldn’t have been this complicated if Tawan hadn’t stuck his nose in my business.

“…Kinn.” Tawan’s eyes seemed to quiver, and his voice shook. Back when we were together, I wouldn’t have been able to bear seeing him so upset, but I only felt numb now. I wanted him out of here.

“Get out,” I snapped, not bothering to be considerate of his feelings any longer.

“You’re angry at me again?” Tawan clung onto my arm.

“Tawan!” I wrenched his hand off of me before shoving him toward the door. I wasn’t sure how much force I used, but it knocked Tawan off-balance enough to practically send him flying.

“Kinn, that hurts,” he said. I opened the door and tossed him out of the room.

“Don’t mess with me or Porsche again, phi, unless you want to find out just how much I can make it hurt!”

Khun and Kim came running from the stairs.

“Kinn, what’s going on?”

“Tawan? Why is he here?” Khun glared at Tawan before turning to me. “What did he do to you, Kinn?”

“I’m sorry, Kinn,” Tawan said, his voice breaking as tears began to overflow. I scowled at him and ran a hand through my hair in frustration.

“Get out,” I repeated myself.

“My brother said get out, so get out!” said Khun, his temper flaring along with mine. “And all of you bodyguards, how did you let him get inside?! If he sets another foot in our house again, chase him away!”

“Khun, that’s enough,” Kim said, hurriedly trying to calm our older brother.

I didn’t stay to listen to Khun squabble with Tawan. Instead, I opened my office door and collapsed on the couch. I was physically and mentally exhausted from all the problems that were piling up.

I closed my eyes and wearily leaned against the backrest, listening as Khun’s shouts echoed through the halls until they eventually quieted. Not long after, my door swung open once more.

Khun stomped in, positively fuming. “He’s gone!”

“You’re doing too much, Khun,” Kim admonished Khun as he sat down next to me.

“For someone like him, I’m not doing *enough*! I barely said anything, and now he’s pretending to squeeze out a few tears. *Hmph!* Should I go after him?!” Khun started to get up, clearly ready to start shit with Tawan again, but Kim quickly pulled him back.

“So reckless, Khun. Eat food if you’re hungry, but if you’re brash, you’ll end up eating a foot.”[18] Kim shook his head, fed up.

“*You* eat a foot,” Khun retorted, raising his foot at Kim before turning back to me. “What did he do to you, Kinn?”

“He started trouble with Porsche,” I said, rubbing my temples. “And just now, Porsche called me and Tawan grabbed my phone away.”

“You’ve finally moved on from Tawan, huh?” Kim asked.

“Yes!” I answered immediately.

“I’m surprised… Porsche isn’t your type at all. Look at the guys you’ve dated—each one is more effeminate than the last.” Kim laughed. “Porsche is the only butch of the bunch. He practically talks with his fists.”

“Yeah, I didn’t want to believe it either…but I like him,” I said.

Kim was right. The guys I slept with all had that gentle, soft look; each one of them was dainty and sweet. Then there was Porsche, with his masculine face, firm muscles, and bold tattoos; he even had a wild and coarse attitude to match. But strangely enough, when he was with me, I saw him as *cute*—downright adorable, really. He'd finally given in a little and called me, even if it was just to chew me out, but then the whole mess with Tawan happened. Now things were even more complicated than before. Would I ever be able to reconcile with Porsche?

"Finally found yourself a husband, and a fearsome one at that. Aren't you scared he'll catch you with one of your little side pieces? He'd wash his feet with the blood from your head," Kim said with an exaggerated shiver.

"Chay's not so different from Porsche. Aren't you scared *he'll* wash his feet with *your* blood?" Khun teased, squinting at Kim.

"They're not the same!" Kim blurted out, seeming to forget himself. He turned to look at me in alarm the next moment, but I was too tired to focus on yet another problem. *Fuck! I can't even sort out the old problems!*

"Should I go to his house?" I wondered out loud. Maybe if I went to him, I could explain everything that had happened.

"Oof. Better not. Last I checked in with Nont, Porsche was chasing him down trying to kick his face in." Kim looked kind of horrified. "I don't know if he's going to come back in one piece."

"Really?" I said.

"Don't go," Khun agreed. "You're not gonna get anywhere if you try to talk to him right now. You should wait until he calms down."

"Mm-hm." I nodded, acquiescing. They were right. If I went to see Porsche now, we wouldn't talk—we'd probably just end up at each other's throats like before. Knowing him, he'd eventually make a run for it, or maybe even go into hiding if I wasn't careful.

"Go get some rest, Kinn," Kim said. "Khun and I will take over searching the documents for you."

"It's all right. I won't be able to sleep anyway," I said.

I moved the pile of documents to the sofa. Khun and Kim scattered themselves about the room along with their men, who all filed in and took up space in various corners as they searched through the papers.

It was getting close to evening now, and my body was beginning to protest. The sofa was comfortable, and I stretched my legs out and leaned back, hoping to rest my eyes for a bit to alleviate my aches and stress. *Just a moment for my mind to be empty. If only for a little while…*

Rrrrring!

I woke with a start at the sound of my phone ringing. I'd been deeply asleep—and I was afraid I had slept for much longer than I'd intended.

I glanced at the wall clock and pulled at my hair. *Shit! It's nine in the morning?* I'd slept like the dead all night. There was even a blanket covering me. Worse, everyone who'd come to help me yesterday was still here, fast asleep and sprawled all over the room. Even Khun and Kim were sleeping on the rug, also covered in blankets.

The men on the floor began to stir, and I reached over to stop my phone's incessant ringing. I rubbed my eyes, glancing at the screen before springing up from my sofa in surprise.

"Porsche!" I cried out, hurriedly answering the phone.

"Kinn! Where is Tawan's house?!" Porsche's voice sounded so panicked that I could barely make out his words.

"Wait, slow down. What happened, Porsche?"

"I said, where is Tawan's house?!" Porsche sharply enunciated each word, demanding an answer without listening to my question.

"Porsche, calm down. What's going on?" I tried to get him to relax, but I had a bad feeling about this.

"My brother's missing, and it's because of your ex, you bastard! If you have a problem, take it out on me—why did you have to involve my brother?!"

"What? Porchay's missing?! How?!" I blurted out in shock. Kim —who was curled up on the floor with a blanket over his head— suddenly jumped up and stared at me.

“What’s going on, Kinn?!” Kim demanded, just as shaken as I was.

“Tell me where Tawan’s house is, motherfucker!” Porsche yelled. “If he touches a single hair on my brother’s head, I’m going to kill him!”

“Porsche, you have to calm down,” Tem’s voice echoed in the background of the call.

“Where are you, Porsche? I’m going to you right now.” I needed to see him right away. I was equally concerned for him and for his little brother.

“Kinn, what’s going on?” Kim asked anxiously.

“Where I am is my business, Kinn. Are you going to tell me where the guy lives or not?!” Porsche snarled.

“Tawan, you said?” I tried to make sense of the sequence of events in my head and wondered what this had to do with my ex.

“Yes, him! Who else could it be?!”

“Why—”

Porsche butted in before I could finish. “Oh, I forgot, he’s your ex-*wife*—of course you have to protect him!”

“Cut it out, Porsche.”

“Fine, you don’t have to tell me. I’ll find him myself, you fuckhead!”

“Porsche! Porsche!”

The call cut out abruptly. I kept trying to ring him back, but my call was rejected every time. Still confused about what had happened, I turned around to see everyone’s wide-eyed gazes fixed on me.

Kim couldn’t sit still. “Kinn, talk to me,” he said, his expression grave. “Chay’s gone missing?”

“Yes.”

“Who? Where? When?!” Kim put his head in his hands and started to pace the room. “Shit! He didn’t answer me at all last night, but I thought he was just asleep! What is this?! Agh!” Kim yanked at his hair, looking more and more like a madman.

“Fuck, I don’t know. I still don’t really understand what I heard. Porsche said Tawan took him.”

I still didn’t get why Porsche was so certain it was Tawan. It wasn’t because I was trying to protect my ex—I just didn’t have any idea what Tawan’s motivation would be. Whenever Tawan got up to something dreadful, he was thorough enough in covering his tracks that no one could catch him. But Porsche had mentioned something strange to me before: to tell Tawan not to involve his brother. Had Tawan threatened him? If that was the case, Tawan would be incredibly foolish to make this move.

“Motherfucking Tawan!” Kim cursed.

“Quick, get ready. Meet me downstairs in ten minutes. I’m going to pick up Porsche at his house first,” I ordered, and everyone nodded in unison.

“Shit, Khun! Wake up! Khun, you fucker, are you asleep or are you *dead*?!” Kim walked over to nudge Khun with his foot where he lay asleep, blissfully unaware of our current crisis.

“Huh… Hah… Documents, documents…” As soon as he opened his eyes, Khun crawled toward the documents in front of him.

“Fuck the documents—Chay’s gone!” Kim yelled.

“Gone where?” Khun asked, still half asleep.

“I don’t know. Come help us find him!” With that, Kim stormed out of the room.

“Wait, he’s been kidnapped?” Khun asked, but no one answered him. Everyone in the room was rushing to get ready as fast as humanly possible. I hastily washed my face and got dressed, ready to leave, but I didn’t give up on trying to call Porsche, frantically tapping the call button until the moment I arrived downstairs.

“Hello.” Vegas’s appearance made my already dour mood worse.

“Why are you here?” I asked, glaring at him.

“I brought some documents for Be[19] to sign. Can’t I be here?” His annoying expression and mocking voice made me want to rush forward and cave his face in, but I didn’t have the time to trade

barbs with him right now. I was too worried about Porsche, and I needed to see him as soon as possible.

Rrrrrring.

Vegas fished through his pocket for his phone before smirking at me triumphantly. He pointedly glanced at the cell in my hand displaying Porsche's name on the screen as the outgoing call.

"That call probably won't connect because the line is busy," Vegas said as he held up his phone, the screen lighting up with Porsche's name. I gripped my phone tightly and gritted my teeth in rage.

"Yes, Porsche?" Vegas took the call right in front of me, still staring at me with contempt. This nutjob was making a point to fuck with me. No matter how cordial we might have been before this, we'd held deep grudges against each other's families for who knows how long. He and I both knew it. Things were only coming to blows now because there was a trigger to set everything off.

"Hmm? What is it...? Yes, of course. Wait for me right there, Porsche. I'll be there soon." Vegas frowned and rushed out of the house, no longer paying any attention to me. This was probably about the same situation with Chay. Would Porsche really ask for help from Vegas? I was furious just thinking about it!

"Damn it!" I kicked the large decorative vase by the stairs in my frustration. *Why does it have to be Vegas?! Damn you, Porsche!*

But in a situation like this, there was nothing to be done. I had no options left. I ran to the garage, got in a car, and floored it after Vegas.

Why do you have to trust Vegas so much, Porsche?! No matter how many times I repeat myself, you never listen to what I say! Not even once! The one who should be helping you when you're in trouble is me!

Damn it, why does it have to be him*?!*

Side Story:
Vegas × Pete 0

VEGAS

[FLASHBACK]

“THANKS,” said a deep voice.

I took Porsche for a joyride around his university today. I’d been eagerly waiting for a chance to get close to him—I hadn’t expected it to arrive this fast.

“If you ever need a driver, you can always call me,” I said, smiling broadly at Porsche. He always looked so handsome. His figure, his face, even his tough, stubborn demeanor—everything about him was so tempting.

“If you like it so much, why don’t you buy one?” Porsche remarked casually, but his face showed a bit of annoyance. I couldn’t take my eyes off him.

“If I buy one, would you still sit behind me like this?” I smiled at him flirtatiously to make it obvious why I wanted to get close to him. I needed to up my odds while I had the chance, right?

“I’m going. Thanks a lot.” Porsche quickly dismissed me and left.

I didn’t think he was being rude—I knew what he was like. I could see right through him: Beneath his defiant, rugged exterior was a man filled with worry. It was almost as if the bravado was a front to hide his weaknesses. Every time I saw him, it felt like looking at my own reflection. The only difference was that Porsche was a straightforward kind of guy, whereas I was more adept at hiding my thoughts and feelings. It probably came down to our different life experiences.

Porsche Pachara has accepted your friend request.

I looked at my phone, delighted that Porsche had accepted my Facebook friend request. But when I got into my car, my smile vanished. I looked at my reflection in the mirror on my car’s visor

and rubbed at my jaw. The deeper I looked into my eyes, the more I could see the apprehension in them.

I could admit that my behavior changed depending on the situation, and my mood was not very stable. I acted friendly toward Porsche because I wanted to get close to him. At first it was just because I wanted to beat Kinn, but now...I was genuinely starting to get interested in him.

Would Porsche still accept me if he discovered my true self? What would he think if he found out that everything I'd done for him was built on a lie?

I snapped the visor shut and started the car. Before I drove away, I caught a glimpse of a familiar vehicle parked discreetly around the corner from the building. My lips curved into a smirk.

"You're persistent," I remarked aloud. "You sent your dog to follow me, and now you even come yourself?"

I retrieved my phone and posted something on my Facebook account to rile him up. If I'd known Kinn'd be here, I would've tried to make Porsche stay with me longer. *What a shame.*

Vegas Korawit: Can I stay a little longer? Don't let me go. You should know right now that my heart is all yours.[20]:)

I put down my phone and turned on some music, picking my favorite playlist of dark songs. The more I got into the music, thinking of Kinn, the more satisfied I became. Whatever I could do to rile him up pleased me to no end.

Kinn, the second son of the Major Clan, was the epitome of perfection. He was handsome and educated, and his high social status was impossible to match. I couldn't believe he'd lower his dignity to date some ordinary guy like Porsche.

I only wanted to provoke him for fun like I always did—like having sex with a guy Kinn was interested in before he got the chance. It was hilarious to watch him entertain himself with my sloppy seconds.

I typically found Kinn's taste in men tacky, and I had to grit my teeth and bear having sex with them, but this time he had good taste for once. He didn't seem to be looking for a quick fuck like he

usually did, either; from my observations, it seemed like Kinn wanted Porsche for real. But what could I say? I wanted Porsche too, even though I knew he'd probably slept with Kinn already.

Porsche was so sexy that I wouldn't mind fucking him after Kinn. When that day came, Kinn would go apeshit for sure. It was clear he had feelings for Porsche; he was already getting desperate. This was good, though. It would make our little game more challenging.

However, I didn't want to target only Kinn. I hated everyone from the Major Clan. If you'd like to know why, it was because everyone kept reminding me I was from the *Minor* Clan. The word *minor* had been drilled into my head since childhood. No matter what I did, I would always be from the lesser branch of the family. My family, my education, even my family's business was secondary to theirs. But the main reason I hated Kinn more than anyone—even more than Tankhun—was because...

"Look at Kinn, he's so smart."

"Kinn is the golden child. Unlike Vegas, that good-for-nothing brat."

"You're a fucking disappointment! You screwed up again. I'm so jealous of the Major Clan—they have Kinn."

"You're in the Minor Clan. You don't need to be the best, right?"

"If only Vegas were half as good as Kinn."

I remembered every word my father, our associates, and even my teacher had said to me. They always compared me to Kinn. His perfection forced me to be a high achiever—to be his equal. Although I succeeded in some areas, Kinn was still the man people turned to at the office or during social events.

Kinn was the reason I had to push myself to live up to my father's expectations. He wanted me to be many things, but most importantly, he wanted me to be better than the Major Clan—which had Kinn as its pillar.

It was always Kinn. But I couldn't blame them for relying on the middle son: Tankhun was a lunatic and Kim was a delinquent. I thought it'd be easy to get rid of my enemies, but Kinn was the backbone of the Major Clan.

If I could just eliminate Kinn, my family would get everything we'd hoped for. It was my mother's dying wish to see me take over the family business.

I'd never forget what happened to my mother. She used to be the head accountant in my father's company. She still worked there after marrying my father, the leader of the Minor Clan. However, she committed suicide after she was accused of stealing company income. I was still young when it happened.

My father always blamed the Major Clan for slandering my mother and forcing her to end her life. I desperately wanted to destroy the Major Clan and make them pay for what they took from me. Everything I did was to take them down.

Just as I parked my car, one of my men rushed toward me.

"Mr. Vegas! Mr. Macau and your father are arguing again," he said in alarm, urging me to hurry inside the house.

I rushed toward the sound of my father and younger brother shouting at each other.

"Father! Why did you do that?"

"How dare you talk back to me!"

When I arrived in our living room, I saw the two of them engaged in a heated argument.

"What's going on?" I asked, immediately going to stand next to Macau.

"Hia, I'm..." Macau sobbed and threw his arms around me. I quickly patted his back to soothe him.

"Ah...the bad influence is here," my father yelled. "I shouldn't be surprised he's following in your footsteps!"

"What the hell is this all about?" I raised my voice back at him.

"I thought I could laugh in Korn's face when Kinn turned out to be a faggot," my father snarled, "but my two sons have brought disgrace to my name by being degenerate cocksuckers like him. You should have some respect for me before you stick your dick where it doesn't belong!"

I gritted my teeth and tightly clenched my fist to control my fury. My father and I didn't get along well. We argued almost every

day because he couldn't accept my sexuality. The day he discovered I liked men, he nearly went berserk.

My father pretended to love me and my little brother when we were at social gatherings or in the company of the Major Clan, but it was all just an act. Ever since our mother died, all Macau and I had left in this world was each other.

"Why are you mad over such a trivial thing?" I barked. "Have you ever thought that what you're doing would upset our dead mother? No! Have you ever thought about *us*?" I was furious at the way he was talking to me.

"Vegas! Because you set a bad example, your brother follows you in everything!"

"Honey, don't blame our son," said a woman about my age who was standing behind my father. She grabbed my father's arm as if to stop him, and I became even more enraged.

"Fuck off! You're not my mother!" I yelled, pointing at her. Her face fell immediately.

"Don't get arrogant, Vegas!" My father tried to come at me, but his woman held him back.

"I'm not sure anymore if Mother committed suicide because of the accusation or because she couldn't stand seeing you sleep around with countless other women. I bet it's the latter, because I can't stand it, either."

Smack!

My father slapped me hard in the face, sending me staggering backward.

"What are you doing? Why did you hurt him?" Macau threw a fit, forcefully pushing our father away. This was not the first time our father had hit me. I'd already lost count. It didn't hurt anymore; my body was numb to the pain.

"Stop being a faggot before you dare to point your finger at me!" he roared.

"As if *you're* such a bastion of morality." I tried to right myself, turning to face him. I wasn't going to back down. "It's because of you and your gold-digging whores that Macau and I turned away from women and fucked men instead!"

“Damn you, Vegas!” my father yelled, raising his hand to slap me again.

“That’s enough!” Macau yelled, quickly dragging me out of the room. “Let’s get out of here!”

“You arrogant brats! If you think you’re better than me, then get the hell out of my house! Let’s see how you smug little shits survive without me!”

Our father’s shouting rang through the house, but Macau and I didn’t give a damn anymore. We dashed up the stairs and headed into Macau’s bedroom.

“Damn it!” Macau swore, kicking his bookshelf in frustration. I just stood there and rubbed my bruised cheek. I didn’t even feel hurt. His words didn’t get to me anymore.

When our mother was still alive, I always overheard them arguing about his mistresses. After she died, my father no longer bothered being discreet; he brought so many women home that I lost count. Some were only here for a day before they left. Some stayed longer and attempted to control our house’s affairs. They tried to act authoritative, ordering our subordinates around. I’d kicked them out of our house countless times; I even threatened to kill a few of them. My father and I had been at odds ever since. We no longer ate meals together or engaged in civil conversation, save for when we were seen in public.

My father had always been a workaholic who never gave a damn about his children, and it only got worse after our mother died. He saw me as a puppet whose sole purpose was to follow his orders. He was incredibly egocentric; everyone in our house had to obey him without question.

The physical abuse started after he found out I was gay. It only added fuel to the flames.

I tried to suppress the anger, hatred, and exhaustion deep inside my heart. I didn’t want anyone to see the weak side of me, not even my own brother.

I sat down on the sofa in Macau’s room. “So, what did you do to make him that angry?” I asked him.

“P’Top dropped me off in front of our house today,” he replied matter-of-factly. “I was pleading with him to pick me up tomorrow, and he probably heard it. Father yelled at P’Top like crazy. It was so embarrassing.”

“P’Top? That tutor of yours who’s a doctor?” I asked, just to be sure.

I’d only recently found out that Macau liked men. He told me he was determined to get into medical school because he met a handsome doctor at a hospital. Macau asked that doctor to tutor him for the entrance exam. Macau was just acting like an ordinary boy-crazy teenager.

Unfortunately, it looked like our family was cursed. There seemed to be no straight men left in the family apart from Tankhun—but I wasn’t sure about him, either.

“Yes, him,” said Macau. “P’Top is my first love. How dare Father yell at him!”

It seemed like my brother cared more about this Top guy’s feelings than our father’s. That came as no surprise. We were so used to him screaming at us.

“Don’t worry about Father. This P’Top of yours… Does he like you too?” I asked, trying to sound as casual as possible.

My younger brother was the only person I cared about right now. He was just a kid, but he was still subject to our father’s problems. I was worried it was starting to get to him. This was another way that Porsche and I were similar—from what I gathered, Porsche only had one younger brother left, and he was also fiercely protective of him. It was when I’d found that out that I started to like Porsche for real.

“Of course! He has to love how cute I am—who wouldn’t?” Macau said confidently. But then, he frowned. “Although… Do you know who I met while I was waiting to meet P’Top at the hospital?” he asked, sounding frustrated.

“Who?”

“Khun!” Macau scoffed. “Tankhun, that bastard, is P’Top’s patient too!”

“Ah… What’s wrong with that? Everyone from our family goes to that hospital. Anything from a paper cut to a fever to a gunshot wound.”

“I don’t care! I hate it!” Macau whined. “What if he saw how handsome P’Top is and fell in love with him too? What do I do then?”

“You’re overthinking it. Do you think someone like Tankhun could fall in love with anyone? I doubt the guy’s brain has any folds,” I joked. The tension from the earlier argument with my father began to subside.

“Whatever! P’Top will be mine. He belongs only to me. I love you, P’Top!” Macau yelled, throwing his arms forward as if that Top guy was standing right in front of him. He looked practically delusional.

“Ha ha! I seriously need to see this Top guy’s face!” I laughed.

I said goodbye to my brother and went to my own room. I wouldn’t tell Macau who he could or couldn’t love; it was his life, after all. I also didn’t want to know when he’d started liking men, because what I’d said earlier might actually have been true. We probably got so sick of seeing our father hook up with an endless parade of women that we subconsciously began to despise them.

I felt that Macau might be looking for someone to lean on, to listen to everything he’d been through. I wasn’t the only one being compared to the Major Clan. Macau was no different, but our father didn’t push him as often as he did me. He had higher expectations of me because I was the eldest.

“Mr. Vegas,” my subordinate called, “Master asked me to bring these off-the-record purchase orders to you.” He placed the folder on my desk.

These were purchase orders for illegal items that had nothing to do with the head company. I had my men on the inside smuggle items from our central warehouse. The unregistered firearms came from corruption in the central armory, and my father managed the drugs. The Major Clan wouldn’t dirty their reputation with illegal business. All the profits would stay off of the central ledger and serve as the Minor Clan’s primary income. I oversaw these exchanges while my father made calls and covered up our tracks.

“Again?” I said. “Call Big. Tell him a large order is coming, and he should be prepared.”

I went out to the balcony for a smoke. Sometimes I got tired carrying all this weight on my shoulders, but I was taught not to show weakness to anyone—that made you a loser. Some of the things my father did to me made me want to cry. Sometimes, I’d relax and have a carefree day. But most of the time, my subconscious kept pushing me to be ambitious. To be better than Kinn.

I didn’t know how I’d gotten this far. I wondered if there was anyone out there who could truly understand my feelings, because they were so damn complicated…

From the balcony of my room on the second floor, I saw a black vehicle parked in the shadows opposite my house. Although it looked like a regular car parked on the curb, I wasn’t stupid. I knew Kinn had sent one of his men to keep an eye on me.

“He’s still there?” I asked my subordinate.

“Yes,” he replied. “You need to be careful. I’d avoid going to your house in the suburbs for a while—I think Mr. Kinn is getting suspicious.”

I scoffed. He was probably just being possessive of Porsche. Their relationship seemed to be rocky lately, so he was following me to see if I was trying to gain Porsche’s favor. It seemed like Kinn really was serious about Porsche—all I’d done today was take Porsche for a meal, and Kinn showed up immediately.

So… Let the games begin!

“That guy, Pete. How good is he?” I asked as I scrutinized the black car.

“He’s excellent!” said my subordinate, who used to work in Kinn’s house. “Pete is Tankhun’s head bodyguard. He’s the reason Tankhun hasn’t been getting abducted lately.”

I took a drag of my cigarette and blew out the smoke. “He’s been following me for a few days. So inconvenient…”

“You want me to get rid of him?”

“Not yet,” I replied. “The game has only just begun.”

I lit another cigarette, wondering what Pete would tell his boss about me today. I didn't want to get rid of him yet—I still wanted to watch Kinn suffer. And I knew Pete personally, as well. We often ran into each other when I went to Kinn's house. I couldn't just kill him without giving him the chance to beg for mercy.

"All right. Let me know when you want me to take care of him."

I stubbed out my cigarette in an ashtray and went back inside, keeping my eyes on the car. As I slid the tinted glass door to my balcony shut, I saw the car drive away.

"Is he leaving already?" I asked.

"Mmm…probably not." My subordinate checked the time on his watch. "He likes to go to a convenience store at the entrance of the street leading to our house. He usually leaves his post around two in the morning."

Kinn wasn't the only one keeping his eyes on his enemy.

I got up to retrieve my car keys and my wallet. I had an idea for something fun.

"Where are you going, Mr. Vegas?"

"Just somewhere around here," I said.

"Let me go with you."

"There's no need."

I headed to my car, thinking I should tease Kinn's lapdog and show him I knew what he was up to. Maybe I could help him get to know me a little better so he could report it all to his boss.

[7-ELEVEN]

I parked my car in front of the convenience store. When I entered, I immediately saw Pete's sleepy face. He stood at the cash register with his side turned toward me, cans of coffee and energy drinks piled on the counter in front of him. He was busy picking a pack of gum on the stand, not paying attention to his surroundings.

I looked at the items he was buying and got an idea of what was missing. I went to pick up that item, thinking it was essential for someone lurking in the shadows—I feared Kinn's man might be

bitten to death by mosquitoes before he had enough information to report back to his boss. That'd make for an unfortunate demise.

Thud! I slammed a bottle of mosquito repellent on the counter, making Pete nearly jump out of his skin. He tensed up immediately, his eyes opening wide with shock.

"Want me to ring everything up together?" the cashier asked us.

I glanced at the row of small, colorful boxes on the counter. I picked a box in my size and added it to the pile of Pete's items.

"Yes. Please put everything on the same bill," I told the cashier with a smile. I didn't turn to see how pale Pete's face might be or if he was losing his shit. He simply stayed still and silent.

I gave the cashier a one-thousand-baht note and glanced at Pete out of the corner of my eye. He seemed to be getting nervous.

"There's a lot of mosquitoes out there. Don't forget to use this..." I slid the bottle of bug spray closer to him. Nervous sweat was forming on his forehead. It was fucking hilarious.

"Do you need a bag? It's two baht per bag," the cashier said.

"Yeah, you want a bag? Better wrap it up," I said, waving a golden box of ribbed condoms I had just grabbed from the counter in front of his face.

I smirked as I watched Pete's face drain of color. His eyes darted around nervously as he tried to come up with a response.

"Well, I'll get going," I said. "You can keep the change."

I walked out of the store with the condoms and drove straight home, a satisfied smirk on my face.

You better come up with a better plan to catch me, Kinn. I'm tired of playing games with such stupid opponents...

Chapter 32:
Resolve

B*ANG! BANG!*

"Is anyone outside?! I'm hungry!"

Porchay paced the filthy room, a musty dampness lingering in the air.

He'd been walking down the street to his house yesterday after school when a group of men wearing black clothes dragged him into a van. All it took was one split second where he wasn't careful—the next thing he knew, he was locked away in this room.

Porchay had no idea what was going on; the confusion made him restless, unable to sit still through the night. He was all alone, and no one was giving him answers.

Porchay sank down onto the grimy concrete floor. At least his arms and feet weren't bound anymore, like they'd been in the van. He was in a sorry state, though, his uniform dirty with scuffs and stains. Although he'd tried to resist, he couldn't fight off so many tough guys on his own.

Have I offended anyone? How did I end up in a situation like this? Does no one even want to come look for me?

He was left alone in this bare room with nothing, not even food. It was completely silent outside, like there was no one living here at all. How long had he been stuck here?

Porchay hugged his knees and leaned back against the wall, sighing. There were two people he couldn't get out of his head… Porsche and Kim. He wondered whether they realized he had been kidnapped by now. He hoped that one of them would try to contact him and suspect something was up when he didn't respond—enough to start looking for him. He needed them to find him, because he was so tired, so hungry…

Click! The sound of the door opening caught Chay's attention, making him turn and spring up from the floor.

"After you, Mr. Tawan," a man said as his boss sauntered in.

“Why did you kidnap me?!” Porchay shouted as soon as he saw the group of men approach him.

“Now, now, calm down. If you want to say something, then you can say it slowly.” The man was tall and refined, well-dressed from head to toe. He held himself differently from the others—Porchay knew that this must be the leader, or at least the man who’d had him brought here.

“Who are you? What do you want?” Chay demanded. He really didn’t know why he was in this kind of trouble.

“Heh. You really don’t know who I am?” the shrill voice sneered. Chay eyed the guy up and down; he looked like a high-society brat.

“How am I supposed to know?! Are you crazy…?” Porchay muttered grimly. He knew he wouldn’t be able to fight these people head-on. “Who are you, and why did you kidnap me? You want a ransom? Hah! I’m telling you now, my family doesn’t have that kind of money.” Porchay guessed that ransom money was the most likely reason for a kidnapping, but he wasn’t exactly a rich kid. But what other reason could there be?

“You look just like your brother. But now that I think about it, you’re much cuter,” Tawan said in surprise, his sharp eyes glancing at the boy’s blue.[21] blue uniform shorts. From what Tawan had gleaned, Porsche’s family wasn’t exactly wealthy. In fact, they were quite poor. However, Porsche and Porchay looked prim and proper—no different from any other young master.

“Are you one of Kim’s flings? Hey! I’m telling you now, Kim and I aren’t together!”

Tawan frowned. “Don’t tell me you two intend to reel in *both* brothers,” he mused, circling around Porchay. “You’ve got quite lofty plans. You gold diggers sure know how to pick them.”

“What drugs are you on? Oh, forget it. I’m hungry—is there anything to eat?” Porchay didn’t feel like he was going to get anything more useful out of this guy. He was too tired to try to pry, besides, especially when the man in front of him was making less and less sense the more he talked. He wasn’t too worried, though—

the moment Porsche found out what was going on, these guys wouldn't stand a chance.

Tawan was astonished. "Aren't you afraid of death at all?"

"Why should I be? What about you guys, aren't *you* scared? When my brother finds out what you've done, this place'll be toast!" Porchay knew his brother cared about him more than anything. And the way this Tawan guy kept mentioning Porsche, he could start to piece together the story—Tawan clearly had a problem with Porsche.

"Hah! Your brother must truly be remarkable," Tawan sneered.

"He is! Seriously, have you got a problem with my brother?" Porchay crossed his arms, sizing up Tawan. "Is that why you kidnapped me?"

"Not exactly. I'm just curious why he feels the need to mess with my lover. I wondered what he would do if I messed with *his* loved ones..." Tawan stalked closer toward Porchay.

"Oh, I know! You're P'Kinn's ex! I get it now. You must've really gotten your feelings hurt. Seems like P'Kinn doesn't want you anymore. Hah!" Porchay knew that Porsche and Kinn had fought. He'd heard bits and pieces from his brother's friends about an ex of Kinn's who came to harass them, but he hadn't thought he'd meet the ex like this.

"Porchay!" Tawan marched over to grab Porchay's face and squeezed tightly, displeasure apparent in his expression.

"Let me go!" Chay quickly shook his face out of Tawan's grip. "For real, what soap operas are you watching? You're being so melodramatic," he retorted fearlessly.

"You're just as smart-mouthed as your brother!" Tawan shoved him, slamming his back into the wall at full force.

"My brother's more than just a smooth talker—he's got other talents. P'Kinn wouldn't have fallen so hard for him otherwise!" Porchay was beginning to have fun with this, feeling his anxiety ease now he'd figured out what Tawan's intentions were. *This Tawan dude is starting to look like a soap opera villain. I doubt he could kill anyone at all.*

“What are you talking about?! Kinn loves *me*, not your brother!” Tawan shoved Porchay again, but Chay was utterly unconcerned.

“How the hell did P’Kinn pick someone like you in the first place?! You’re motherfucking crazy! It’s no wonder P’Kinn likes my brother more—”

Smack!

Tawan slapped Porchay hard enough to make his face turn.

“What are you talking about?! I said Kinn loves *me*! Kinn loves me, do you understand?!” Tawan slapped Porchay again, his other hand coming up to choke him.

“Let go!” Chay cried, coughing. He tried to smack Tawan away, but Tawan had already lost his mind.

“Please, Mr. Tawan, that’s enough. If you’re not careful, you’ll kill him.” Tawan’s lackeys rushed over to pull Tawan away from the boy, who crumpled to the floor in a heap.

“That hurt, Tawan!” Porchay gasped out, glaring at him. “I’ll tell my brother about this!”

Tawan wrenched his arm from his lackey’s hold and squatted down to taunt Porchay. “Go ahead. You’ll have even more to tell him after I’m done with you. I really want to see your brother’s face when he realizes his precious little Porchay has been ruined. You’ll have no pride as a man left. Or perhaps you never had it in the first place!”

Chay’s breathing sped up, inhaling short and shallow gulps of air. “What are you gonna do…? And learn to speak like a human being!” Although he was deeply shaken by Tawan’s words, Porchay tried to act unfazed. He knew Tawan wouldn’t dare to kill him—he’d probably be kept as leverage against Porsche. But who knew what he’d have to face in the meantime… The thought destroyed nearly all the confidence he had left.

“Prepare yourself. Your brother hurt me, so he needs to be hurt even more—remember that. Call them in!” Tawan’s voice rang out across the room before his lackeys opened the door, letting in about ten or so teenagers.

“Whoa, P’Tawan, nice!” one of them remarked. “Just like you said, private school blues. Premium goods.”

Porchay quickly pushed himself up from the floor, eyes flashing with a fear he couldn't hide.

"What are you gonna do to me?!" he demanded, restless. His eyes darted everywhere, trying to look for an escape, but there were so many people crowding around him that he could barely see the door.

"Finding you a few husbands. Your brother will be so proud. What are you all waiting for? Get on with it!"

The teenagers converged on Chay and held him down.

"Let me go!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. But no matter how hard he struggled against the crowd of people, he couldn't even move.

"So pale!" one of them leered, ripping Chay's shirt off. His face went ashen and he squeezed his eyes shut, thrashing wildly in terror.

"Let me go, you bastards!" Porchay's heart pounded as hands roamed over his body. He trembled and fought back with everything he had.

"Stop moving! Stay still!" A thunderous snarl, and Porchay was pinned down once again.

"Let me go, you fucking assholes! If you're that horny, go fuck your mother!" Porchay yelled, his voice shaking as he gasped for breath.

Smack! A thick hand slapped him in the face, and the taste of blood filled his mouth. A face leaned down, brushing against his.

"Save that smart mouth of yours for moaning! Heh heh."

"Let me go! I don't want it!"

"Hmm, no more witty remarks, Porchay?" Tawan smirked, standing with his arms crossed over his chest.

"Take his pants off!" one of the teens shouted to his friends.

"Let go of me!"

"What the hell are you guys doing?!" shouted a panicked newcomer, rushing into the room and hauling the throng of teenagers off of Chay.

“Mek! What are you doing?!” Tawan tugged at his brother’s arm as Mek pushed the others out of the way, trying to get to Porchay. “Stop, Mek! I said stop!”

“I should tell *you* to stop, phi!” Mek turned to yell at Tawan before pulling a trembling Porchay up from the floor. “Are you out of your mind? That’s a *kid*!”

“This isn’t your concern—mind your own business!” Tawan shouted, but Mek didn’t pay attention. Instead, he tried to chase the teenagers and Tawan’s lackeys out of the room.

“All of you, get out! Out!” Mek barked. He wasn’t making an empty threat, either—he pulled out his gun, and everyone but Tawan scattered immediately.

Tawan immediately turned on Mek. “What did you do that for, huh?”

“Phi, what about you?! The fuck are you doing? Didn’t you say you were just going to kidnap him? This is going too far!” Mek hastily threw a shirt over Porchay to help him cover up.

“Everything I’ve done is for us!” Tawan insisted.

“Everything you do is for yourself, phi!” Mek spat.

“Do you still see me as your phi?”

“Look at yourself! Do you have any humanity left?!” Mek stared at Tawan in total disbelief. He couldn’t imagine that his beloved older brother could commit such an atrocity.

“Mek, listen to me! If we get rid of Porsche, Kinn will be mine. We won’t go broke. We’ll have our lives back, just like before. All I’m doing is getting rid of a few thorns in our side. If Porsche is still around, Kinn won’t come back to me—do you understand?!” Tawan pounded Mek’s shoulder in frustration.

Mek grabbed Tawan’s arms and shook them, trying to bring his brother back to his senses. “What does Porsche’s little brother have to do with any of it?!”

Mek had needed to dissuade Tawan from making many bad decisions in his life, but his brother had changed so much over the years. These days, Mek had no idea what was in his brother’s heart.

“Before I kill Porsche, I want to see him hurt!” Tawan declared, his eyes flashing. “I need to hurt him more than he hurt me!”

“Are you nuts?! If you keep acting like this, there’s no way in hell Kinn will come back to you—even if Porsche is dead!”

“Mek!” Tawan slapped Mek as hard as he could. “I’ll pretend I didn’t hear what just came out of your mouth!” For a moment he stood there, fists clenched, quaking with anger. Then he spun around and left the room.

Mek sighed heavily, turning to look at Porchay.

“…Thanks,” Porchay said, his voice still trembling.

“Are you all right?” Mek asked, looking at the shaking boy with concern. When Chay nodded, Mek turned around to leave.

“Phi… Can you stay with me for a while?” Chay asked. “I’m scared they’ll come back.”

“Mm-hmm,” Mek hummed in understanding. He walked over and slumped down against the wall, lighting a cigarette and taking a drag to soothe his frayed nerves.

PORSCHE

TEM, JOM, AND NONT watched as I paced all over the house like a caged animal, unable to sit still. I was running out of ideas. Ever since Chay went missing last night, the four of us had been searching for him nonstop. We scoured his school, his friends’ dorms, even the streets—but there was no sign of him anywhere. We’d lost contact early in the evening yesterday, and ever since then, I’d had a horrible feeling about it all.

“You need to calm down,” Nont said.

“My brother is missing, and you want me to *calm down*?!” I exploded in rage. Everything was setting off my temper right now.

As soon as we were sure that Chay had gone missing, Tawan’s face popped into my mind. He’d threatened harm to Chay that time we met at the restaurant, but I hadn’t thought he would dare to act on it.

“It could just be nothing. Chay could’ve gone to a different friend’s house,” Tem suggested.

We'd been ruminating over this all night—I was so fucking certain something was wrong.

"For as long as I've known Chay, those are all the friends he's got," Nont said. His words made me spin around to face him.

"When did you get to know my little brother?" I demanded, cigarette in my mouth. I lost count of how many cigs I'd smoked today, but I'd gone through at least two packs already.

"What?" Nont pleaded innocence. "I'm Mr. Kim's bodyguard. When he goes somewhere with Chay, I have to follow."

"Hold up—when did my brother start going places with *Kim*?" I demanded. Nont's confusing words brought up memories from earlier, when it'd seemed like something was going on between Chay and Kim. I'd ignored it all this time, tried not to think about it… but was it true?!

"You've done it now, Nont. Cat's out of the bag," Jom grumbled, glancing at Nont.

"You…you don't know?" Nont hesitantly asked.

"Don't tell me Kim forced himself on Chay," I said, rolling my eyes. *What the fuck?! This can't be real!*

"Oof. It doesn't sound right when you put it like that. It's more like Chay forced himself on Mr. Kim," Nont said candidly, completely unaware that what he was saying worried me even more.

"What? My brother is like *that*? I'm dead!" Fucking hell! Ever since I got involved with this family, a new problem popped up every single day. The latest shitshow was my own little brother forcing himself on their family's youngest son! *Ugh… I have no words. Chay, why do you have to be so damned precocious?*

Shit, how the hell did it turn out like this?

"Forget about that, Porsche," said Tem, his voice strained. "Listen, Nont says Kim is at home, so we can compare notes with him first. I think we should consider if Chay has any other enemies."

"I'm certain it's Tawan," I insisted. "Fuck it! I'm done waiting." I dialed Vegas again and asked him to give me directions to Tawan's house.

“Vegas, send me Tawan’s location,” I said in a rush the moment he picked up. “I’m not waiting any more!”

“Please calm down,” Vegas said on the other end of the line. “I’m nearly there.”

“Send the location. We’ll meet there. Quickly,” I snapped. My heart was aching with worry. I was afraid that if I arrived too late, something horrible would happen to my brother.

“All right. I’ll send it to your LINE,” Vegas replied.

I hung up on Vegas and hurriedly opened our LINE chat. Soon, Vegas shared a location that was pretty far from my house.

“Let’s go! Get in.” I ushered everyone out, heading for Tem’s car. Nont volunteered to drive, seeing as he was more familiar with the area. I had to admit that Nont was quite useful. I’d chased him away yesterday after accidentally bumping into him snooping around in front of my house. He’d made an effort to stay discreet, but I happened to be observant enough to spot him and kicked him around a bit.

Nont was yet another one of that family’s bodyguards. I’d seen him around and talked to him before, although it wasn’t that often because Kim didn’t come home much. He was a simple guy—he didn’t really overthink things. It was good to have him as an ally.

“Nont, don’t you know Tawan?” Tem asked. I was glad my friends were getting along with Nont, at least. “Tell us, is he a psycho?”

“I told you already—I’d only just started working for the family when Mr. Kinn broke up with Mr. Tawan…” Nont glanced at me warily. I rolled down the window of Tem’s car and kept smoking my cigarette, acting like I hadn’t heard them. I’d interrogated Nont about where Tawan lived last night, but he insisted he didn’t know anything.

“If you ask me, Chay is going to be okay,” said Tem, trying to comfort me. “He can take care of himself. He’s a smart kid.”

That made me stop and think. He was right. Chay wasn’t exactly delicate; he could probably hold his own.

“He’s probably fine. Worst-case scenario, he gets slapped around for that foul mouth of his. It’s just as bad as Porsche’s,” Jom

said in an attempt to lighten the mood.

"Jom!" Tem and I shouted in unison. If we hadn't been in a car, I'd have kicked his face in for saying that when I was trying to convince myself to stay calm.

"Way to put your foot in your mouth, Jom." Tem thwacked him on the head. "Look at Porsche—he's already stressed enough."

"Nont! Can't you drive any faster?!" I begged, anxiously bouncing my leg and looking at the cars around us in frustration.

"I'm going over the speed limit! Tem can pay the ticket," Nont said as he weaved his way through the traffic.[22]

After a while, Nont pulled up to a fancy-looking gated community. He and Tem got out to clear things up with the security guard outside, and soon enough, we managed to get past the gate.

"This one," Nont said, parking in front of a house. I launched myself at the fence out front.

Ring! Ring! Ring! Ring! Ring! I frantically slammed the doorbell, not caring about anything else. I was certain Tawan had taken my brother. "Tawan! Get out here!" I yelled, kicking at the fence like a lunatic.

"Porsche! You've gotta calm down!" Tem ran over and took my arm, rubbing soothing circles onto it. I took a deep breath, closing my eyes to suppress the rage that was threatening to burst out of my chest. Just seeing Tawan's house made me want to burn the place down.

"Shit! What is this?"

Nont and Jom stood next to the fence on the far side, staring at a piece of white paper stuck to the railing. They both looked dumbfounded.

"What is it?" Tem asked, guiding me over to the spot where the others were standing.

Jom pointed at the paper. "Porsche. Come look."

I furrowed my brows at the red letters spelling out *FORECLOSURE*. I read through each line on the page. It was a letter from the bank about the seizure of this house, declaring the owner—Tawan's father, presumably—bankrupt.

“Tawan’s family is bankrupt?” Nont said in disbelief.

“What does his family do?” I asked Nont.

“They’ve got their fingers in several pies. On the outside, real estate and that kind of thing. Behind the scenes, they’re partnered with Mr. Korn, but they withdrew their stake a while ago and sold it to someone else,” Nont explained. He knew a few things from being Kim’s head bodyguard.

“Who are you looking for?”

We were so shocked by the letter in front of us that when we heard a woman’s voice, we were all startled. We spun around to face the woman who’d spoken.

“If you’re looking for the people living in that house, the owner and his wife already packed up and fled to China.” It was an auntie coming outside to throw away her trash. “As for their son, he’s studying abroad in England!” she shouted at us, and walked away.

“Shit! Does he want Kinn back because he’s out of money?” Tem wondered.

“I don’t think so. He’s probably just jealous,” said Jom.

“But isn’t it just too much of a coincidence? Or maybe it’s both. He could be feeling possessive, too, seeing Kinn getting serious with our friend here.”

“What do you mean, getting serious? Stop talking about Kinn, guys, it’s annoying!” I quickly cut them off, making them purse their lips.

Rrrrr. Rrrrr. I fished out my vibrating phone at once, the screen showing an unfamiliar number. I picked up immediately—it might be Porchay trying to contact me.

“Hello?”

“Wow… You answered so fast. You must be absolutely frantic right now. Looking for someone?” That teasing lilt… I knew exactly who was on the other line.

“Tawan!” I shouted. I lowered the phone and turned on the speaker for my friends to listen in as they huddled around me.

“I’m so happy you remember my voice,” Tawan teased.

“Get to the point! Where’s my brother?!” I snarled, fed up. Tem put his hand on my shoulder.

“Your little brother went missing? Oh, wherever did he go?”

“Tawan!” I growled, trying to suppress my fury.

“Aww, don’t get mad at little old me. Our fun has only just begun. How about this—I’ll help you find him, hmm?”

I gritted my teeth and closed my eyes as Tawan tried to rile me up.

“He’s crazy,” Tem mouthed at me.

“Porsche, why don’t you come see me at the warehouses?” Tawan chirped, then his voice suddenly hardened. “Hah! Remember to hurry—you wouldn’t want your precious little brother to die, would you? Oh, and please come alone. We wouldn’t want Kinn to find out. If he does, I can’t guarantee Porchay’s safety!”

Tawan hung up.

“Too late! Kinn knows already, you stupid bitch!” Tem shouted after him, even though the signal was already gone.

Jom scratched his head. “Is Tawan nuts?”

“I just want to know what soap opera he watched,” Tem said, shaking his head. “Was it *Love and Envy*? Shit, he’s got the part down.”

“Let’s go. I’m so fucking worried about Chay. I don’t know what that lunatic’s done to my brother.” I headed for the front passenger seat as soon as I finished speaking.

“Aren’t we gonna wait for everyone else?” asked Nont.

“I’m not waiting. If anyone wants to come with us, they can follow behind,” I said brusquely. And I wasn’t going to listen to what Tawan said about going by myself—who’d be stupid enough to do that? I’d seen my share of soap operas—this was clearly a trap. If I was reckless and stormed in there alone, I’d be dead for sure!

It wasn’t that I was afraid of him—I could fight. But I wasn’t crazy. I knew I needed to have backup in case something happened. If Tawan decided to start shooting at me, my friends could go get Chay out of there first.

“Yeah, yeah, let’s go,” said Nont. “I know where those warehouses are.”

Everyone followed me into the car. I told Nont to floor it, but on the way there, his phone started to ring.

“Yes, Mr. Kinn… He’s here…” Nont said into his phone. He looked at me, eyebrows raised. “Porsche, Mr. Kinn wants to know why you aren’t picking up his calls.”

“Fuck off!” I shouted at the top of my voice.

“You heard him, Mr. Kinn… Yes… Mr. Tawan called Porsche just now, telling him to meet at the warehouses… Yes, Mr. Kinn, it really was Mr. Tawan… I’ll take Porsche there first, and you can follow after us, Mr. Kinn. Goodbye.”

As soon as Nont hung up, I whipped my head around to glare at Nont. “Why did you tell him?!”

“Come on, Porsche, think of your brother,” said Nont innocently. “If Mr. Kinn knows what’s going on, he can bring reinforcements to help. From what Mr. Tawan was saying…it sounds like he really has gone crazy.”

“Are all of Kinn’s exes fucking lunatics?” I complained, rolling down the window for another smoke.

“Probably. Just look at you, Porsche—you’re a bit crazy yourself,” Jom giggled. Nont and Tem tried not to smile.

“Screw you, Jom. Do you want me to push you out of the car?” I stared daggers at Jom in the back seat, marking him down for later. Then, restless, I turned back to Nont. “Nont! Drive faster.” I was about ready to jump out and start running. *If something happens to Chay, I’ll hunt down every last one of them! Fuck!*

“Porsche! If we go any faster, you’ll be searching for Chay in hell,” Nont shot back, his eyes locked on the road.

“Stop the car,” I yelled. “I’ll drive!”

My friends all looked at each other in a panic.

“I said *stop*!”

Nont relented, pulling over so we could swap seats. As soon as my foot hit the pedal, everyone started screaming.

“Aah! Porsche!”

It didn't take us long to arrive at our destination: a group of old warehouses on the edge of the city. Hidden past a narrow alleyway, this area was entirely empty of people. When I put the car in park, everyone clutched their chests and checked themselves over to make sure they were still in one piece.

"Shit!" said Jom, his face pale. He turned to shake Tem, who looked equally queasy. "Am I still alive, Tem? I thought I fucking died."

"You guys stay here," I said, holstering the gun I'd brought with me at my waist. "Keep yourselves hidden. Don't follow me inside."

"Are you sure, Porsche? Let us come with you," said Nont, sounding serious.

"He wants me to come alone. If he finds out I brought you guys, Chay might be in trouble."

"Shit, no. I think we should come with you," Tem said, pulling at my arm to stop me from getting out of the car.

"How about this—if I don't come back out in twenty minutes, or if you hear gunshots, you guys can move in." I peeled Tem's hand off of me before getting out of the car, ignoring everyone's protests. I walked straight up to the warehouse door, unafraid of what might await me.

The entrance was completely silent; it was like there was no one there. I reached out to the rusty door, wrenching it open and slowly walking inside. My eyes swept across the wide-open room, but the only thing in there was a pile of wrecked scrap metal littering the floor. I was on high alert, wary of anyone who might be waiting to ambush me. It was quiet—*too* quiet.

I took a painstakingly slow step, my eyes darting around as I tried to listen to my surroundings. The sound of footsteps behind me made me spin around and kick out immediately.

"Shit!"

The bastard had a metal bar raised at my head. It was a good thing that I reacted in time, swinging my legs into his torso and doubling down with a stomp for good measure, shoving him to the floor.

“Argh!”

After I made my opening move, the rest of them began to show their faces. Soon, a whole group of thugs were gearing up for a brawl—they were idiots if they thought they could get to me that easily. I was ready to knock their lights out.

But while I could stop them from ganging up on me, I could also slip—and if they took advantage of my distraction, I’d be fucked.

One of the goons held my arms in a lock behind my back as he tried to push me into a wall. I waited until my feet were in range and used the momentum to step onto the surface, flipping backward out of his hold and kicking his head into the wall. The rest of the men piled onto me again, but I tirelessly drove them back with my fists, elbows, and knees. Rage rushed through my veins, my blood singing with fury. I didn’t just want to knock them out—I wanted to kill them all.

“Tawan! Where are you?!” I bellowed, my wrath uncontained. Some of the men lay at my feet, and a few had run away. The more riled up I became, the more energy I had to fight. Tawan’s men weren’t too skilled—when it came to hand-to-hand combat, they were total amateurs.

“Show yourself!” I shouted at the top of my lungs. Now that I’d taken care of the rest of his men, I kicked at a piece of metal on the floor. “Get out here *now*! Where the fuck are you hiding?!” I yelled as I swept my gaze in every direction, even stepping on one of Tawan’s lackeys when he tried to lift his head up. I stomped on his head to vent my anger as I waited for Tawan to turn up.

Clap, clap, clap. Tawan’s tall, lanky figure emerged from a small room off to the side, smiling and applauding. I took a deep breath to calm myself down, marveling at his idiotic performance. If I hadn’t been so furious, I’d have been laughing. The fuck was this moron clapping for?

“You’re good… I can’t believe a man like you has such an abundance of talent,” Tawan said, looking me up and down. He was still standing a good distance away.

“Is that all your lackeys can do?” I scoffed, glancing at the group of goons sprawled uselessly on the floor. “Pathetic!”

“You’re as tough as they say,” he sneered. “Are you good at anything besides swinging your fists and running your mouth?”

I looked at him in disgust. I really wanted to beat him up, but fucking with him would be more fun, so I smirked at him. “I don’t know what else I’m good at—why don’t you ask Kinn?”

“Don’t test me, Porsche!”

“Stop blathering, Tawan. Where’s my brother? Hand him over.” I was too tired to keep up this conversation. His words kept going around and around in circles; the melodrama was exhausting.

“Shhh, slow down. What’s the rush? I’m still having fun,” Tawan said, lifting his chin and smirking.

I put my hands on my hips, frowning at his fake-as-fuck acting. “For real, why are you doing this?” I could see that he was agitated, even as he put on this whole performance. His face was so very punchable.

“For my own satisfaction—what else? I hate you. Once you’re gone, Kinn will come back to me!”

I raised my eyebrows. “What, are you going to *kill* me?”

“I warned you to stop messing with Kinn,” he said, his voice getting louder, “but you didn’t listen!”

“If you kill me, don’t you think Kinn will find out?”

“Don’t you know that everyone is clamoring for your head right now? I can easily make it look like one of the company shareholders got rid of you for leaking secrets.”

“...You know about the leak?”

“I’ll tell you out of the goodness of my heart, Porsche, since you’re about to die: I’m the one who spread the news that you were the mole. You took the company’s sales history to its competitors, causing such a mess, making the shareholders and partners so very unhappy...so no one’s going to think anything of it when you show up dead.”

I was starting to put the pieces together. It looked like all the trouble happening in that house tracked back to Tawan. *What a desperate loser.*

“Oh... So what was the last soap opera you watched, anyway?”

“Porsche!” Tawan snarled, angrier than ever. “Don’t you dare get smart with me.”

Although I wanted to kill him, I needed to pay attention to the story beginning to unravel. The one who stole the documents from Kinn’s house must have been Tawan—how else could he fool the other shareholders?

“I know why you want Kinn back so desperately—your family is bankrupt.” I was growing more certain by the minute. It made sense that he would resort to something so stupid and reckless.

“What are you talking about?” Tawan was on edge, like he couldn’t accept the truth.

“You don’t have feelings for Kinn at all. You just want to take advantage of him.” If Tawan really wanted to get back with Kinn, he wouldn’t be acting out like this. He probably thought that Kinn’s family was powerful enough to help him through his family’s financial troubles.

“Shut up! I *love* him!” Tawan pulled out his gun, aiming it at me with shaking hands.

“Do you even know how to shoot that? The things you see in soap operas don’t always work in real life,” I said, unable to resist another jab at him.

“You think I won’t shoot?!” Tawan cried—and he pulled the trigger.

Bang! The bullet headed straight for me. I managed to dodge it just in time; the slug ended up glancing off the floor. Tawan clearly hadn’t been trained to shoot a gun, so he couldn’t properly handle the recoil—making a lucky opening for me to pull out my own pistol.

“This is how you shoot a gun, dumbass!”

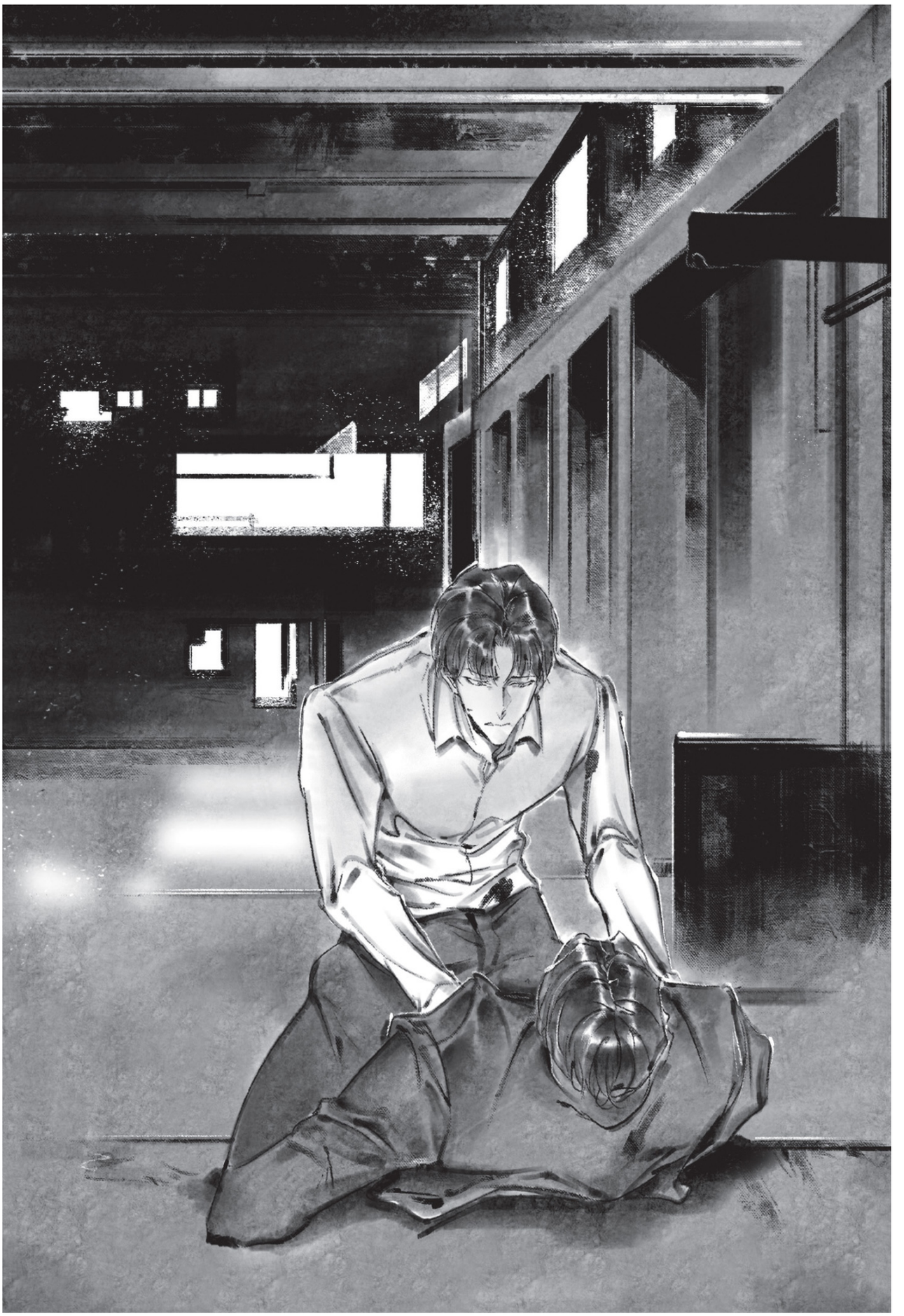
Tawan froze as I aimed for his face, but I switched targets at the last second, shooting at his gun instead.

Bang! The firearm flew from his hand. I immediately launched myself at him, pistol-whipping him with the butt of my gun.

Smack! Tawan’s face jerked to the side, blood seeping from his split brow. I didn’t wait for him to get his bearings; I clenched my fists and punched his face once, twice, three times.

“What the fuck were you thinking?! Why the fuck did you mess with my brother?!” I shouted, yanking his collar and throwing him to the ground. I stomped on his stomach until he doubled over in pain.

“Aaah!” he wailed.



“What did you do to my brother?!” I demanded, straddling him. I wrapped my hands around his neck in my rage. “I told you not to touch a single hair on his head! He’s got nothing to do with this!”

I switched from choking to punching—again and again, until blood trickled from his mouth.

Tawan panted heavily. “Let…go,” he gasped, trying to struggle against me, but there was no way he could compete with my strength. I knew I was out of control, but he brought this on himself when he decided to involve my little brother.

“Porsche!” came the sound of Kinn’s voice as a group of familiar figures rushed inside. Soon Kinn was pulling me off Tawan.

“What?!” I wrenched away from him, raising my fist to hit Tawan again. But Kinn didn’t relent.

“Enough! That’s enough!”

I shook Kinn away and spun around to face him. “What? You’re worried about *him*? Hah!”

“No! Calm down first—if you don’t stop, you’re going to kill him.” Kinn tried to gather me in his arms as I thrashed around wildly. Despite his tight grip, I managed to wrench myself free.

“Good! I want him dead!” I growled, glaring at Tawan. “Come here!”

I grabbed Tawan by the hair to get him to stand, but he couldn’t hold himself up. I kicked at his flank instead.

“Porsche!” Kinn cried out. He bit his lip, looking like he wanted to try to grab me again.

“Say it! You spread the lie that I was selling secrets, and you’re the one who took the documents, aren’t you?!” I stepped on Tawan’s chest, pointing at him threateningly.

“I didn’t,” Tawan coughed, spitting out blood. His face was unrecognizable.

“If you didn’t do it, tell me who did!” I demanded.

“Porchay! Where are you, Chay?!” Kim’s voice echoed through the warehouse.

“Say it!” I pressed my foot down harder.

“I…really don’t know. Someone else brought it to me,” Tawan said, squeezing his eyes shut in pain.

“Who?!” I kept pressing against his chest, my voice hard.

“I don’t know!”

“Hia!” a familiar voice cried out.

I turned to see Porchay walking toward me with a big smile. He was roughed up and dirty, his uniform in tatters. It made me clench my teeth again. I rushed to him, checking him all over. Mek and Kim were by his side—and the two of them looked like they were about to throw hands.

“What did he do to you?” I asked.

“He slapped me—twice!” said Chay. “And he brought people to…to rape me.”

“What?! What the fuck did you say?!” Kim and I both started yelling at once.

“But they didn’t get the chance,” Porchay explained.

“Mek! You tried to hurt my brother, didn’t you?!” I lost all the restraint I had left, charging toward Mek without listening to anyone’s protests. Kim grabbed Mek and immediately twisted him into a headlock.

“Wait, hia! P’Mek helped me!” Chay protested, blocking my arm and moving to stand in front of Mek.

“Why are you protecting him, Chay?” said Kim. “Why are you like this?!”

“No! I’m telling the truth! He really did help me,” Chay said. Mek shook himself out of Kim’s hold.

“P’Tawan, where are you?! Why did you lock me up…?” Mek called out, looking for his brother. His eyes soon landed on the figure on the floor. Mek dove straight toward him.

“P’Tawan!” Holding his brother in his arms, Mek turned to snap at me. “What did you do to him?!”

“What about what he was going to do to my brother?! Isn’t that going too far?!”

“Porsche, calm down.” Kinn walked over, gently stroking my arm.

“Don’t touch me!” I jerked away from Kinn, heading straight for Tawan.

“Did you say you were going to kill me? Go on, then, kill me! What’s stopping you?” Tawan said. I squatted down next to him, grabbing him by the collar. Mek swatted my hand away.

“That’s enough!” Mek said.

“Say it. You took the documents and pinned the blame on me.” I kept pressing Tawan—I wanted Kinn to finally see the truth.

“I didn’t take them… Someone else sent them to me.” Tawan’s face contorted in pain as he clutched his middle.

“Who?!”

“Porsche! Please, that’s enough,” Vegas’s voice rang out from behind me. If I hadn’t heard him, I would’ve completely forgotten that he’d shown up, too.

“What do you mean, enough? Porsche, force the truth out of his mouth! I’m sick of his shit!” Tem backed me up.

“Stop!” Vegas said again. “Don’t make things more difficult than they already are.”

“Hah! I respect you, Vegas—you feign innocence so convincingly,” Tawan said, glaring at Vegas.

Vegas furrowed his brows. “P’Tawan, what are you talking about?”

I looked between the two of them.

“What? Weren’t you the one sending me Kinn’s whereabouts and Porsche’s every move? And now you have the gall to act like you don’t know anything. How shameless,” Tawan said, the truth spilling from his lips. “Heh. Porsche, you’re a fool. Just one little push and you were ready to believe him.”

I looked at Vegas and stood up to face him. “Is it true, Vegas?!” I demanded. Vegas was hesitant, refusing to meet my gaze.

“Look me in the eye and tell me—is it true?!” I repeated myself.

“P’Tawan, what the hell are you talking about?!” Vegas clenched his fists and shot Tawan a dirty look. He tried to lunge toward Tawan, but I grabbed him by the collar and yanked him back.

“Say it!” I demanded. Vegas, who’d been so kind to me—had he been lying to me all along? I couldn’t trust anyone anymore!

“Tell him how you hate Kinn, how you try to stab him in the back every chance you get,” Tawan sneered. “Take Porsche, for example—you just wanted to stake your claim before Kinn could.”

“Is it true?!” I gripped Vegas’s collar tighter. He sighed and closed his eyes.

“That’s… Everything I’ve done, I’ve done for you, Porsche! I love you,” Vegas said, opening his eyes and looking at me sadly. He slid his hand over to touch my shoulder.

“You’ve never loved anyone in your life! You’re too busy loving yourself,” Kinn retorted. “And stop touching him!” He yanked me away and shoved Vegas until he stumbled backward.

Vegas glared at him. “Stop fucking with me, Kinn!”

“You’re fucking with *us*!” Kinn snarled.

Vegas turned to look pleadingly at me. “Porsche. Porsche, listen to me. I love you, Porsche, I really do. If I’ve done stupid shit in the past without thinking it through…I promise I won’t make those same mistakes again.”

“Ugh! Don’t make me puke,” said Tawan, spitting blood onto the floor. “Vegas, how can you say that without any shame? Who knows, the documents ending up in my hands was probably your doing, too.”

“Tawan!” Vegas shouted, ready to lunge at Tawan, but I couldn’t bear to look at him anymore. If what Tawan said was true, then Vegas was at the root of all this.

“That’s enough, Vegas.” I stomped over to shove Vegas in the chest, pointing a finger at his face. “What happened today—what happened to my brother—you have a hand in all of it, don’t you, Vegas?”

Vegas’s face fell. He stared at me pitifully. “I really didn’t know.”

“Get the fuck out of my life, Vegas,” I bit out. “Never come near me again. Everything you’ve done—I can’t tell what’s real and what’s bullshit!” I was utterly disappointed in him. I thought he was a friend, but he’d just been messing with my head this entire time. Sending my movements to Tawan might not have been that big a

deal, but I'd let my guard down enough to trust someone and got betrayed in the end. All these terrible things that had happened—I still didn't know who was really behind it all!

"Porsche! Can't you listen to me first?" Vegas begged.

"I've heard enough!"

Kinn strode forward and threw a punch at Vegas's face, but Vegas didn't take it lying down. He hit back, the two cousins trading blows. Although Arm, Pol, and the other bodyguards tried to pull them apart, it was a futile effort, and the bodyguards ended up catching stray punches in the process.

"Stop, both of you!" I grabbed hold of Kinn's arm and pulled him away from Vegas, who was still kicking wildly.

Vegas held his bleeding lip as he pushed himself up from the floor. "Come at me, Kinn! I love him!"

Kinn struggled against my hold until he realized it was me. "Didn't you say you'd never hurt someone you love?" he yelled back at Vegas. "What the fuck is this, then?"

"Vegas, I don't know if you had a hand in what happened today, but I can't trust you anymore. Leave!" I shouted.

"Porsche, won't you listen to me?!"

"Arm, get rid of him," Kinn ordered, and Arm hurriedly dragged Vegas outside. I let go of Kinn and turned away from Vegas. I wasn't angry at him, but my trust was destroyed. If it turned out that Vegas really was involved in what happened today, I would never forgive him.

"After spending so long as a fool, you've finally seen the light," Tawan jeered.

"What else do you know? Tell me!" I walked over and stomped on his balls.

"Porsche! Don't hurt him!" Mek got up from the floor and pulled on my shirt collar, but Kinn immediately pushed him off.

"Don't touch him!" he snapped.

"Ow, ow! That's all I know, I swear!" Tawan cried.

I leaned all my weight into his crotch. "Tell me!"

“Enough! Porsche, let’s go,” Kinn said, his voice taking on a harsh edge as he stared at Tawan’s face. “Tawan! My father will be hearing about this! If you don’t stop, I’ll take more permanent measures! Get out of my life! I’m never getting back with you.”

I stood there until Kinn started tugging at my arm to pull me off of Tawan. I shook his hand away, still seething, but some of my anger slowly seeped away as I looked down at Tawan’s bloody, battered face. Kinn was right—if he took another blow, he’d probably croak. I turned away, ready to leave this place. *I really need a fuckin’ smoke. I can’t think straight.*

“Kinn, don’t go… I’m so sorry, Kinn, don’t leave me here, please,” came Tawan’s grating, whiny voice. It was the final straw. I spun around and kicked him in the face, knocking him unconscious.

“P’Tawan!” Mek cried out in disbelief.

“He kept fucking blabbering,” I snorted. “It was annoying!”

“Uh, that kick looked personal,” Jom piped up, scratching his chin as he looked at Tawan’s prone form.

Kinn threw his arm around my neck. “All right, enough, or else he’s really going to die.”

“Then you can go take your ex to the hospital. He’s acting like a total pussy! Should I kick him again?”

Kinn held on despite my resistance.

“Let me go!” I shouted, pushing him away and stomping outside.

“Ah, I’m going to lose my mind. All of you, take care of this.” Kinn let out a relieved sigh. Then, he shouted after me: “When are you going to stop being angry with me?!”

I took a deep breath and fished a cigarette out of my pocket. Today’s events kept spinning in my head in one confusing blur. Kim and Nont had already taken Chay to the hospital; I was relieved that my brother was going to be okay. Otherwise, I really would have killed Tawan.

“Porsche… Let’s go home.” Kinn looped his arm around my shoulder and pulled me into a hug.

“What, *your* home?!” I pushed against him, cigarette still in my mouth.

“Come on… It’s over now. Let’s get in the car,” Kinn said, tugging me toward his vehicle, but I wasn’t having any of it.

“You want me to beat you up next, Kinn?” I glared at him in irritation.

Kinn spun me around to face him. “Porsche… I’m sorry,” he implored me. “I’m so sorry. I was wrong.”

“We’re through, Kinn! Stop fucking with me!” I looked away from him—anywhere but at him.

“I’m sorry… Please listen… Please?” Kinn bent down and tried to burrow his face into my shoulder. I wanted to pull away, but his hand gripped my waist tightly, the bastard. I was just tired. I wasn’t giving in. “Come on, let’s get in the car… Please? We’ll go see Porchay at the hospital.” Kinn nuzzled my shoulder with his forehead. *Motherfucker!*

Be strong, Porsche. You don’t feel a thing for him anymore, remember that! Every fucking disaster in your life right now is because of him. Don’t be stupid. Be angry at him. Hate him, Porsche!

Kinn hummed and opened the door for me with a cheerful grin. Looking at his smile made me scowl.

Don’t think I’m giving in, Kinn! I’m only getting in your car because I want to see my brother! Don’t get smug. Just because you told your ex you’re not getting back together with him, don’t think I’m going to just get back with you that easily! I’m not falling for your bullshit again!

“Are you hurt anywhere?” Kinn asked as soon as we got into the car. I gazed outside the window, ignoring him. “Come here, let’s see if you’ve got any bruises,” he insisted. He smiled and reached over to touch my jaw, tilting my face this way and that.

“What are you looking at?! You should check your ex for bruises!” I grumbled. “He might be fucking dead, actually, so why don’t you go check on *him*?”

“Why would I go to him? My lover is right here,” Kinn said, gently petting my hair.

“Hah! Don’t touch me.” I pulled Kinn’s hand off my head.

“Forgive me, please?” he said, softly pleading. “I have nothing else to say. I made myself perfectly clear. I know you heard me.” This was the gentlest I’d ever seen Kinn. *Stay strong, Porsche!*

“This time it’s Tawan—which ex of yours will have it out for me next time?”

“I won’t let anyone do anything to you,” Kinn promised. He pulled my hand over and grabbed some tissues to wipe my face, which was covered in other men’s blood.

“Hah!” I scoffed, pulling my hand back and running my fingers through my hair. “Yeah, sure, I believe you! I think next time it’s gonna be March. What’s *he* going to do to me?”

“Porsche! I really didn’t sleep around with anyone, even with March! What you saw that day… I didn’t do anything, I swear. I’m sorry… I’m so sorry.” Kinn leaned in and rested his head on my shoulder, making me twist away.

“Didn’t do anything, my ass! I saw it with my own two eyes.”

I bit my lip hard. *Fucking hell! I shouldn’t have let that slip. I don’t care about Kinn sleeping around. I don’t! I don’t!*

“I didn’t do anything with him. Really. Here, do you want to check?” Kinn lifted his hips off the seat and started to unbutton his pants. “Everything is exactly the same as you left it.”

“The fuck are you doing?!” I shouted at him.

Still smiling, Kinn started to push his pants down. “Proving that no one used this after you.”

“Kinn, this isn’t funny!” I yelled, turning away.

Kinn stopped pulling his pants off and rubbed his chin against my shoulder instead. “Ah… I’m sorry… Please forgive me. No one else has made me feel like you do.”

“Get out of the car now, or I will!” I threatened, Kinn’s breath tickling my neck. He moved to blow into my ear childishly.

“Kinn, you asshole!” I turned toward him, intent on giving him a piece of my mind. But when my eyes met his, no words came. He was looking at me from up close, his face pressed into the crook of my neck. My breath stuttered as I felt those familiar feelings

flooding back. Like always, Kinn's eyes stopped me in my tracks—even when I was trying to be angry with him.

Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Kinn's phone broke the moment by exploding with LINE notifications. It had been going off every now and then for a while now, but this time it sounded like someone was sending him a flood of messages all at once.

"What is this?!" Kinn pulled away from me, annoyed.

"One of your boytoys must want you back."

"Don't joke about that…" Kinn frowned, bending down to check his phone. "What the hell does Pete want?"

I looked at him suspiciously. *Is it really Pete? Are you lying to me?*

Kinn went quiet. He opened a video file, and loud moaning sounds blared from his phone.

"Aah! Ahh! Mhmmm… Ssss."

"Fucking hell, Kinn! How the fuck can you be watching porn right now?!" I scolded him, but Kinn was focused on his screen.

"Shit!" he cursed.

"What is it…?" Confused, I craned my neck to look. Kinn turned the phone toward me so I could see it better. As soon as I saw the movement on his screen, my face fell.

What the hell is this?! I don't believe it!

Side Story:
Vegas × Pete 1

PETE

[FLASHBACK]

A*RGH!* What the hell should I do?!

I pulled my hair in frustration. My life was a total mess, and I didn't know what to do. The situation at home was already tense, but I'd still managed to be an idiot and screw things up. *Damn it!*

"Why the hell are you pacing around?" Arm asked, confused.

"I'm stressed out!" I replied. I stood with my hands on my hips and my brows furrowed. The vein at my temple throbbed, like it had been doing for several days now. I was afraid I might die a premature death from stroke if this kept going any longer.

"Why?" Pol asked, joining our table. He put his plate of food down and looked at me with the same confused expression as Arm.

I dragged a chair to sit next to Arm, who raised his eyebrows at me.

"Arm, can you take over tailing Mr. Vegas from me?" I asked seriously.

"Why?" Arm asked. He put his coffee mug down, crossed his arms over his chest, and gave me a scrutinizing look. "What's wrong? You've been acting odd for a couple of days now."

"Argh!" I yelled, angrily raking my hands through my hair. Arm and Pol just stared at me, stupefied by my strange behavior. I hit the table hard with my fist, causing Pol and Arm to jump. Then, I leaned closer and whispered so the people around wouldn't hear us. "I think Mr. Vegas knows I was following him. What do I do?"

I couldn't stop thinking about it. I'd been following Mr. Vegas like I normally did, nothing out of the ordinary. I saw him return home, so I decided to take a break. I went to buy some snacks for a little pick-me-up when something horrible happened.

Mr. Vegas—who I thought had showered and gone to bed at this point—suddenly materialized beside me. He said something ambiguous and bought me mosquito repellent. It looked like he

knew I had to stay up all night and keep my eyes on him. I swore under my breath…but I had to admit that there were a lot of mosquitoes around his house.

“What?!” Pol looked gobsmacked. “How?”

“Have you told Mr. Kinn yet?” asked Arm.

“I’m too scared to tell him!” I admitted.

Truthfully, I didn’t even dare to look Mr. Kinn in the eye right now. The situation with his boyfriend had him majorly pissed off and unpredictable. I couldn’t believe someone like Porsche could rile him up this badly.

Porsche was the reason why the atmosphere around this place was so thick with unease. I had to pray to calm my nerves before I came home. I even checked my daily horoscope for which foot I should use to step out of my room every day. If I stepped outside on the wrong foot, I might invite additional disasters. That would be the day everyone in the house had to endure Mr. Tankhun’s and Mr. Kinn’s wrath.

“You should tell him, though,” Arm said hesitantly. “If Mr. Kinn finds out about this after the fact, he’ll be furious with you.”

“Would you have the balls to tell him?” I asked. “These days, he gets mad at me for breathing!” I meant it. Mr. Kinn might not lash out at us like Mr. Tankhun did, but the way he glared daggers at me sent shivers down my spine.

“Still, you need to tell him,” Pol insisted. “If Mr. Vegas knows about you, he might be more careful. You won’t get any evidence from him when his guard’s up.”

Pol had a point. I was following Mr. Vegas because Mr. Kinn suspected that his family was involved in the disappearance of essential documents and general corruption within the company. Mr. Kinn said his instinct was that Mr. Vegas was behind all the bad things happening lately. The two clans had never gotten along, and he knew their history. The only problem was he didn’t have any concrete evidence implicating the Minor Clan.

The situation worsened every day as power began to shift from the fathers to the sons. This was a pivotal moment: Both Mr. Vegas and Mr. Kinn had to strive to secure the power in their hands.

That had to be the reason why so many bizarre things were happening around the house.

This should have been a matter between Mr. Vegas and Mr. Tankhun. However, everyone knew you couldn't entrust Mr. Tankhun with anything halfway resembling responsibility. We'd given up on him a long time ago, hoping that fate would lead the way.

"I'll need to tell him eventually," I said. "I just want Mr. Kinn to calm down a bit more first."

"I know one person who can keep you from getting scolded by Mr. Kinn," Pol said with a snap of his fingers. "That guy could turn this serious problem into a minor issue."

"You mean Porsche?" I asked wearily.

Pol and Arm nodded in unison. I had known from the start that Porsche was the only person who could save me—if only he'd pick up my calls.

I sighed and said, "I better be prepared for my retribution."

Porsche was a proud man. I didn't know what had happened in his love life; all I knew was that he and Mr. Kinn must have had some disagreements. I'd warned Porsche myself that Mr. Kinn was a playboy—if I had to guess, that was probably the reason for their fight. But who'd have guessed that Mr. Kinn would be so badly affected by their falling out? Those two used to be on cloud nine together. Now, the air around them was so dark, it was like someone turned off all the lights in the house.

"If you won't do it, then all you can do is accept your fate," Arm said, crushing my spirit. "Just be more careful. Mr. Kinn told me to follow Big. I wouldn't dare to refuse his orders right now."

I turned to Pol, who immediately shook his head and said, "I'm in the middle of playing games with Mr. Tankhun. He'll kick up a fuss if I don't play with him."

"Agh, this is so fucked!" I groaned, collapsing into a chair. Ultimately, I needed to continue tailing Mr. Vegas—more carefully now than ever.

I looked down at my watch. It was already past 7:00 a.m.—I needed to get going. My daily routine was to wait in the street

leading to Mr. Vegas's house until he left and follow him from there. I just needed to suck it up and get back to work.

I got in the car and drove off. I changed vehicles daily so it wouldn't be so obvious. Thanks to the Major Clan's wealth, I could choose from a variety of cars, ranging from the most expensive brands to utterly ordinary ones. I could pick any car in any color, a privilege reserved for the family's head bodyguards.

I parked at my destination, and before long a familiar car drove past me. I went after him, making sure to put some distance between us. Mr. Vegas's daily routine was repetitive: Every morning, he stopped by Starbucks before heading to his university. Sometimes, he went to fast food restaurants, too. It seemed he didn't eat breakfast at home, preferring to eat on the way to classes instead.

I snuck around the coffee shop, trying to keep the tall man in sight. Today, I wore a casual outfit to blend in with my surroundings. It was Porsche's idea. He'd told me if I didn't want to draw attention to myself, I should stop wearing the ridiculous black suit that was our uniform. Thinking about it, he was probably right. Who in their right mind wore a suit every day?

I jotted down everything I saw in my notebook. Mr. Kinn told me to observe everything Mr. Vegas did to see if something was out of the ordinary.

I'd been tailing him for a week now; if I hadn't known for a fact that Mr. Vegas was a morally bankrupt backstabber, I'd think he was like any other guy. He even seemed like an optimistic person. He was intelligent, handsome, and polite, and he carried himself well—unlike the sons from the Major Clan. Well, okay, Mr. Kinn was on par with Mr. Vegas. It was only the eldest son who acted like a total lunatic.

I sat at the opposite side of the coffee shop, getting up when I saw Mr. Vegas order and pay for his coffee.

I was about to walk after him when a barista holding a tray with a beverage stepped in front of me.

"Oh, my bad," I apologized to her.

"Iced hojicha tea latte for you," she said, handing me the cup.

“I didn’t order this.”

“I was told to bring it to you,” she insisted.

“By who?”

“I don’t know his name. If you’ll excuse me.” Cutting the conversation short, she thrust the cup into my hand and left.

Holy shit! Was this from Mr. Vegas? I was so fucked! No way, it couldn’t be. I’d gone out of my way to sit in a corner, out of his line of sight. I was probably just being paranoid. This iced tea didn’t really come from him, right? It had to be from the woman sitting over there. Maybe she thought I was handsome and bought me a drink.

I kept staring at the woman sitting opposite me. When she finally looked up, I smiled broadly to thank her. She frowned at me, and my smile immediately faltered.

So it wasn’t her. Maybe it was the woman at that other table? I decided to quit guessing and tore the straw from its wrapper. I took a long sip, downing half the drink…then suddenly realized there was something I should be doing instead of drinking tea and glaring at disinterested women in a coffee shop.

Damn it, Pete, you dumbass!

I swore and got up to sprint after Mr. Vegas. How stupid of me to forget that I was supposed to be following him!

I cursed and yanked my hair in frustration when I saw Mr. Vegas’s car was gone. If he went about his usual routine, his next destination would be his university. But I’d have no way to know if he stopped anywhere else before that. What should I do if he did something suspicious when I wasn’t following him?

I rushed across the street to where my car was parked. I just wanted to catch up with him as fast as I could. I was in such a rush that I didn’t look at the oncoming traffic.

Swoosh!

“Hey!” I yelped in surprise when a strong arm grabbed my waist, just in time to stop me getting hit by a fast-approaching car.

“You should look both ways before crossing the street,” said a deep voice from behind me.

I quickly pulled his arm away and turned to look at my savior.

“Fuck…” I hissed through my clenched teeth.

“What’s the hurry? Aren’t you afraid of death?”

At this moment, I wanted to run away and scream at the top of my lungs. However, I could only take a deep breath and act as calm and collected as possible.

“Oh, hi, Mr. Vegas! What a coincidence to meet you here,” I greeted him brightly, putting my palms together in a wai gesture. *I’m sure this doesn’t look suspicious as hell!*

Mr. Vegas just snickered at me, his eyes lingering on my face before lowering to the cup in my hand. I saw the corners of his lips lift into a smirk.

“What are you doing here so early in the morning?” I said, trying to seem genuinely surprised to have run into him.

Mr. Vegas still didn’t say anything to me. He had a bag of four grilled pork skewers in his hand, and he crouched on the sidewalk and pulled one skewer out of the bag. Two stray dogs immediately approached him, wagging their tails happily.

I watched as Mr. Vegas fed grilled pork to the dogs, petting their heads with his other hand. I wondered if I should take this chance to run away, but it’d be highly suspicious if I did. *What should I do?*

“These dogs seem tame,” I said. “Looks like they enjoy grilled pork.” I wanted to slap myself in the mouth for saying something so stupid. Maybe my brain function was declining from lack of sleep.

“I wouldn’t know about that,” Mr. Vegas said without looking at me. “I’m not a dog, so I don’t know how they think. But if *you* say that dogs like grilled pork, they probably do.”

“Right…” I smiled awkwardly at him. *Did he just call me a dog?*

“But dogs are good. They’re loyal—they’ll do anything their master tells them to,” Mr. Vegas continued. “They’re simple creatures who don’t know how to think for themselves. They’re happy being led by their master…but they have to be careful not to be led to their deaths.” Mr. Vegas glanced at me askance and smiled.

I gulped nervously. I wasn't an idiot; I understood what he was insinuating. I was confident he knew I had been following him.

"Right," I replied. "The story of these dogs sounds complicated… I better get going. It's good to see you, Mr. Vegas. Have a good day."

I said goodbye and turned around to leave. This time, I remembered to look both ways before I hurried across the road to my car.

"Damn it, Pete, you dumbass! What the hell are you doing?" I groaned once I was back in the car. I hit my forehead repeatedly against the steering wheel, hoping I could knock some sense back into myself.

Way to go, dipshit. Shadowing someone should have been a walk in the park, but I still managed to monumentally screw it up. My performance kept deteriorating—it was making me feel unworthy of my position as head bodyguard to the Major Clan's eldest son. Before this exceptional failure, I'd been a top-tier bodyguard with an outstanding performance record.

I had to report this to Mr. Kinn sooner or later. He might fire me for being so careless and incompetent. Then I'd have to go back to the south to be a farm boy again and help my grandmother tap rubber trees.

My confidence was at rock bottom, but I still wanted to make a last-ditch effort to mitigate the situation before I called Mr. Kinn.

I phoned Porsche. I hoped and prayed to all the mighty gods that he would pick up. The gods seemed to answer my prayer, because I heard a click.

"Porsche! You finally picked up my call!" I yelled excitedly.

"What do you want?" Porsche asked.

"Well, I…"

"Wait! If this is about that shithead, I'm going to hang up."

Shit! What do I do?

"I need your help. So… What should I call him if I need to mention him?" I asked. I hoped that if I didn't say Mr. Kinn's name outright then Porsche would at least listen to me.

“So it *is* about him. I’m gonna hang up.”

“Wait! Hear me out, please. This is about me,” I pleaded. “Please, just listen to what I have to say. I’m in deep shit right now.”

Why are you so damned hotheaded, Porsche?!

“Oh, hell…” Porsche grumbled.

“I’m at my wits’ end. I need your help. Please?” I weakly begged for his sympathy.

“Fine! Call him ‘son of a bitch’ if you need to mention him.”

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” I asked. The situation he was putting me in gave me a throbbing headache. Porsche was my friend, but Mr. Kinn was my boss.

“Bye, then.”

“All right!” *I’m sorry about this, Mr. Kinn.* “Can you talk to…um… to…”

I paused to curse at myself. I felt like an ungrateful employee for talking shit about my boss. *I don’t mean it at all, Mr. Kinn. Your boyfriend forced me to do this.*

“Can you ask…that…son of a bitch…to find someone else to take my current position?”

“Hmm, why don’t you tell him yourself? Why do you think he’ll listen to me?”

“Oh, I’m sure he would. One hundred percent!”

“Pfft, you can tell him yourself.”

“He’s not been in the best mood lately…” I said. “If I told him, he’d be furious. He might even fire me. I can admit that I screwed up this job. Mr. Kinn would—”

I heard the *click* of Porsche ending the call, followed by incessant beeping.

Damn it, Porsche! I cursed. Why couldn’t he have the patience to listen to his friend? I slipped up and said Mr. Kinn’s name, and that guy hung up on me like he didn’t care. *I hope Mr. Kinn doesn’t take you back, you piece of shit!*

I sat in my car for a long while, contemplating my fate. Eventually, I managed to compose myself. Once I got home from

tailing Mr. Vegas, I needed to confess to Mr. Kinn.

I was a bit surprised by Mr. Vegas's behavior today. After he left the coffee shop, he'd moved his car from where he parked it earlier, so I panicked when I didn't see it.

After that, his routine continued as usual. He went to his university, attended his classes, and hung out with his friends. I kept my distance and tried to be more careful while watching him.

In the afternoon, he drove to Mr. Macau's private high school to pick him up. Mr. Vegas always picked up his younger brother on days when he didn't have tutoring after class. Judging from how much he pampered him, he seemed to love his younger brother very much.

Today, they went to a department store near Mr. Macau's school. Mr. Vegas paid for everything that Mr. Macau wanted. He looked like any ordinary man, but I'd sensed a strange air around him during our morning encounter.

The two of them headed to the floor where a movie theater was located. I mingled with the other moviegoers and spotted the brothers standing at the ticket kiosk. Then, they disappeared inside. I guessed they probably decided to watch a movie. I sighed in relief. Mr. Vegas was acting like his usual self this time. He probably didn't see that he was being followed.

I decided to stay until they finished the movie. I looked around for a place to sit. It would be nice if I could take a small nap while waiting.

However, before I could step into the theater, my phone rang. I rolled my eyes at the caller ID onscreen. This guy was the bane of my existence. Why were my days so exhausting?

"Hello, Mr. Tankhun," I said.

"Where the hell are you?!" a loud shout blasted from the speaker. I quickly pulled the phone away from my ear.

"I'm at a department store."

"How dare you, Pete! Are you slacking off at the mall? Now I know why I haven't seen you all day. I'll cut your paycheck until you can only afford to eat white rice with fish sauce!"

“Wait, sir!” I interrupted him. “I’m tailing Mr. Vegas as Mr. Kinn ordered. He went to the department store, so I had to follow.” I shook my head, fed up with my boss. This guy was beyond any explanation. There was no one on Earth like him.

“Oh… I forgot about that. I thought you were slacking off. All right, I forgive you.”

Forgive me for what? Didn’t I say I was working? This bastard was going to be the death of me!

“So… Is there anything you need from me?” I spoke into the phone and started walking. I tried to avoid hitting a group of teenagers heading in my direction. They discussed what movie to see as they headed to the ticket kiosk.

“Oh?! Are you at a movie theater?” Mr. Tankhun asked, sounding excited. He probably overheard the teenagers’ conversation.

“Yes.”

“Good! I want popcorn. Buy a large bucket for me. I want to eat it while I watch TV tonight.”

“It’ll be stale by the time I get home. Why don’t you ask Pol to buy some for you?” I said matter-of-factly. I usually didn’t get home until two or three in the morning.

“Why? You’ve changed, Pete. I want you to buy it. Do you have any problem with that? You *must* buy popcorn for me!”

Yes, this was Mr. Tankhun’s usual level of bossiness. He had to get his way, no matter how unreasonable his request was.

“All right. What flavor do you want?” I asked. “I’m telling you now, you can’t yell at me if I get home late, okay?”

I closed my eyes and tried to control my temper. If he weren’t my boss, I’d give him a swift kick in the head in the hope it’d restart his brain.

“Whatever,” he said. “I want cheese popcorn. A large bucket! And you have to watch the series finale with me tonight, too. That’s all.”

He hung up after that. I stomped against the floor in frustration, pretending the carpet was Mr. Tankhun’s face. I kept

crushing the floor with my shoe until I was satisfied. The people around me stared at me in confusion. I took a deep breath, chanting *Breathe in, breathe out* in my head.

I swore under my breath. I barely had time to sleep at night. I didn't get home until two to three in the morning, and then, by seven, I had to get up and repeat my routine. I wasn't surprised I was so grumpy; my mind became easily muddled lately.

I headed to the concession stand at the theater. "One large bucket of cheese popcorn, please."

My hazy brain was thinking about the bed in my room when I heard a familiar voice order after me: "One more bucket of sweet popcorn. Put it on the same bill."

I was startled when a hand holding a credit card was suddenly thrust forward. What in the actual fuck was my life? Had I stepped out of the house on the wrong foot or forgotten to share loving kindness during my morning prayer? Why did I keep taking wrong turns today?

I turned around to greet him. "Oh, Mr. Vegas, we meet again! What a coincidence." I smiled broadly at him. My earlier sleepiness had disappeared—suddenly, I was wide awake.

"A lot of coincidences lately, huh?" Mr. Vegas replied. He stood with his hands in his pockets as he waited for the concession attendant to finish scooping popcorn into buckets for us.

"Isn't this P'Tankhun's man?" Mr. Macau said when he noticed me. "Shit! Don't tell me P'Tankhun is here." He swore and looked around nervously.

"I don't think he's here," Mr. Vegas said, directing his piercing gaze at me. "You're alone, right?"

"Are you here to watch a movie?" Mr. Macau asked. He didn't wait for my answer, though, continuing disdainfully, "I should have guessed seeing you in casual clothes. P'Tankhun is usually super bossy and has an entourage of men in suits flocking after him."

In the past, he would have been correct. However, when Porsche started working for Mr. Kinn, he'd revolutionized how the bodyguards dressed. Mr. Tankhun agreed with him and let us wear

casual clothes more often. He said we would blend in more when we went clubbing.

I laughed nervously and turned to pick up the bucket of popcorn from the cashier.

“So, what are you seeing?” Mr. Macau kept asking while Mr. Vegas turned to order sodas, not paying attention to us.

“Um…th-that…one,” I stuttered, pointing to a random poster on the wall.

“That’s the same one as us!” Mr. Macau exclaimed. “What’s your seat?”

I began to understand why Mr. Tankhun wanted to smash Mr. Macau’s head in. This kid was a chatterbox. He kept asking me question after question like we were on an episode of *Jeopardy*!

“Well…” I didn’t know where my seat was, because I wasn’t planning to watch the movie. Why didn’t I just tell him I came here to buy popcorn for Mr. Tankhun and I was about to leave? My brain had stopped working at this point.

“I think he hasn’t bought a ticket yet,” Mr. Vegas butted in.

“Really?! That’s perfect, hia,” said Mr. Macau, shoving a movie ticket into my hand. “Here. Take it. One of our friends couldn’t make it today.” He turned to his big brother. “It’s good we don’t have to throw this ticket away, right, hia? It’d be a waste of money.”

I felt like I was about to pass out. Mr. Macau looked like a typical arrogant rich kid—why was he acting so generous all of a sudden? He was very charitable, but I didn’t want his kindness.

“Thanks, but I can’t accept it,” I said, handing the ticket back. “I’ll buy one myself.”

“Come on, just take it!” Mr. Macau insisted. “I promise not to tell P’Tankhun about it. If I remember correctly, you’re his favorite bodyguard, right?”

Why does it have to be me? Just my fucking luck. Why does Mr. Tankhun want to eat popcorn today? For fuck’s sake!

“I really can’t…”

“Here,” Mr. Vegas said, handing me the soda. “Just take the ticket. You’ll get bored waiting outside.”

He leaned in closer, and his sneer made me feel trapped. I frowned and bit my lip. The veins in my head pulsed, feeling as if they were about to burst.

Before I knew it, I was seated in the theater with them. Mr. Vegas sat in the middle, with me on one side and Mr. Macau on the other. How the hell had I gone from trailing him to sitting next to him in a movie theater? This took following a target to a whole new level…

I couldn't help but wonder how Mr. Kinn would react if he saw me and Mr. Vegas together. Would he be speechless? Would he be overwhelmed by the bizarre nature of this situation*?*

I didn't know how to react myself. Nerves gripped me so tightly that I couldn't even focus on the movie playing on the screen. I was at a loss for what to do, and I didn't know where to put my hands and arms.

Argh! The movie had barely started, but I felt like I'd spent ten years in the theater already. Time passed so slowly that I distracted myself by eating Mr. Tankhun's popcorn. I didn't know what else to do. I didn't even dare to look at Mr. Vegas sitting next to me.

Come on, Pete! You can handle this! Just relax. You've got nothing to lose at this point. Let's see what this movie is all about. I decided to let fate guide me. I'd confess everything to Mr. Kinn later—I'd just have to prepare for whatever the consequences might be.

The movie Mr. Vegas and Mr. Macau chose actually wasn't that bad. It was a foreign crime thriller about the mafia, and eventually the scenes and characters caught my attention. I kept watching the film, eating popcorn, and sipping soda from the cup I'd put in the holder between my seat and Mr. Vegas's.

"Why is the female lead so stupid?" I muttered. With my eyes still fixed on the screen, my hand moved from my bucket of popcorn to my drink. The man beside me suddenly put his hand over mine and pulled the cup out to take a sip. He did it casually, even though it was my drink and my hand was still holding the cup.

"Umm… I think your drink is on the other side, Mr. Vegas?" I tried pulling my hand away from his grasp, but he squeezed my hand until the paper cup began to dent.

“Oh, sorry,” Mr. Vegas said bluntly, returning the drink and my hand to their proper place.

What the hell just happened? He kept shooting me all these glances and smirks—it was making me really overwhelmed. He just seemed to radiate a menacing aura. I was so creeped out that I instinctively hunched away from him, pressing my body against the side of the seat, muscles tensed. I was so intimidated by him that I felt a scream building up inside me.

I tried to calm my nerves by closing my eyes. The exhaustion and the cool breeze from the air conditioner made my eyelids heavier, and before long I couldn’t force them open to look at the bright screen anymore. I tried to blink, but the time it took for my eyes to reopen became longer and longer. All my thoughts began to fade, and darkness suddenly consumed me. I couldn’t recall what happened next.

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“Mister... Sir... The movie has ended.”

I was jolted awake. The bright light in the theater was blinding, and I had to squint to readjust my eyes. After a moment, I looked around to find the place empty apart from me and the theater staff cleaning up the trash.

The whole situation took me aback. I’d fallen asleep? Why didn’t Mr. Vegas and Mr. Macau wake me up after the movie ended?

I was so embarrassed that I sprang up from my seat. It was then that I saw a small sticky note with messy handwriting stuck on my right arm: “*Sweet dreams :)*”

I plucked it off, crumpled it, and threw it into the trash bag the staff offered me. Was Mr. Vegas messing with me? Shit! The people in this family were a bunch of dicks!

Realizing I had let Mr. Vegas out of my sight again, I swore. He was probably home by now, but I should go check anyway, because I’d be in deep trouble if he was out doing something shady and I missed it.

After leaving the theater, I went to the bathroom and splashed water on my face to wash away my fatigue. I kept falling asleep this week because I barely got four hours of sleep each night. Everything gave me a headache. I might get admitted to the hospital at this rate.

***

Once I returned to my car, I fished my phone out of my pocket to check if anyone had called or texted me. It'd been over three hours since I'd put it on silent.

When the screen turned on, I immediately saw ten missed calls from Arm and five missed calls from Pol. *Crap!* I called Arm back right away.

"Hello?"

"About time, Pete! I thought you got killed or something. Where the hell are you?"

If I hadn't fallen asleep in the theater, I would've been at Mr. Vegas's house… I was too embarrassed to tell them the truth. "Umm… I'm… I'm in front of Mr. Vegas's house," I lied to them. "What's up?"

"That's enough for today. You better come home now," Arm said solemnly.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Porsche came here to quit his position. He already took his stuff back!"

"What? And Mr. Kinn didn't stop him?"

"Ah, I don't think he could. Mr. Korn couldn't stop him, either. Just get your ass back here now!"

"All right, I'll be back right away," I said, and hung up.

I hurried back home, wondering what the hell was in the water today. With everything that was going on, I wouldn't have been surprised if I had a stroke. I felt so damn exhausted. I just wanted to lie down and do nothing.

When I arrived, the house seemed quiet. The atmosphere was unusually gloomy and tense. It was probably because of the latest problem this family was facing. There were issues both with the company and the family; it was like bad luck had hit everyone here at once.

I stood in front of Mr. Kinn's room, trying to psych myself up. I knew I had screwed up, and I needed to accept the consequences. After a long moment, I finally made up my mind. I knocked on his door three times before I opened it.

"You're back!" Mr. Tankhun yelled when he saw my face. I paused and took a step outside again to check the door. This was indeed Mr. Kinn's room. Why the hell was Mr. Tankhun here?

It wasn't only Mr. Tankhun, though. Mr. Kim and the rest of the bodyguards were in there, too. They were sprawled across the floor, their noses buried in piles of documents.

"How long are you planning to stand there?" Mr. Kim asked. "Get in here."

I smiled faintly at him and closed the door.

"It's good you're back," said Arm, waving me over. "Can you help organize these documents and record the incomes and expenses in this book?" He explained that they were reviewing these documents to determine whether there was any evidence of suspicious activity in the customer records or the financial accounts.

I glanced at Mr. Kinn, wondering if I should confess to him now. He looked tense, engrossed in the documents on his desk. He seemed cut off from everyone else in the room.

"Where's my popcorn, Pete?" demanded Mr. Tankhun.

Fuck, I'd completely forgotten about the popcorn. I'd eaten half the bucket and left the rest in the theater.

"I... I forgot, Mr. Tankhun," I admitted, lowering my head. Then, I quickly covered my ears in anticipation of what was next.

"You son of a bitch!" Mr. Tankhun yelled. "How dare you forget my order? If this were any other circumstance, I'd make you go out to buy popcorn for me right now! You've changed, Pete! You don't care about me anymore. You only look at that bastard Vegas!" I

noticed he wasn't shouting as loud as usual... He probably didn't want to offend Mr. Kinn.

"I'll buy two buckets of popcorn for you tomorrow, Mr. Tankhun," I promised, trying to negotiate with him. "I'll pay for them myself, too. Would that be okay with you?" I was so exhausted. I wanted to end this argument as soon as possible. I wondered how many times I'd screamed in my head from stress today.

"Okay, fine!" Mr. Tankhun accepted my offer.

I was so relieved that he decided not to be angry about something so nonsensical. Mr. Tankhun often lost his mind when he got angry, but he didn't have any sense when he was serious, either. I was content enough that he occasionally knew how to behave.

After Mr. Tankhun's crazy outburst, I went back to scrutinizing the documents page by page. My face got closer and closer to the documents, and my body slumped lower and lower until I was lying on my stomach on the floor. My eyelids got heavier and heavier. It was the same feeling I'd had at the movie theater.

The air in the room was cold, and the music playing softly from Mr. Tankhun's phone sounded like a lullaby. I felt like I could fall asleep at any moment. I stared at the pile of documents in front of me, thinking they would be perfect to rest my head on. Perhaps I could nap for ten or fifteen minutes...

***

"Pete, go sleep in your room."

Pol nudged me, waking me up. I swiftly jumped into a sitting position, panicked that I had fallen asleep again. I should have known there was no such thing as a ten-minute nap for me.

Glancing at the clock on the wall, I saw I'd been asleep for almost six hours. This was probably the longest I'd slept in the past few days.

Argh, I didn't get any shit done!

People were filing out of Mr. Kinn's room. Mr. Tankhun dragged his feet with his eyes closed, almost like he was sleepwalking to his

room.

As everyone left, I hurried to organize the documents into a neat pile. I also wanted to rest in my room soon.

“Pete,” Mr. Kinn called over to me. “You’re very tired, yes?”

I glanced up sleepily. When I saw his face, I suddenly remembered that I needed to tell him the truth about what had happened today and the day before.

“Um… A bit,” I replied. “Mr. Kinn…”

“Here, this is for you,” Mr. Kinn said, cutting me off and handing me a white envelope.

“What is it?” I asked, curious.

“It’s for your hard work.”

I took the envelope and opened it—and frowned immediately.

“Isn’t this too much?” I asked. Inside the envelope was a thick wad of thousand-Baht notes.

“Just take it. I don’t know how to thank you,” Mr. Kinn said plainly. There was a profound confusion and sadness in his eyes.

I sighed. I felt terrible for accepting this much money, because my mistakes were unforgivable. I opened my mouth to speak, but Mr. Kinn immediately cut me off.

“I need to trouble you with one more thing,” he said. His expression became more serious, so I swallowed my words and paid attention.

“What day does Zek-Kant usually go to the casino?”

“Every Saturday, sir.”

“Then, two days from now, I want you to sneak into his house,” said Mr. Kinn. “Search for the missing documents there and collect any suspicious evidence you find. I want to catch him red-handed for once.”

“Understood, Mr. Kinn,” I replied at once.

“This is very dangerous. Are you okay with that?” Mr. Kinn asked, concerned.

“I can do it, sir,” I assured him. I’d gladly do it if it meant I could redeem the mistake I’d made with Mr. Vegas.

“All right,” said Mr. Kinn. “Can you do this alone? I want as few people to know about this as possible. Right now, I don’t trust anyone but you.”

“I’ve got this,” I promised.

“If you feel like the plan is going south, call me immediately.”

“Of course, Mr. Kinn.”

“You can also tell me if you don’t want to do it.”

“I can do it!” I said confidently.

“Thanks so much, Pete,” said Mr. Kinn. “From now on, you don’t have to follow Vegas anymore. Rest up until Saturday arrives. You look like shit—get some sleep.”

“Wait, Mr. Kinn…” I called after him, but he headed into his en suite bathroom and completely ignored me.

I didn’t get the chance to tell him what happened, but I could use sneaking into the Minor Clan’s house to look for evidence as a way to atone for my mistakes.

My thoughts wandered back to the theater again. *You’re so pathetic, Pete!*

Side Story:
Vegas × Pete 2

PETE

“PLEASE, SIR… Help me out, please.”

After a whole day to rest and sleep, I felt better than ever. I’d received permission from Mr. Kinn to rest as much as I wanted. I had one more day to prepare before breaking into the Minor Clan’s house to look for the evidence Mr. Kinn requested.

“No! Why do I have to go?” Mr. Tankhun lifted his chin and turned his face away as he crossed his arms, sulking. He was probably still mad at me for yesterday, when he’d tried to wake me up to be victim to his bullshit. I might have been too sleepy not to be rude to him, and now karma was biting me in the ass.

I can still remember what happened…

***

[YESTERDAY]

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

“Peeeeeete!”

Bang! Bang! Bangbangbang! Bang! Bang!

Fuck! I covered my ears with my pillow. The incessant banging on my door was drilling straight through my ears into my brain, giving me the worst headache. *Argh!* I’d been planning on sleeping for a day or two—what kind of karmic torture did I have to wake up and face?

“Pete! Open the door! Open up!” Mr. Tankhun’s yelling echoed through my door until I had to force myself to sit up. I ran a hand through my hair, annoyed at being called when I wanted to sleep. Right now, sleep was the most important thing in my life, and no one could take it from me!

I stomped over to the door and threw it open.

The young master beamed at me, paying no attention to my annoyed expression. “Are you up? It’s noon; let’s go eat!”

“Sir, I’m off today! I want to sleep!” I slammed the door in Mr. Tankhun’s face. I didn’t care how shocked he looked, how his mouth was open and ready to scold me. I went back to bed, plugging my ears and burrowing under my blanket, cut off from the world.

“Pete! You dare to do this to me?! You’ve changed. You’ve changed!” I heard his muffled screaming before the sound faded away. My eyes slid shut, and I knew nothing else…

***

“Sir, you have to help me,” I said, shaking Mr. Tankhun’s arm. He shot me a haughty sidelong glance and then shook my hand away.

“I’m only important when you need something from me, is that it?” he scoffed. He got up from the sofa and walked in circles around me, looking me up and down. “Heh. I’m telling you now, I take demands from no one, you ungrateful wretch! What’s the use of feeding you…? Yeah, that’s right! I’m just the eldest son of the Major Clan; how can I compete with the eldest son of the Minor Clan, am I right?”

“I’m sorry, sir, I was really sleepy yesterday,” I said, sighing for the millionth time. How long was my life gonna be like this?

He clenched his fists and curled his lip in resentment. “You can make excuses…”

“Sir, can you quit playing around? I’m being serious,” I quickly cut in before my headache could get any worse. I’d come to ask for help from Mr. Tankhun so that I could get into Mr. Vegas’s house more easily. But I’d been trying to make a deal with him for ten minutes now, and I wasn’t getting anywhere. If this didn’t work, I’d have to go ask for Mr. Kim’s help instead.

“How bold of you. You’ve always been so daring,” Mr. Tankhun said, irritated.

He was still staring at me angrily, but I got up from the sofa and approached him. “Mr. Tankhun, can you please visit Mr. Kant

today? Pretend you have to bring him some documents or something. I just need to check where the security cameras are inside the house so I can plan my route for tomorrow," I explained.

I had to plan a way to break into Mr. Vegas's house as smoothly as possible. I knew the positions of the exterior security cameras, but I had no idea where the cameras were inside the house. I'd been there with Mr. Tankhun before, but that was at least a year ago. My boss didn't even want to step inside that house, so I wasn't familiar with the place at all.

"Why do I have to do it?!" he grumbled.

"It's for the family business," I said, trying to convince him. "I'm going in there to catch the mole. We need to find the person trying to ruin your family's company."

"What's that got to do with me?" Mr. Tankhun said, indifferent. "Do it yourself."

"Sir, don't you want to help your family's business? It's something you must care about." I'd always spoken to him like this when I asked for help with the family business. But I doubted it would ever reach his brain. *There's no way!*

"Heh. Read my lips, Pete! I. Don't. Care," Tankhun declared confidently. "I. Have. A. Trust. Fund. Remember that!"

I was hopeless, tired, and felt a little like giving up. Mr. Tankhun was seriously bizarre. You'd think the eldest son would take responsibility and be a leader, but no, he acted like the youngest child instead. I was so fed up with it all.

"Fine, fine. I'll ask Mr. Kim for help, then. But if you go with me, you'll probably see Macau." I stroked my chin as if I was deep in thought. "Hmmm, you might be able to hit him a couple of times. Oh! Or you can wind him up so much that he cries and tells Mr. Kant. You could even kidnap him. Hmmm. But you don't want to go, so you must not want revenge. Forget it." Hopefully he'd take the bait and come along without complaint.

"Macau, that little demon! Damn that kid! Argh!"

I snuck a glance at the young master and smirked. If it was about Macau, I could always get Mr. Tankhun's attention. Not because he had any love for the kid, but because he constantly

wanted to one-up him one way or another. Not too long ago, Mr. Tankhun had claimed he had a stomachache and went to the hospital, only to find Mr. Macau there making doe eyes at a particularly handsome young doctor. Anyone could see Mr. Macau had a giant crush on the guy. Could you believe it? In a split second, Tankhun's interest in the poor doctor went through the roof!

I felt sorry for that unlucky soul. He really needed to go make merit—probably nine temples' worth of it—because his life was in mortal danger.

"Excuse me, I'll go see Mr. Kim," I said, making to walk out of the room.

"Wait! Fine, I'll go. Take it as me officially declaring war on Macau. *Hmph!*"

I smiled. Success! If Mr. Tankhun was "in love" these days, it wasn't a problem—I wasn't even surprised that he was interested in a man. If Mr. Macau had been interested in a girl instead, Tankhun would be interested in her too. This time, it just happened to be a guy. He was so predictable. Did he even know what having an actual crush on someone felt like? And if Mr. Korn knew his eldest son swung the same way his brothers did, how upset would he be? I couldn't fathom it. At this rate, the only way Mr. Korn was going to get any grandkids would be to pray for Mr. Macau to start liking girls.

As soon as Mr. Tankhun agreed to help me, he ran straight to Mr. Korn's office. "Father, is there any document that Zek has to sign or that you want to bring to him?"

"Wait a moment... Who are you, and what have you done with my son?" said Mr. Korn, in total disbelief. "Are you ill?" Of course he didn't believe what he was seeing. When had the young master ever asked about work in his entire life?

"Nu[23] wishes he were ill, but it's just not the vibe right now. Hurry, is there any document you want me to bring to Zek?"

Mr. Tankhun often called himself "nu" around Mr. Korn and other people he was close to, even though he spoke normally with everyone else. It wasn't cute—it was like he was asking to be punched!

“Fine, fine… It’s a good day for me. My son finally came to me of his own volition and asked about the family business. Good! Then you can take this file to your zek,” said Mr. Korn, pleased.

“Okay!”

“What is going on with that boy?” Mr. Korn said to himself.

“I’ll take my leave now. Excuse me,” I said, giving a wai to Mr. Korn before I followed the young master out.

Mr. Tankhun, Pol, Arm, P’Jess, and I got into a car and headed to Mr. Vegas’s house.

“Let’s make this quick,” said Mr. Tankhun. “I still have to come back and help Kinn search for evidence.”

All of us bodyguards turned to smile proudly at the young master. It was rare to see him like this. The work that Mr. Kinn did for the family really was supposed to be Mr. Tankhun’s responsibility.

He abruptly started to laugh. “Heh…I’m going to sort those documents so hard that I won’t get any rest. I’ll get sick, and when I’m sick, I’ll have to see a doctor! Hah! I can’t wait to see Macau’s face when Dr. Top checks me all over! How heartbroken will he be? Ha ha ha!”

The young master rambled on and on. Was he talking to us? No, he was just thinking out loud. We sighed and looked at each other. I needed to change the subject. This was getting ridiculous.

“Arm, I’m worried about the security cameras. What can you do?” I turned to the best man for the job. I was completely clueless about tech; when it came to IT stuff, I always deferred to Arm.

“I’ll have to see the cameras first,” he said. “I’m not sure if I can get into their system, but if I can, you’ll get in and out easily.”

I told Pol and Arm that I had to sneak into the house tomorrow and gather all the evidence I could for Mr. Kinn. They both wanted to come with me, but I insisted on going alone. It’d be easier for me to move around by myself, and it would be less conspicuous that way. Plus, Mr. Kinn wanted as few people involved in this as possible.

We pulled up to Mr. Vegas’s house, and I started looking around. The outside I knew well enough, because I’d been sitting

and staring at it for days on end by now, but I wasn't familiar with the inside...which was why I had to come all the way here with Mr. Tankhun as my cover. I needed to gather intel as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kant was walking by sipping his coffee, about to enter his office, when he turned to see Mr. Tankhun fearlessly sauntering inside.

Mr. Kant spat out a mouthful of coffee. "Oh, what's all this?" he exclaimed.

"Father said to bring this file to you," Mr. Tankhun said, holding the document out in front of him.

"And you had to bring it in person? We have dinner with clients tonight; you didn't have to come all this way."

I didn't pay any attention to their conversation. Pol, Arm, and I tried to sneak glances at every corner of the place. This house wasn't as big as the Major Clan's, but it was still quite fancy. There weren't as many guards, and it was a lot quieter—not as chaotic.

"Take a seat," said Mr. Kant. "I'll call someone to bring us drinks and something to eat."

"Mm-hmm..." Mr. Tankhun craned his neck as he looked around.

"Vegas and Macau are in class right now. No one else is here."

The young master spun around to glare at me. "That's right," he hissed quietly, through clenched teeth. "It's Friday; of course they're at school. Did you trick me?"

"No, no, I just forgot." I hurriedly tried to soothe him.

"You... Then it's alright, Zek, I should get going. I'll take my leave." Mr. Tankhun gave me one last glare, then turned to say goodbye to Mr. Kant.

I leaned in to whisper from behind him. "We can't, sir. You have to buy us some more time. I haven't checked out everything."

"No! You tricked me!" Mr. Tankhun whispered back.

"Sir! I promise I'll scatter some nails in front of Mr. Macau's room for you. Please!"

"Is something wrong?" Mr. Kant looked at us in bewilderment as Mr. Tankhun and I whispered back and forth.

“Nothing…” Mr. Tankhun turned and gave Mr. Kant a cheerful smile. Then, his eyes went to the large clock on the wall; he gasped dramatically, holding his hand up to his mouth. “Oh! It’s already three! I completely lost track of the time—how could I forget my afternoon tea…? Zek, it’s time for my tea. If I don’t have my afternoon cup of tea, I won’t feel at ease. I’m afraid I’ll miss teatime if I go all the way back to my house—how about I take my afternoon tea here?” Tankhun spun around and plopped himself on the sofa.

Mr. Kant looked at him in puzzlement, but he called for a maid to bring some tea for the young master regardless.

Tankhun was spouting nonsense: He never actually drank tea in the afternoon. In fact, just getting him to wake up on time to eat breakfast was a challenge. Which TV show had he gotten this afternoon tea crap from?

“The water has to be exactly ninety degrees Celsius,” Tankhun said with a haughty expression, ordering the maid around like this was his own house. “I’ll take some chamomile.”

“We only have oolong,” the maid replied, intimidated.

“Why? I want chamomile; is that a problem?!” Mr. Tankhun snapped, showing the spoiled side that I had to put up with every day. It made the staff look at each other nervously.

“No one here drinks chamomile, so we don’t keep it in stock. Can you drink something else?” Mr. Kant said, sitting down opposite Mr. Tankhun as he continued playing the part of a spoiled young master. Actually, he wasn’t acting at all—this was the real Tankhun. I used the opportunity to keep observing my surroundings.

“If I drink any other tea, I won’t feel relaxed, Zek,” Mr. Tankhun complained, sighing. “I’m going to miss teatime. What shall I do now?”

Mr. Tankhun kept up his dramatics, successfully drawing the attention of the people in the house away from us bodyguards.

“Well, it’s not often that my nephew comes over to visit me at this house,” Mr. Kant said, then turned to the maid, who was smiling rather sheepishly. “Go find some tea for my nephew.”

“Thank you, Zek… Oh, I’ll have some almond cookies, too…but the almonds have to be organic. Did you get that? Organic. Only.”

The people there were practically trembling in fear by now. I wanted to laugh. *What do you mean, organic? You’ve got instant noodle packets in his sock drawer.*

“Go sort it out for my nephew… You’ll have to wait a while. I’ll get someone to buy it for you.”

Mr. Tankhun was spoiled completely rotten thanks to this kind of treatment—people bent to his every whim.

“Thank you, Zek… Oh, you’re going to check the casinos tomorrow, right?”

“Yes, what about them?”

“Oh, nothing,” Tankhun said. “Are things going well?”

“They’re good. I’m surprised—you’re helping out your father now?”

“A little. I’m the eldest son, so I should take some responsibility,” Tankhun said with a giggle. Arm and I shared a glance and shook our heads.

“You’ve finally grown up,” Mr. Kant remarked.

“Sure. Anyway, when are you planning to go to the casinos? They’re so far away—you’ll be on the road for a long time, right?” Mr. Tankhun seemed like an airhead, but he was actually very cunning—even if he never used his intelligence for the right things.

“Oh, I’m heading out a little later in the morning, but I’ll get there by eight or nine—when it’s busiest.”

“That must be *so* tiring,” said Mr. Tankhun. “Such a long journey, and you’re working as soon as you get there… It’ll be so late. Do you have to come back right away, or will you be staying the night? If you have to rush back… You’ve got to take care of your health.”

That’s it, sir, that’s exactly the right thing to say. I’ve got an exact time to get in and out now. Shit, he can actually be helpful when he wants to be!

“No, no. I’ll be back on Monday,” Mr. Kant replied. “I have to make sure everything’s in order.”

“That’s good. You won’t be so tired.”

I bent down to address Mr. Tankhun. “Enjoy your tea, sir. I’ll excuse myself outside.”

“Mmm,” Mr. Tankhun agreed. “Don’t smoke too many cigarettes, Pete. I don’t want you stinking up the place.” He must have been afraid Mr. Kant would get suspicious if I spent a long time outside without an excuse.

“Yes, sir.”

I walked outside, looking around for exit points. Arm and I had already split up so he could go find the cameras’ domain or IP address or whatever. He said that hacking into the security camera system was his job, and if he could do it, it’d make things way easier for me.

I made my way around the house, smoking and ogling the various plants like they interested me. Security here wasn’t as tight as at Mr. Korn’s house. There were fewer people, and the guards didn’t seem too alert.

I walked past the garden and under Mr. Vegas’s bedroom balcony on the second floor. After watching this house for so long, I knew exactly which rooms were which. Mr. Vegas often came out for a smoke on this balcony at night. I didn’t know why, but when I looked up at it, I felt a little uneasy—like my gut was trying to tell me something. Or was the room haunted? Fuck! I had a bad feeling about this.

Arm came over to join me. “I have their IP address. There’s no one watching the security cameras in the control room! Are they crazy? If it were my men, I’d give them all a good earful,” he muttered darkly. I was relieved that everything was falling into place; it was going much more smoothly than I’d thought.

I walked back inside and signaled to Mr. Tankhun, who was sipping tea with Mr. Kant and barely managing to hide his bored expression. He shot me a spiteful glare before putting on a smile and saying goodbye to his zek. And as soon as we got into the car, ready to go home, Mr. Tankhun upbraided me.

“Where the hell did you disappear to? And for so long, huh? I drank tea until my face turned green! Look!” Mr. Tankhun’s shouts

filled the car.

“Thank you so much, sir.” I spoke patiently and gently, trying to calm his aggravated temper.

“Flattery will get you nowhere, Pete. How could you leave me in there alone? I had to dig through my brain for things to talk about with Zek! I ended up bringing up our ancestors—any longer and I’d have dug up the founder!” Mr. Tankhun yelled in my ear, like he thought I couldn’t hear him unless he shouted. “If you bodyguards hadn’t come in when you did, I’d have had to convince Zek to research our ethnicity and go excavate some fucking fossils!”

“Please don’t be angry, sir. We’re doing this for the Major Clan,” Arm tried to placate him.

“Traitors! I hate you all! Pull over and get me a can of something carbonated. Shit, that tea was so bitter.”

We pursed our lips, trying not to laugh. *The tea was his idea! Who told him to drink it?* He was really such a pain in the ass.

When we got home, we all went back to work. I split up from the rest of the group and headed to my room to prepare for tomorrow’s mission. Everyone else—including Mr. Tankhun—went back to Mr. Kinn’s office to continue searching for evidence that would implicate the mole.

***

[MORNING]

I walked out of the bodyguards’ fitness room soaked in sweat, my clothes sticking to my skin. I exercised every morning so I could stay fit and ready for action, especially for a day like today. I needed to be at my best to break into the Minor Clan’s estate. I cut across the house and headed straight for the fridge, grabbing a bottle of water to rehydrate after sweating so much.

I was about to take a swig, but I nearly choked on my water when I heard a familiar voice.

“Hey. I haven’t seen you these past couple of days.”

I spun around to face the newcomer, who was standing not too far away from me. “Mr. Vegas,” I said quietly, nodding in greeting.

“Were you exercising just now? You’re drenched,” Mr. Vegas remarked, his eyes sweeping over me from head to toe.

“Yes… Mr. Vegas, it’s quite early. What brings you here?” I quickly changed the subject. My eyes couldn’t help but dart to the documents in his hand.

“I’m here to see Be. I’ve got some urgent documents for him to sign. It just so happens that my father isn’t available…” Mr. Vegas didn’t look at my face, staring down at my chest instead.

“Oh. Mr. Korn should be awake now. He’s probably in his office. Follow me, please.” I quickly put my bottle down on the table and led Mr. Vegas to Mr. Korn’s office. I quickened my pace, but Mr. Vegas stayed right on my heels. I felt a chill travel down my spine.

Knock, knock. I rapped on Mr. Korn’s door. “Mr. Vegas would like to see you.”

“Come in,” P’Chan called out.

I pushed the door open and twisted to the side to let Mr. Vegas through. He brushed past me, glancing at me out of the corner of his eye with a smirk before disappearing inside. It gave me goosebumps. This guy was bad news. Every time I met him, I could hear the alarm bells going off in my head.

I shook off the feeling of unease; I was just overthinking things. I went back to my room to shower and change. I put on my usual uniform: a black suit. I’d blend in with Mr. Kant’s guards, since we all wore the exact same thing.

Today, I won’t fail. I’m going to make up for all my failures. I secretly prayed that Mr. Vegas would be out of the house for a nice long while, so I’d have as much time as possible to gather intel.

I was about to leave to do some initial recon, but I was met by the sight of Mr. Kinn and Mr. Vegas running out into the hallway, looking panicked. I stared after them in surprise; soon, Mr. Kim came running by, followed by Arm and Pol.

I pulled Arm to the side. “What’s going on?”

Arm's face looked grim. I could tell something was very wrong. "Porchay's missing," he said. "We're going to go look for him."

"What! How?!" I was shocked to learn Porsche's precious baby brother had gone missing. It explained why Mr. Kinn and Mr. Vegas had run out of here at the speed of light.

"I don't know. Look, I'll bring my laptop, so don't worry. When you're ready, just send me the signal—I'll cut their security feed," Arm said in a rush. "Oh, and Mr. Vegas should be helping us search for Chay, so you're clear to leave."

"I'm worried about Chay. Should I go with you guys first?" I began to waver; Porchay was like my own little brother now.

"No, do your job. We'll take care of this. Call if there's anything to report," Arm said, patting my shoulder before stepping into Mr. Kim's car.

"Wait for me!" Mr. Tankhun shouted from inside the house.

"You wait here, sir! We'll be back soon!" Pol shouted back.

As they sped away, I stood there weighing my options. In a situation like this, I was worried for Porsche. Was Chay going to be okay? In the end, though, I decided on doing my duty. I could only hope that Chay would be all right.

I drove all the way to park near the Minor Clan's household. I watched as Mr. Macau left the house, accompanied by three bodyguards; going to his tutoring session, no doubt. He'd be back around six o'clock.

I sat there watching for over an hour until I was certain Mr. Kant had taken most of the bodyguards with him, leaving a skeleton crew behind. I holstered my gun and exited the car, sneaking along the outer wall to climb over at the back, where there were fewer guards patrolling. I called Arm to give him the signal to take care of the cameras, keeping my earpiece in just in case.

"Pete, I'm not sure when their people will check on the cameras," he said. "I'll disable them for fifteen minutes, then let them run normally, then disable them again. Make sure to time your movements." With that, Arm hung up. We'd planned to be in communication the entire time, but I knew he must have been busy over there; I'd just call him periodically instead.

I pushed myself up onto the wall and carefully let myself down to the other side before looking for cover. I walked inside the house; it was silent save for the whispering of the maids echoing down the hall from the kitchen.

When I opened the door to Mr. Kant's office, the room was completely dark. There was a camera inside the office, so I had to stay hidden from it until I got the signal from Arm that I could continue. When he sent it, I turned on my flashlight and started opening each drawer to check the files.

I found about ten sets of strange product orders, which I quickly photographed. Each only had Mr. Kant's signature—they weren't sent through the main company or clan accounts.

A bead of sweat slid down my face. With all this pressure weighing on me, having to dodge the camera every fifteen minutes, the stuffiness of the room felt suffocating; hot and cold at the same time. I searched for over an hour until I was certain these were the only unusual documents, checking and rechecking until there was nothing else to check.

Then I switched targets to the second-floor office belonging to Mr. Vegas. As far as I knew, Mr. Vegas had stepped up to help Mr. Kant with the family business, so there might be useful evidence in his room.

I waited for Arm's next signal before slowly creeping out of Mr. Kant's room. I hid against columns and giant vases as people walked past, my heart hammering every time I heard footsteps approaching.

Finally, I made it to Mr. Vegas's room. This room was also completely enveloped in shadow; the blackout curtains and dark interior meant no light could make its way in. This room was easier to snoop through, though, because there was no camera to avoid. It was just an office attached to a bedroom, similar to the young masters' rooms at the Major Clan house. It was a little smaller, but airy and orderly.

Stepping inside, I could faintly detect Mr. Vegas's cologne. I'd smelled it pretty often lately, when I was tailing him and he happened to get close. The smell was a bit mysterious, but nice in its own way; whenever I smelled it, I felt light-headed.

Anyway, I don't want to think about that anymore! Let's just get this over with so I can go.

I searched the documents on the desk and in the drawers, taking photos along the way and sending them to Mr. Kinn's LINE. This way, I could be sure that the evidence was safely in Mr. Kinn's hands. If I ended up getting caught, the intel wouldn't be lost.

I'd already noticed the strangeness of the product orders—they didn't contain Mr. Korn's name or the company name, only the names of Mr. Kant and the clients. I had a feeling these products weren't recorded in our system, and I was growing more certain that they were skimming off the top.

But how would we know if they were taking these products from the Major Clan's warehouses or if they were selling them on their own? I needed to find some sort of evidence that would implicate these people.

I stood up, my eyes landing on the iMac on the desk. Perhaps the stolen information and under-the-table sales records might be on it. I turned the computer on—only to despair the next moment. I'd forgotten these motherfucking things required a password! What should I do?

I called Arm in a hurry. "Arm, can you crack a computer password for me?"

"Are you crazy? That takes too much time. Besides, I'm at the warehouses—I'm not touching a computer anytime soon."

"What do I do, then?"

"Just guess?" Arm said. "Mr. Kinn! Please calm down!"

Arm hung up on me. Clearly, he was busy.

I looked at the locked computer screen and started putting in some stupid numbers. *1234... Of course not!* I bit my lip, the vein in my forehead throbbing. *Usually, people pick numbers that are important to them. How about his birthday? December twenty-fifth... 1225.* I knew it offhand because whenever Mr. Vegas's or Mr. Macau's birthdays rolled around, Mr. Tankhun liked to surprise them with the most insane gift possible. But that wasn't the right password.

I sat there racking my brain for numbers. Mr. Macau's birthday, Vegas's license plate number—I tried everything.

Wait! Mr. Tankhun always says that Mr. Vegas looks like a pervert, right…? How about 6969?

"Shit, it really is sixty-nine! I'm a genius!" I whispered happily to myself. Mr. Vegas really was a fucking perv!

I went through the folders and… *There!* I found information on the clients outside our system: thirty of them in total. *Now, how do I send these to Mr. Kinn? If I send them by email, it'll leave evidence on the computer, right?*

I employed the same method I used with the paper documents, taking pictures and sending them to Mr. Kinn's LINE. All the records were here, from illegal arms sales to drugs, including details on the clients and suppliers. I kept sending pictures, not caring if I was blowing up Mr. Kinn's phone. This was important information!

I combed through everything with great care. Aside from the drugs, everything Mr. Vegas's clients ordered matched what was missing from the company's warehouses. There were even clients who canceled their contracts with us but appeared on this list instead. Well, this was going to be fun!

I clicked through the folders until my eyes stopped on one simply titled "X." I didn't hesitate to click on it, but I frowned when I saw that it contained only video files.

"What's this?" I randomly clicked on one of the videos. When it started playing, my eyes went wide. I sat there speechless.

"That's… Mr. Tawan with Mr. Vegas…" *Shit!*

It was footage of Mr. Tawan and Mr. Vegas getting it on, right there on the bed. From the angle, it looked like a hidden-camera recording. My jaw dropped. *Holy fuck!* Looking at the dates, these were from three years ago, when Mr. Tawan was still dating Mr. Kinn! It wasn't just one video; there were multiple other clips of Mr. Tawan and Mr. Vegas getting busy at various different times. Motherfucker! How often had these two been bumping uglies?

I weighed my options. I knew Mr. Kinn ought to know about this. How could Mr. Vegas do this? I didn't know how else to send

these to Mr. Kinn, so I recorded the screen with my phone and sent them all to his LINE.

Wait! I opened the latest video. *That's Mr. March! Shit! There's Mr. Pheem in this other one, and here's...* The whole folder was full of Mr. Kinn's bed partners. Fuck, Mr. Tankhun was right—Mr. Vegas really was a crazy pervert!

I remembered the men Mr. Kinn slept with, and their faces were so clear in this footage that there could be no mistaking them. Without hesitation, I recorded these videos as well, sending everything to Mr. Kinn.

But why had Mr. Vegas done this? What did he want? The way he approached Porsche... Was *this* the reason why? The more I looked, the more evidence I found. I didn't know if any of this would be useful, but I tried to focus and take pictures and recordings of everything I found.

"I told you to stop!" A sudden shout from outside the door made me jump. I hurriedly shut off the computer and scrambled to put everything back in place, looking around for a way out.

"Big! Stop! I told you, Mr. Vegas isn't here!"

I froze. Big? What was Big doing here? I didn't have time to ponder it, though—I could hear footsteps coming closer. Time was running out.

Leaving the room was too risky, whether I went through the door or climbed down from the balcony. Besides, I wanted to know what that asshole was doing here. So I hid inside the wardrobe, making sure to close the door as silently as possible. With one hand, I pulled out my gun, the other holding my phone as I pressed the record button.

Bang! The door slammed open, and Big angrily stomped inside. I nudged the closet door ajar to record his face as clearly as I could.

"I'll wait for him!" Big shouted at a bodyguard.

"You know that Mr. Vegas forbade you from seeing him!"

"So what?! How am I supposed to stay put? Mr. Kinn's getting more suspicious of me every day—and now look at what Mr. Tawan has done!"

“You need to get out of here. You know Pete’s been tailing Mr. Vegas. If he sees you coming here, Mr. Kinn will surely find out.”

I closed my eyes. *This whole time, Mr. Vegas knew I’d been watching…*

“I can’t wait! Fuck!” Big cursed.

“Get out, or I’ll kick you out myself!”

The argument continued for a while until another voice rang out. This one nearly made my heart stop: “Big! What the fuck are you doing?!”

Fucking. Hell. I’m dead! Why is Mr. Vegas here? Isn’t he supposed to be looking for Chay?!

Big immediately grabbed Mr. Vegas’s arm. “Mr. Vegas! You have to help me!”

“Get out, all of you,” Mr. Vegas turned to order his men standing behind him. “Out!” He was fuming, almost like he was ready for a fight. His eyes were harsh and steely, completely unlike the Vegas I knew.

“Mr. Vegas! It won’t be long until Mr. Kinn finds out I’m the one sending you the info—”

Smack! Mr. Vegas slapped Big hard enough that his mouth started bleeding. My jaw dropped at the sight.

“Mr. Vegas!” Big glared at Mr. Vegas, holding his cheek.

Mr. Vegas jabbed a finger in Big’s face. “You didn’t just send the information to me, Big! Who else did you sell it to?!”

“What are you talking about?!”

“Who else did you sell clan secrets to? You didn’t just sell them to me. Tawan’s side, our competitors—I think it was all you!”

Big went still for a moment. Then he wiped the blood from his mouth. “Hah! Isn’t that convenient for you? You wanted that side to fall, and I needed the money. What am I doing wrong? Did you think you were the only one with enough money to buy me?”

Big, you fucking snake! I knew you were scum, but I didn’t think you’d resort to this!

“Then why didn’t you check with me first?!” demanded Mr. Vegas. “I didn’t even know about the latest leak! I was wondering

how our competitors got our shipment history!"

"Why are you trying to be the good guy now? The people who bought it from me can't do anything to your side of operations. Doesn't the Minor Clan's main income come from your 'extra' deals? This is only going to affect the Major Clan's inventory!"

"You're too shortsighted! It's because you're so clueless that they caught on to you so fast!"

"Hah! Like *you're* so smart? All you do these days is follow Porsche around like a little lost puppy. I don't see you producing any results."

Smack! Mr. Vegas slapped Big again. I could almost feel the sting this time. Fuck! I'd never imagined Mr. Vegas could be like this!

"Don't you dare drag Porsche into this! Tawan's ridiculous, daring to say that Porsche is the mole... If you all keep acting without using your brains, it'll all come crashing down—just you wait!"

"You love him," Big sneered. "You're head over fucking heels. You must be so worried about him. What's so special about that little shit?!"

"He's better than you, at least!" Mr. Vegas yelled.

"You're all fucking idiots! You're just as deluded as the rest of them. What, does the business not matter to you anymore? That bastard Porsche is the most important thing now, huh? Good. Then the new order we're going to move out of the warehouses can be canceled, and I'll recommend a different supplier to this client; how about that?!"

It was as we suspected. The products going missing, the leaked documents—it was all Big's doing.

"Try it and I'll kill you!" Mr. Vegas gritted out.

"Then do something. The new order will be delivered next week. If Mr. Kinn suspects me, how can I take care of things for you?"

"You were greedy, that's all it is! Leaking information without thinking first! And you sent information to someone like Tawan? He's a loose cannon! I'm telling you now—you're going down!"

“Then find a way! You have to help me!” Big insisted.

“You’re a goddamn idiot! You’ve failed the clan’s business. You couldn’t even manage to get Porsche away from Kinn.”

“And you think *you’re* so much better? Coming up with a plan to drug him, getting him all the way into bed, and you couldn’t even do anything?”

Shit! That was these two? Porsche, you unlucky bastard! I didn’t want to listen to them anymore. Why did I have to hear all of this?

“Big!” Mr. Vegas raised his hand to slap Big again, but this time, Big caught his wrist.

“You and Mr. Kant need to help me, or else I’m taking you all down with me!” Big threatened, before spinning around and marching out of the room.

“Damn it!” Mr. Vegas cursed, sweeping his arm across his desk and sending everything clattering to the floor. I quickly stopped my recording and sent it to Mr. Kinn. Shit, my battery was running out… *Please let me finish sending him this file. Please don’t die on me!*

I silently watched Mr. Vegas explode with rage, begging my phone to hang on. As soon as the file sent, the screen went black. *Thank you for letting me send the file, but couldn’t you have waited another moment so I could send Mr. Kinn a message asking for backup?* I didn’t know when Mr. Vegas was going to leave his room, or how long I was going to have to stay in here. *Great fucking timing, me!*

Mr. Vegas kept throwing things around until he finally reached for his computer. He was about to fling it away, too, but suddenly, he stopped short. I had a horrible, sinking feeling; I couldn’t breathe, and my heart hammered wildly in my chest. I slipped my phone into my pocket and gripped my gun tightly with both hands.

I looked at Mr. Vegas from the crack in between the wardrobe doors. He was standing ramrod straight as he held his hand up to the back of his computer. I swallowed thickly before biting my lip with worry. Why had he suddenly stopped?

Mr. Vegas slowly walked in a circle around his room before going to open the door to call in two bodyguards.

“Clean this up,” Mr. Vegas ordered, and they began to slowly pick things up from the floor and put them back into place. I tried to

control my breathing and bring myself back to my senses.

He was still circling the room, walking casually with his hand in his pocket, like he was just checking out the sights. He stopped in front of the wardrobe and stared. I gripped the gun in my hands and held my breath, afraid it would give me away…

“Heh…”

Slam! The doors were flung open. I was prepared for this, though, and I immediately took aim at the man in front me. Mr. Vegas smiled coldly as we stared each other down. As I was about to pull the trigger, he smacked the gun in my hands away. In the background, his guards yelled.

“You’re good,” he said, smirking at me.

I didn’t know what was going to happen to me. All I could do was silently pray that I’d survive to see my grandpa and grandma again…

Chapter 33:
Stolen

KINN

“FUCKING HELL, Kinn! How the fuck can you be watching porn right now?!”

“Shit!”

“What is it…?”

Porsche and I watched the movement on my phone screen: Tawan and Vegas having sex. If it had been Tawan and anyone else, I wouldn’t have been surprised, but the thing that made me curse out loud was that it was Vegas—my own cousin. I could barely believe it.

Although I didn’t feel anything for Tawan anymore, seeing him with Vegas still left me stunned. The man who had always stabbed me in the back was far too close for comfort now.

“Vegas is fucking vicious,” Porsche said expressionlessly, eyes focused on the screen.

“I told you not to go near him,” I grumbled.

“How is anyone supposed to know he’s like that…? There’s more. Open it.” Porsche didn’t look that disconcerted, but the video files kept on coming.

“Shit… March, too?” I swore as soon as I saw the video, completely forgetting who was sitting beside me as he turned and glared. “No,” I quickly backtracked, “I’m just surprised.”

“Vegas is kinda kinky. Look, he’s even got him tied up!” Porsche chuckled, watching the video like it was all a big joke. I wasn’t laughing. Why the fuck would Vegas do this?

“Come on, lemme see another one,” Porsche urged.

I tapped on the next video file, just as he ordered. I didn’t dare to disobey him right now. It looked like he still hadn’t completely forgiven me yet.

As I went through the videos, I realized they featured every single one of my previous hookups. “What the hell is this?!” I burst

out, my temper flaring. *Vegas, you bastard! You dare to stab me in the back like this?* Now I knew why he was going after Porsche so brazenly.

"What?" Porsche lifted his face to ask me as I speechlessly stared at the screen. "You know these people?"

"It's… I…" I stammered. I didn't know what to say. I didn't want to lie, but if I confessed, Porsche might kill me.

"What are you… Who… Don't tell me these are *all* your exes." Porsche was smarter than he let on—although it wasn't exactly hard to guess.

I didn't want to lie to him anymore. I could only bend my head and admit the truth. "…Yeah."

"Heh… Hey, let me see those," Porsche said, taking the phone from my hands and scrolling through the video files.

I was in shock. Vegas had been scheming behind my back this entire time, and I didn't know why. It didn't hurt or upset me; it just left my mind reeling for answers. I tried not to read too much into it, but I really couldn't figure out his motive.

I remained silent.

"Oh, you've gone quiet all of a sudden," Porsche teased me. "Can't speak, huh?" He clutched his chest dramatically before bursting into song:

"My baby went astray,

It hurts but I can't say,

It hurts but I can't complain,

Oh, I'm already so old, but I'm the fool today!"[24]

I couldn't help but smile. At least there was a silver lining to this mess. Porsche was finally talking to me—finally letting go of his grudge.

"But does my baby want to go astray?" I joked, looping my arm around his shoulder and pulling him close.

"Let go! I'm not one of your sugar babies, dickwad!" Porsche thrashed wildly against my embrace, just as stubborn as ever.

"Why don't you call me P'Kinn?" I laughed. "Say it. 'P'Kinn is so handsome, P'Kinn belongs to N'Porsche.'"

Porsche kept trying to push himself away from me. “Call *you* phi? In your dreams! Kinn, are we driving to the hospital or not? Otherwise I’m getting out.”

As he tried to twist out of my grip, I bent down to kiss his cheek. “I missed you so much, did you know that?” With Porsche beside me, I could forget about the videos that Pete had sent. The man in front of me took up all my attention.

I didn’t know how I was going to deal with Vegas after this. I didn’t care who he chose to fuck—as long as he didn’t go near the man in my arms.

“Don’t you dare!” Porsche pushed me away, furiously wiping his cheek in disgust.

“Oh, I *dare*,” I leaned in again with a goofy grin until he pushed my face away again.

“Unlock the door! I’m getting out!”

“Fine, fine, we’re going. Let’s go.” I put the car in gear and pulled away from the front of the warehouse. If I stalled any longer, Porsche was going to kick my ass.

For the entire drive, Porsche sat there with his arms crossed, staring out the window. I tried to tease him, reaching over to pet his hair or touch his face or his arm, but he always shook my hand away. If it was anyone else holding onto a grudge, it’d probably be annoying, but because it was Porsche, I couldn’t stop smiling. Right now, the only thing I wanted was to have him back by my side. *As long as we’re together every day, I’ll be happy.*

My brother called to tell us that he was already taking Chay back home.

“Oh, okay, Kim… Okay, we’ll go straight home,” I said, and hung up. “Let’s go home, since Kim already took Chay home,” I told Porsche. “The doctor said your brother is fine, just a little hungry.”

“Whose home?” Porsche asked tersely, frowning at me.

“Our home,” I answered, reaching over to pet his hair.

“Your home.” He peeled my hand away. “*Not. Mine!*”

I shook my head. Seeing Porsche sulk like this was endearing, but I could only hope he wouldn’t be like this for too long—I was

running out of ways to appease him.

I finally managed to bring him back to my house. Porsche was fuming the entire way, but how could he not come with me? His brother was here, and I knew he couldn't leave Chay behind.

As soon as I parked the car, Porsche jumped down and marched inside.

"Chay! Where are you?! We're going home!" he shouted, stomping toward his old room. The guards in the hallway gaped at us.

"Wait, wait. Porsche, calm down." I hurriedly held him back before he could cause a larger commotion.

"Let me go, Kinn! I'm going to see my brother!"

Porsche and I scuffled a bit. The guards and staff looked on, but no one dared to intervene.

"Come here, Porsche… All of you, get out of the way!" I held Porsche from behind and pulled him up the stairs, the crowd scattering when Porsche started flailing his limbs as far as they could reach.

"Let go!" he growled, struggling hard. I was breaking out in a sweat, but I mustered all the strength I had and dragged him into my bedroom.

"*Oof!* I'm tired," I sighed, dumping Porsche unceremoniously onto the sofa and wiping sweat off my forehead.

Porsche glowered at me. "That hurt, Kinn! How could you throw me like that?"

I put my hands on my hips, looking at him sprawled awkwardly on the sofa. "You were being stubborn."

"And why did you drag me up here? I'm taking my brother home!" Porsche pushed himself upright, about to stand up and leap out of my room, but I pounced on him and held on tight once more.

"Kinn, you shithead! Let go of me! I'm gonna kill you!"

"Please stop, Porsche," I begged, breathing heavily. "I'm so tired." This was the most exhausted I'd been in days. I was panting hard and sweating profusely; it was almost like I'd just run a marathon.

Porsche whipped around to glare at me. “Then let go of me!”

“I won’t let go of you. Even if I die, I won’t let go,” I said, burrowing into his shoulder. I breathed in his scent, hoping it might put my heart at ease.

“You’re the one who chased me away, you bastard!” Porsche struggled less, but he was still huffing and trying to pry my hands off.

“When did I chase you away?” I asked. “What did I say that meant I wanted you to go?”

“Your actions were clear enough. And I’m telling you now, I’m not like one of your old boytoys who come and go at your beck and call.” Porsche was back to sulking. He was probably tired, too, from all that thrashing around. He went still, letting me hold him.

“I know you’re not like them. You aren’t like anyone else.” I pressed my nose into his nape, but he twisted away.

“Keep on talking, Kinn. Your words don’t mean anything to me now,” Porsche replied. “Let go of me.”

“Porsche! Please listen to me. I’m sorry—I was wrong. I’m clear about my feelings now. I only want you. Do you understand? Not Tawan, not March. You. You’re the only one who can drive me crazy like this. I’m begging you, please give me another chance.” I nuzzled into his inviting neck, breathing in the scent I’d been yearning for, before lightly biting down and sucking. Porsche went still. He took a deep breath and pushed me away.

“I’ve had enough, Kinn! I won’t believe another word from someone like you.” Porsche’s voice was curt.

Smelling Porsche’s scent and holding him so close was riling me up. He was distracted enough now for me to pin his arms over his head and push him down against the sofa.

“The fuck are you playing at?!” Porsche thrashed under my hold. I used my weight to pin him in place so he couldn’t escape.

“I’m making it up to you,” I said.

We stared at each other, our bodies going completely still. I slowly lowered my lips onto his, putting all my longing into the kiss. Of course, Porsche turned away, his eyes squeezing shut, but I didn’t relent, chasing after him.

“Let go!” Porsche pursed his lips, keeping them tightly sealed. I couldn’t lick inside, but I didn’t care. I sucked at his lower lip, pressing gentle kisses to his soft mouth, his warm breath mingling with mine.

He was driving me crazy. I’d missed him so much that I could barely contain myself. I kissed his lips and his cheek in turn, trying to convey everything I felt inside that was threatening to burst out.

“I missed you so much!” I insisted, but Porsche still kept his eyes tightly shut, shaking his head from side to side. He was running out of air with his lips pursed, and when he gasped for breath, I quickly slipped my tongue inside and searched for that familiar taste. He tried to use his tongue to push mine out, but it only felt like he was responding to me. We traded wet, messy kisses, and it turned me on even more.

“K-Kinn!” Porsche let out a sound of protest from the back of his throat as I lost myself in the feeling, before…

He bit down on my tongue.

“Ah!” *Shit! That really hurts!* “That hurt!” I complained. I backed away but still held onto him.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?!” Porsche hissed, looking annoyed.

“You want to be a brat? Fine!” I spun him around, twisted his arm behind his back, and pinned him against the glass coffee table.

“Shit, Kinn, what the fuck are you doing?!”

I pushed him down onto the glass; he was on his knees with his back to me. I smiled at his attempts to escape, pleased by our current positions, before easing my grip on his arms.

I chuckled as I used my free hand to undo my belt and pants, letting them fall to my knees.

“Kinn, you shithead! Let me go!” Porsche flailed, fists flying. *It’s too late, my love. Give me the chance to make it up to you. Please.*

“Don’t be stubborn…” I bent down to whisper in his ear. “Behave yourself, or you’ll be punished.” Porsche tried to turn his face toward me, but I kept his head pinned down.

“Punished? Yeah, right! Let me go, asshole!”

I didn’t wait, tugging his black T-shirt up and leaning in to breathe in his scent. I ran my tongue up his spine, not forgetting to leave hickeys all over.

“Kinn, you shithead! That hurts!” Porsche continued to curse at me, but it only spurred me on—this really was Porsche I was with and no one else. I reached for his front, unbuttoning his jeans and pulling them down. He jolted when my hand grasped his half-hard cock.

I slid up from his back to whisper in his ear again, nuzzling at his nape. “You didn’t tell me you were feeling it too.”

“I’m not! Get your hands off of me!”

I licked from Porsche’s earlobe down to his neck, slowly stroking his length. He looked a little flustered, biting his lip as his face flushed red and sweat beaded on his skin. *Does he know he’s driving me wild?*

I smiled, laughing at my ability to tease him like this. “So sexy,” I murmured as I sped up my movements, pumping up and down his shaft. Porsche’s hand that had previously been fumbling around now clutched the edge of the table. Seeing him like this made me want to tease him even more. I ran my thumb over the tip of his cock until clear liquid began to dribble out, then pressed down firmly, making him squirm.

“Kinn! Ah…” Porsche bit his lip and squeezed his eyes shut. I quickened my pace, continuing to play with his cockhead.

“You missed me, too, huh?” I joked, bending down to kiss the corner of his lips. Porsche squinted up at me as he continued to take shaky breaths.

He bit my lower lip. “Ow!” I yelped.

“Serves you right,” he snorted.

I took my revenge by changing up the rhythm, faster and harder than before. Porsche twisted and writhed, his hands gripping the table so tightly that his veins popped.

“Please stop being angry with me,” I said, kissing his cheek.

“Ugh… Uh… N-no!” Porsche made muffled sounds in the back of his throat.

“You won’t? Fine!” I slowed down my pace, stroking languidly to frustrate him.

“K-Kinn, you bastard! What do you want?!” Porsche blurted out, making me laugh. My face was still buried in his neck. *I’m sure I’ll pay for this later.*

“Say it properly… What do you want me to do? Hmm?” I rubbed the tip of my nose against his cheek.

“L-let…let me go,” he said.

“You really want me to let go?” I asked, my hands moving even slower. I flicked my thumb against the head of his cock again.

“D…Don’t tease me… *Ah!*”

“Then say it like you mean it… Something like ‘please, P’Kinn!’” I smiled smugly and affectionately kissed his cheeks.

“Phi, my ass!”

“Say, ‘P’Kinn, I’m not angry with you anymore. Let’s go back to the way we were before.’ Say it, won’t you?” I wasn’t done toying with the man underneath me. My finger slid along the cleft of his ass to the tight furl of his hole, making Porsche shiver with the barest touch before moving back to his shaft and stroking lazily.

“I won’t say it, you bastard!” Porsche buried his face into the table, looking embarrassed and pissed off at the same time. *He looks even cuter like this. Just how enamored can I be with him?*

“If you don’t say it, I won’t do it…” I trailed off and bent down to give his temple another kiss. I wanted him to say it already so we could get this over with. I wouldn’t be able to hold on for long, having gone without him for so many days. He was so adorable I wasn’t sure I could stand it any longer. *Shit, am I gonna finish too soon?*

“Then don’t, asshole!” Porsche bit out.

If he wouldn’t say it, then so be it. I couldn’t take it anymore. I pumped faster, my eyes focused on Porsche’s quivering back. He was breathless with need. It wasn’t long before he stiffened and came, leaving a sticky white mess all over my hand.

I didn’t wait. I *couldn’t* wait. I was nearing my limit just from the sight of Porsche’s sweat-soaked body. There was no time to get

up and grab the lube—I still had to hold him down so he wouldn't escape. I hastily jerked my own cock, then smeared our combined fluids all over his ass. As soon as my finger began to circle his hole, he let out a groan. I carefully pushed his knees apart.

"Ugh… Fuck…you…mmm," Porsche moaned and cursed. "*Ah*…"

Just my finger sliding into him was enough to make Porsche jolt. He turned his face to the side, gasping for breath and tensing up again. I slowly inserted my finger until it was fully inside, feeling his tight, throbbing walls. My skin was damp with sweat as I tried to hold off my orgasm, but it was getting harder with every passing minute.

"I can't hold on. Can I fuck you?" I moved my index finger in and out, then added a second finger.

"Uh… Ugh… No… It hurts," Porsche cried out in protest. I could sense his discomfort. He was soaked with sweat, hanging onto the table like his life depended on it.

"I can't hold on…" I moved my fingers in circles, pumping faster. Porsche bit his lip, crying out incoherently every time I hit his prostate.

"Uh… *Ah*… K-Kinn! Slower!"

The more I looked at Porsche, the thinner my patience became. I pulled my fingers out and tugged myself to full hardness before lining myself up with Porsche's pink hole.

"Put on a condom, you bastard!" Porsche twisted around to order me, his eyes half-lidded. I felt my breath catch.

"Why? I didn't sleep with anyone else," I said, carefully pressing the tip of my dick inside. My other hand went from holding Porsche's head down to supporting his hip. It seemed like he'd run out of energy to fight back.

"I don't believe you! Kinn… It h-hurts… Ugh…"

I pushed in slowly, but I'd only gotten halfway inside when Porsche's walls frantically clamped down around me. I had to get my breathing under control, trying to calm myself down.

"Ah… *Sss*… I'm gonna come!" I stopped, trying to pull myself back from the edge.

“Ah… I… I fucking told you to put on a condom!” Porsche cursed.

“Oh… Don’t tense up… Mmm…”

Sweat dripped down my face as I started pushing inside again. I held my breath and braced myself until I was fully sheathed in Porsche’s ass.

Porsche’s face twisted in pain as he slowly let out the breath he was holding. “Ugh… So full… I can’t… Y-you…aren’t listening to me!” he stuttered as he turned to glare at me.

“Shh… Just being inside you… I can’t… I didn’t mess around with anyone, I swear,” I said as I started to shallowly thrust, holding Porsche’s hips.

“*Ah*… K-Kinn… I don’t believe you, you manwhore!” Porsche berated me, moans slipping out between his bouts of shouting.

“You don’t believe me?” I grabbed Porsche’s hips and shoved inside forcefully until he squeezed his eyes shut and clenched his fists.



“You’ve got so many boytoys…how can I believe you…? *Ah*…” The more he talked, the faster I thrusted. I aimed for that spot inside of him, hitting it over and over until he let out a trembling moan.

I hissed in pleasure. “I won’t have anyone else… I only want you… Only you…”

My moans mingled with Porsche’s as he tried to lift his head up to gasp for air. I felt a shiver run through my body, my heart racing with need after being apart from him for so long. The tightness and heat were indescribable. The strangest thing was that Porsche cursing at me was kind of enjoyable—it spiced things up a little.

“Slow… Slow…Kinn…! *Ah*… I don’t believe you… Once you’ve had your fill of me, you’ll get bored again.” Porsche slid his hand down to jerk his cock to the rhythm of my thrusts. He was so hot that I lost myself inside of him, plunging into his body until he swayed with the force of it, my hands digging into his hips.

“*Sss*… You’re talking too much, my love. Ah… I won’t get bored…ever. I won’t look at, won’t have anyone else… *Fuck*, you’re so tight… I’m gonna come,” I gasped out. I bent over, plastering myself against his back and breathing in his scent from the crook of his neck. “I promise I’ll only have you, Porsche… Please… Please forgive me,” I whispered in his ear, then gave his cheek a loving kiss.

“Ah… I-I’m going to…” Porsche closed his eyes, his hand speeding up. I was close, too. In those last moments, I sped up, hitting Porsche’s sweet spot harder than before.

“Mmm… *Ahh*… I’m close… So close…” I fucked Porsche with abandon; it was an intoxicating, heady thrill. My fingers dug into the meat of his hips as my breath hitched.

The fire inside me built and our moans filled the room until Porsche stiffened and stilled, coming undone underneath me. I was quick to follow him over the edge. I pounded into him, not caring about anything else, letting my mind white out as I finally released inside of him. I came so much that it dribbled out and dripped onto the floor. I kept rocking inside his inviting body once, twice, three more times until…

Crash! The glass pane of the coffee table fell to the floor and shattered. I quickly grabbed Porsche by his T-shirt, pulling him safely into my arms. The glass top and the legs of the table were separate pieces, apparently. I hadn't even realized I was knocking the glass top loose before it fell, breaking into a million little pieces.

"Are you all right?" I immediately turned to look at the man in my arms. He sat there panting and staring at the scene in shock.

He hit my chest. "Shit, Kinn, what did you do?!"

"Hah… And I was holding back, too." I grinned at Porsche, who looked utterly mortified.

Knock, knock.

"Mr. Kinn, what's going on in there? Mr. Kinn!"

Knocking and shouting from outside made both of us turn to stare at the door. Porsche managed to quickly pull his pants on and his T-shirt down before scurrying into the bathroom. I shook my head at the old Porsche I'd won back.

"Nothing!" I shouted, and the clamor stopped. I grabbed a tissue to clean myself up and wiped away the evidence from the carpet. Once I sorted myself out, I opened the door to let the men standing anxiously outside come clean up the mess of glass shards.

"People are here to sweep up the glass," I shouted, knocking on the bathroom door. I was afraid Porsche would just cluelessly wander out.

"You motherfucking bastard! Just you wait; I'll run away and become a monk!"

It sounded like Porsche flung something at the bathroom door. I backed away and shook my head. My phone vibrated with a new notification, so I pulled it out and checked the screen.

I'd forgotten I had entrusted Pete to collect evidence at *that* house. I quickly opened the chat and played the latest video he'd sent. I furrowed my brows and stared at the screen.

Big… What is Big doing at Vegas's place?

"You can leave once you're done," I ordered the men sweeping the glass shards, chasing them out. They were quite close to Big, and I didn't want them to overhear this.

Once they were gone, I sat down on the sofa and pressed play again. The more I listened to Big's words, the tighter my fists clenched. When Vegas appeared in the video, my confusion immediately cleared. There were no more unanswered questions. The one leaking the documents and stealing products from the warehouses was none other than Vegas, the force behind the Minor Clan. He was the one who'd betrayed us—and most importantly, he was the one who almost did the unthinkable to Porsche. In the end, it was all Big and Vegas. Their corpses would be unrecognizable once I was through with them. I gritted my teeth and punched the sofa, then went back to my phone to call Arm.

"Yes, Mr. Kinn?"

"Arm... You and Nont go catch Big and bring him here immediately! I have the evidence!"

"Yes, Mr. Kinn. He's outside—we'll track his GPS signal."

"I'll leave it to you. Don't kill him yet—I'll take care of him myself." I was so enraged that I was losing control, my hands shaking.

Arm gave me an affirmative reply and hung up. I sat there massaging my temples, trying to hold myself together. If it were possible, I'd have had Big dragged in here already and beaten him to death.

Bang! The bathroom door swung open, and Porsche stomped angrily toward my door.

"Where are you going?!" I barked. He froze mid-step and turned to look at me. I hadn't meant to shout at him.

"Back to my house!" he yelled back. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes before getting up and stalking toward Porsche, who looked at me questioningly.

"I won't let you! Get back into the bedroom!" I was still shouting, not quite in control of myself yet. I paused for a moment, rubbing at my face wearily and letting out a long sigh.

Porsche gave me a pensive stare. "What's wrong with you?" he asked sharply, but his stubborn gaze was beginning to soften.

"Porsche... Can you stay with me for a while? I need you here with me. Please, Porsche." I pulled him into a loose hug; he didn't

resist. He let me stay like that for a long while.

"...Fine! But I'm hungry. I want something sweet," Porsche said, gently pushing me away. I slowly nodded in understanding. He spun around and went back into the bedroom.

"Keep watch," I ordered the guards outside my room. "Don't let him leave."

I went downstairs to find something for Porsche from the kitchen. I could've ordered someone else to bring us food, but I wanted to do this for him.

"Kinn, Kinn, Kinn."

As soon as my foot touched the first-floor landing, Tankhun made a beeline for me from his perch in the foyer.

"What?" I asked flatly.

"I hear Porsche is back," he said gleefully.

"Mm-hmm," I hummed, bracing myself for my brother's antics.

"Where is he? Should I throw him a welcome-back party?" Khun stroked his chin contemplatively.

Kim emerged from the kitchen with some sandwiches and a mug of warm milk. "Hey, Kinn. You look like shit. Did you...*talk* things out?"

I sighed, my hands loosely resting on my hips.

"What, you two haven't made up yet?" said Khun in disbelief. "You even risked your life to save his little brother from that evil bastard Tawan!"

"Not yet. In fact, he just said he was going to run away and become a monk."

"Oh, what a coincidence!" Khun patted my shoulder, sporting the stupidest shit-eating grin imaginable. "I've been practicing some songs! Tell Porsche I call dibs on dancing in front of the nak!"[25]

"Don't forget to invite me," Kim piled on, smiling.

"Should I go up and ask Porsche to choose which songs he wants for his ordination ceremony?" said Khun. "Do you think he'll like this one?"

“Which one?” Kim asked. They were playing along so smoothly, the bastards!

Tankhun cleared his throat, then began caterwauling:

“Oh Nim, most precious one,

Your nak leaves you his last instructions.

Today I leave you, my beloved

I’ll put on holy robes and take my proper place

To repay the mother’s grace!”[26]

Khun began to dance, and Kim went along with it. They stepped back and forth, bending with the rhythm Khun set. I kicked at Kim, who dodged me by running up to the second floor. Tankhun was laughing his ass off. I raised my fist at him.

What’s so funny, you little shits?!

One of my guards came running down the stairs, panicking. “Mr. Kinn, sir! This isn’t good!”

“What is it?”

“It’s Porsche, sir. He’s trying to escape by climbing down the balcony, Mr. Kinn.”

I heaved a long sigh and ran a hand through my hair. I was about to run up the stairs, but my bodyguard stopped me.

“He locked all the doors from the inside, Mr. Kinn.”

Khun pulled me toward the front door. “Let’s go.”

“Fuck!” I cursed and ran out to the side garden that my balcony overlooked. When I got there, Porsche had one leg swung over the railing.

“Porsche! What the hell are you doing?!” I yelled up at him. He let out a long-suffering sigh at having been caught. I knew he’d try something—would someone like Porsche ever obey orders?

“I don’t want to stay! Why are you locking me up here?!” Porsche shouted down at me angrily. The bodyguards and even our gardener started to gather around and gawk as if they thought Porsche was going to jump down.

“Porsche, I’m exhausted. Can’t you settle down for once?”

“That’s your problem! What’s it got to do with me?!”

What a brat. Once he got down, I was going to spank him.

“Porsche, I explained everything already!” I said with a serious expression on my face. “What else do you want me to do? Tell me, what do I have to do to put you at ease? I’ll do anything!” What would make him believe my sincerity? What would get us to understand each other? I was willing to do anything!



“Hah! Then let me go! And we’ll have nothing to do with each other ever again!” Porsche retorted.

“I won’t let you! You have to stay here with me!”

“Why are you so fucking difficult?!” Porsche shouted.

I pulled at my hair in frustration. “*You’re* being difficult, Porsche! I’m sorry! What do you want? Whatever it is, I’ll get it for you!”

“You’re only good with words! I told you I’d remember what you’ve done! You’ve hurt me so badly. How can we go back to what we were before?” He clearly didn’t care who was listening.

“Like how a shattered cup can’t put itself back together?” Khun shouted. *Why are you agreeing with him?!*

“Exactly!” Porsche shouted back.

“Buy a new cup, then! This time, no matter how expensive, you can take your pick. My brother’s willing to pay!” Khun said, throwing his arm around my shoulder as he puffed up with pride.

“Shut up, asshole!” Porsche gave Khun the middle finger.

“Don’t be a bitch, Porsche. I’m on your side!” Khun pouted, backing away and crossing his arms over his chest.

“Porsche!” I put my hands on my hips. “I’m begging you, get back inside. Now!”

“Why are you ordering me around? What are you, my *dad*?”

“No, but I’m your boyfriend!” I didn’t care about all the eyes on us anymore. Khun quickly tried to hide his smile, and the staff behind me tried to look busy. The entire house had to know by now, from the bodyguards to the maids—probably even my father. I’d made things pretty obvious.

“Kinn, you shithead! What are you talking about?! What the *fuck* are you talking about?!” Porsche threw a house slipper down into the gathered crowd, making them scramble to get out of the way.

“I thought you only destroyed things when you’re mad. I never knew you’d be so violent when you’re embarrassed,” I teased, smiling wide.

“Embarrassed, my ass! What are you all looking at? Don’t you have shit to do?!”

“Come back and live with me. I promise that I’ll treat you well! I won’t break your heart again,” I said, truly sincere. Porsche clambered up to stand on the railing itself, hands on his hips, clearly not afraid of falling.

“I’m not heartbroken! You’re full of yourself, Kinn! And even if you want me to come back to work for you, I won’t! I’m worth more than that!” Porsche glared at me stubbornly, refusing to back down.

“I don’t care how expensive your rates are, I’ll pay! I’ll pay millions! I don’t care how much! As long as you come back!” I yelled back, hearing faint hollering behind me.

“Quit this bullshit melodrama! Your words mean nothing!” Porsche cursed, but I could see his lips secretly twitching up for a second there. *All right, Kinn, fight for it! Hard-earned things are worth the effort! I’ll willingly embarrass myself in front of all my subordinates for Porsche!*

“Porsche, I’m *begging* you!”

“Fucking hell, why does it always end up like this?” Porsche grumbled, kicking the air in annoyance. My heart dropped to the soles of my feet, afraid that he’d fall.

So it came to this. It was time to bring out the big guns. I was hoping to save it for someplace more romantic, but this would have to do. Hopefully it would calm him down a little.

“You once asked me if I ever loved you… I’ll answer you now: I love you! I fucking love you! I love you, Porsche!”

Porsche froze, staring down at me in shock. I gave him a small smile. Was it embarrassing? Of course. Was it corny? Yes. But the situation called for it! And I dared to do it in front of so many people… Would my subordinates have any modicum of respect left for me?

“Woo! Get it!”

I could hear the teasing, but I didn’t dare to look back or meet anyone’s eyes. This was the first time I’d ever done anything like this. Porsche was right—it was melodramatic, but if acting like this would placate him, I was willing to make an ass of myself. Out of

the corner of my eye, I saw Tankhun slapping the wall in secondhand embarrassment.

“What the fuck are you saying?!” Porsche asked. He pursed his lips, but his eyes were shining. He quickly turned away and began another round of cussing me out.

“Stay here with me… Please,” I begged. *Damn it!* I was so embarrassed, I wanted the earth to open up and swallow me whole. At least my personal bodyguards weren’t here; otherwise I’d be the one who’d have to run away and join a monastery.

“I don’t want to be one of your dumbass bodyguards anymore! It’s stupid!”

The bodyguards behind me started grumbling at that remark.

“Okay, okay. If you don’t want to be a bodyguard, then you won’t be one. All right?”

“Just stop, Kinn. Why are you trying to force me? I don’t want to argue with you anymore. What do you want me here for, then, if I’m not going to be your bodyguard? Your *prisoner*? In your dreams!” Although Porsche’s tone was softening, he was still shouting at full volume. He sat down, dangling his legs from the railing.

“Then stay here as one of my sons,” came my father’s voice from behind me. The gathered crowd hurriedly parted for him and stood at attention.

“Father…” Khun and I greeted him as he came to a stop next to me. He looked up at Porsche, who immediately frowned.

Father looked around curiously at the scene unfolding in front of him. “What are you two playing at?”

Khun immediately grabbed Father’s arm and pointed up at Porsche, who was now glaring at Khun. “It’s…your son-in-law.He must want to audition for a Bollywood movie or something; he’s been doing this whole song and dance with Kinn here. There’s no end in sight.”

Father sighed. “All right, I’m beginning to understand. Porsche, I’m asking you to set aside your ego—your phi has already done this much for you. I heard your words just now. Come back and stay

here as part of the family. I promise we'll take good care of you and your brother."

Everyone looked at each other nervously at Father's words, including me and Tankhun.

"Father..." I called out, grateful. I could barely believe he'd accepted Porsche and me so easily. When I was with Tawan, my father had been resistant. He wanted nothing to do with him—he'd never intervene to help me stay with him. This must mean he approved of this relationship. It was a huge relief.

"Don't. I'm only accepting this because I've made my peace with your tastes. But both of you must behave properly—don't act so crass. Stay here, Porsche, and if Kinn does anything to make you uncomfortable, you can come to me. I'll deal with him myself."

I quickly walked over to massage my father's arms and shoulders. I realized how lucky I was to have him.

"Uh... Mr. Korn..." Porsche, who'd been quietly listening to us, looked uncomfortable and reluctant.

"You don't have to say anything else. Let's move along and prepare for dinner. And the rest of you—don't you have jobs you should be doing? Did I hire you to pry into my children's personal affairs? Go." With that, Father ambled away, gesturing for everyone else to leave.

"Porsche, get back inside," I said, waving my hand for him to get back into the bedroom.

"Motherfucker! You forced my hand!"

"My father already said so much on my behalf, Porsche. I'm begging you! Forgive me, please...please?" I was still playing the begging card, but at least Porsche's indignation was easing; his expression smoothed out into stillness.

"Fine, fine. I'll go back inside. But don't think this is over!" He pointed at me one last time and got down from the railing.

Khun came over to prod at my arm. "I think he's already forgiven you," he whispered. "He's just playing hard to get."

"Mm-hmm. I think so too," I whispered back.

"Shit! It's slippery!"

I was looking at Khun, so I didn't see Porsche as he got up to go back inside. The next thing I saw was Porsche falling through the air toward where I was standing. My arms instinctively came up to catch him, but…

Fuck! I missed. My hands flailed, catching nothing as Porsche fell onto Khun and they both tumbled to the ground. *Yikes!*

"Aaah! That hurts! Owwwww! Help me!" Khun started screeching almost instantly, sprawled in a heap on the floor.

"Kinn! Why didn't you catch me?!" Porsche pushed himself off of Tankhun and rolled away to sit next to him, rubbing his hip in pain.

"I couldn't catch you in time," I chuckled. Fuck, I felt sorry for Porsche, but this was funny. *That's what you get for being such a brat. As for Khun, well, karma's a bitch.*

Porsche whipped around to glare at me. "What are you laughing at?!"

I quickly went over to help support him.

"My bones!" Khun howled. "My bones are broken! Call for a doctor! Now! Doctor Top! Make sure it's Doctor Top, okay? Or else I won't get better! Hurry!"

Tankhun's guards ran over to support their boss, holding back their laughter. I got punched in the back for laughing at him before I joined in to help him up and followed him inside.

The atmosphere in the house was back to its usual liveliness. The chaos that had come along with Porsche since the day he came here—and every day since—brought color into our lives. I loved him. He was the light of my life, even if at times that light might be a little dim…or blazingly bright.

I wanted him in my life from this day forward. I wanted to hug him, to kiss him, to tease him.

I want him here by my side, forever and always.

Chapter 34:
Again

KINN

“Owwww... It hurts so much, Doctor!”

I glanced at Khun where he lay stretched out on the sofa in the middle of the foyer. He’d called Dr. Top, or whatever his name was, to make a house call to check on him.

I sat there holding an ice pack against Porsche’s hip. I snuck another glance at my brother—he said he was in pain, but his expression was so delighted that it made me sick.

“You’re fine, Mr. Tankhun,” the ridiculously handsome doctor said placidly. Behind his glasses, his eyes looked completely indifferent. “Just a bit of bruising. I’ll prescribe you some painkillers and cream for the bruise.”

Khun pushed himself up from the sofa and leaned in closer to the damned doctor. “I don’t have to get an X-ray? What if I broke a bone? What if I’m bleeding internally?!”

“There’s no need. Everything looks normal,” Dr. Top replied in a measured tone, packing his doctor’s bag without paying attention to his conversation partner.

“But I still feel dizzy—like I’m going to faint. I feel nauseous...” Tankhun covered his mouth with his hand and acted like he was going to puke. Porsche and I looked at each other, bewildered. What was this nutjob doing?!

“Then I’ll take your temperature,” said Dr. Top, rifling through his bag.

“Yes, yes, please do!” Tankhun giggled and reclined back onto the sofa, smiling wide. He looked far too cheerful. As this whole display went on, he only got crazier. Why did he want to be sick so badly?

“You should get the doc to check your brother’s brain,” Porsche whispered to me, and I nodded in agreement.

Beep! The doctor produced an infrared thermometer and aimed it at Khun’s forehead, then read out the number on the

display. Khun gasped as he pushed himself back up.

“Is that it?” Khun was clearly disappointed.

“Yes. 96.4. Your temperature is normal,” Dr. Top replied, packing the thermometer away.

“Oh! Oh! phi… Doctor…” Suddenly, Khun clutched the left side of his chest and doubled over. Porsche raised his brows at his actions.

“I think… My heart is fluttering weirdly, Doctor…like…

My heart flutters when I hear you,

Ever since that first day, I hear you in my dreams,

Once I see you, I want to greet you,

But I’m lost when I don’t meet you!”[27]

I froze in shock. *Holy. Shit. Don’t tell me Khun* likes *this guy. Does Father know? And once he knows, how will he react? Fuck!* I didn’t know whether to feel sorry for my ancestors or for this unlucky bastard of a doctor.

“Heh,” Porsche chuckled, arms crossed as he watched Khun’s antics. “I knew it… The family line ends here. All three sons of the Major Clan are gay. How sad.”

The doctor sighed before turning away from Tankhun and moving to face Porsche, who was half sitting, half leaning on the other end of the sofa. “Do you want me to check on you as well?” he asked.

“Uh…” Porsche began to smile lightly at that stupid handsome face, which smiled right back at him.

“No! Just get him some painkillers and cream for his bruises,” I answered for him, frowning. Porsche furrowed his brows at me in confusion.

“What if I sprained something?” Porsche asked quietly. I was even more irritated. *I saw you smile at him! You can’t resist the good-looking ones, can you? When did you learn to act like this?! This doctor is* too *handsome. I won’t let him touch you—I’m not stupid!*

“Don’t make a scene,” I gently chided Porsche.

“What’s your problem?” Porsche replied.

“Here’s Mr. Tankhun’s prescription. And these are for you.” The doctor passed the medication to Tankhun and then to Porsche, but I snatched it away first.

“What is wrong with you?” said Porsche, annoyed. “Should we get the doctor to check *you*, too?”

“If there’s nothing else, please excu—”

“You’re going back already? Won’t you stay for dinner?” Tankhun sprung straight up and cut off the doctor mid-sentence.

“Thank you, but I have a shift after this,” Dr. Top answered flatly.

Khun frowned. He looked around frantically, like he was scrambling for answers. He blurted out, “Chay, Chay… Oh! Doctor, my little brother is sick and resting in his room. Since you’re here, can you take a look at him as well?”

Khun quickly got up and latched onto the doctor’s arm. *Fuck!* I wanted to call our father to come and look at this and make sure he was shaken to the core. Even I didn’t want to believe what I was seeing. What would Father think?

“Speaking of which, where’s my brother?” Porsche turned to stare at me.

“All right…” Dr. Top looked at his watch and nodded at Khun’s request before carefully extracting himself from Khun’s grip. It looked like Khun was holding on with quite a lot of force. *Damn! You’re one unlucky doctor. Better go bathe in holy water sometime soon.*

“He’s in Kim’s room,” I told Porsche reluctantly. “We can go with them.” If Porsche knew that my brother and his brother were… Would he explode in rage or would this worsen his grudge against me? Argh! We hadn’t resolved the old problems, but new ones kept piling on!

Porsche went silent for a while, then hummed in easy agreement—no tantrum, no questions asked. It was surprising. *Well, that’s not like Porsche. Is he in so much pain that he can’t say anything?*

I carefully supported Porsche up the stairs, following after Khun and his stupid doctor. Khun—who mere seconds ago had

been wailing like he was dying—now easily skipped ahead of everyone else. I was pretty sure his “injury” was total bullshit.

After knocking on the door, we all stood there in front of Kim’s room. Soon, my brother appeared, half asleep with his hair sticking up messily. He’d clearly just dragged himself from his bed. *The house is in total uproar, and you didn’t hear anything? How can you still be asleep?!*

“What’s up?” he asked, blearily scratching his face.

“I brought the doctor to check on my beloved little brother. How is he?” Khun asked, craning his neck to look inside the completely dark room.

“Why? I already took him to the doct—”

Khun quickly shoved a hand over Kim’s mouth before he could finish his sentence.

“Poor Porchay. To be asleep so early in the day? He must be deathly ill! This way, Doctor.” Khun pushed Kim’s head out of the way, making him stumble. He marched inside like he owned the place, flicking on all the lights.

“Why the hell did you turn the lights on?!” Chay yelled as light flooded the room. Kim turned to me for an explanation as Khun rushed to sit down by the bed.

“Hey, don’t look at me,” I said, shrugging my shoulders. Kim rolled his eyes and disappeared into his bathroom.

I slowly guided Porsche to sit down next to Kim’s bed. Porsche was strangely quiet as he looked around the room; he’d never been in here before. It was quite different from my room and Khun’s—Kim’s was the only one without an attached office. He had a bed and a home cinema setup, plus his gaming computers. He didn’t want bookshelves or a desk, though, claiming that it gave him a headache and made him not want to wake up, so Father made it a normal bedroom.

“Chay, how are you feeling?” Khun cooed.

Chay squinted at him in surprise at the sudden coddling. “Wh-why are you all here?” He pushed himself up to sit on the bed, leaning against the headboard.

“Chay. How are you?” Porsche asked, looking him over.

“Hia… I’m fine.”

The two brothers nodded at each other. Porsche wasn’t particularly expressive, even in front of his little brother—they greeted each other simply with no dramatic displays of worry. And then there was my older brother, who was poking and prodding at Chay like a mother hen.

“Doctor, my little brother was attacked!” Tankhun turned to look at the doctor with shining eyes, like he was going to cry. “He was kidnapped and imprisoned for an entire day! Please take a look at him!”

“I went to the hospital alr—”

“Shh, don’t talk, Chay—your throat will hurt. Let the good doctor check on you. Trust me.” Khun scooted to the side so that damned doctor could sit down and examine Porchay.

Kim emerged from the bathroom with his face washed, crossing his arms.

“There’s no fever,” Dr. Top said. Chay still looked taken aback by the entire situation, but he let the doctor check him over regardless.

“Is it serious, Doctor?” Tankhun asked hopefully.

“He’s just fatigued,” the doctor answered as he put away his stethoscope. “He can drink some electrolytes. Otherwise, he’s completely fine.”

Khun sat down between Chay and the doctor. “Really? I saw him coughing. Could he have the flu?”

“When did I cough?” Chay looked baffled. *It’s not just you, kid. I’m confused, too.*

“You did.” Khun turned to Chay. “I heard you.”

“Me?” Chay pointed at himself and shook his head. “I didn’t cough.”

“You were coughing…because I said so!” Khun hissed under his breath, glaring at Chay and pinching his arm.

“What’s this all about, Kim?” Chay turned to look at an exasperated Kim.

“I don’t know. Just go along with it,” Kim answered, shrugging dismissively. He probably wanted this to be over with as quickly as

possible.

Chay went silent, almost contemplative. His eyes darted between Khun and the doctor, and a small smile appeared on his face.

“I’m coughing, right?” Chay turned to check with Khun.

“Aww… He doesn’t even know he’s sick,” Khun said, petting Chay’s hair.

“Fine,” Chay said, letting out a few fake coughs. “I have a cough, doctor, and my throat hurts.” Chay jerked forward and let out a loud, hacking cough before swaying toward the doctor. He let his head fall onto the doctor’s shoulder, eliciting a gasp from Khun.

Kim quickly pulled Chay back. “That’s too much.”

“I’m coughing, P’Khun. Was that okay?” Chay was a mischievous little shit. A perfect copy of Porsche, if a little softer and more cheerful.

“…You’ll pay for that,” Khun bit out, smiling stiffly at Chay. We all tried to hide our laughter, save for Porsche, who sat there scowling.

“I’ll give you an electrolyte mix and something for your cough. Just make sure to drink plenty of water and get enough rest.” The doctor set the items down next to the bed, then stood up.

Knock, knock.

P’Chan opened the door. “Sir wants me to remind you all that it is time for dinner.” We all nodded.

“Doctor, won’t you stay for dinner?” Khun still refused to give up.

“Another time. I’ll be late for my shift. Excuse me.” The doctor bowed his head and made a swift exit. Khun looked indignant as he stomped out, chasing after the doctor.

“Fucking hell… Father’s going to have a heart attack,” I cursed, shaking my head. Father had pinned his hopes on Khun continuing the family line, even to the point of asking his friends about their daughters, but would my brother give in that easily? The chances of Father getting grandkids in the future were dwindling close to zero.

“Porsche, come on,” I said. “Let’s go eat.” I helped Porsche up, and we went downstairs.

At first, Kim wasn’t going to eat, saying he’d rather sleep, but Chay was hungry—so in the end, we all gathered together for dinner. Father sat at the head of the table with Khun pouting moodily at his side. Kim ate without a care, while Porsche and Porchay sat there awkwardly, not daring to move an inch.

“I thought I was going to eat with the guards,” Chay whispered to Kim.

“Eat here. Go on, didn’t you say you were hungry?” Kim kept piling food onto Chay’s plate, but the poor kid still looked unsure.

I turned to Porsche, who was picking at his rice but not actually eating anything. “Why are you staring at your plate? Go on, eat.”

“I’m nervous,” Porsche whispered back.

“What are you nervous about? Just act like you usually do,” I said, adding food to his plate.

“Are you sure? That’d be rude of me,” Porsche said, glancing warily at my father.

“Oh, you’re aware?” I smiled, making Porsche elbow me in the ribs.

“There’s no need to bother with formalities here,” Father said smoothly. “From now on, you’ll eat with us every day. Think of this place as your home. I am a man of my word, Porsche and Porchay—the both of you will stay here as my sons. Do you understand?”

But Porsche only looked more uncomfortable. “It’s… Sir, that is, I…” Porsche was trying to say something, but Father cut him off.

“Call me Father. We’re family,” he said with a smile, looking between Porsche and me.

“Thank you, Father,” I said, giving him a wai in thanks for accepting us. “Porsche, don’t forget to thank him.”

“Thank you,” Porsche said, raising his hands in a wai, then turned to scold me quietly. “I haven’t agreed to staying here with you yet.”

I smiled, acting like I hadn't heard him. "Father, there's actually something I'd like to mention," I said, my voice solemn.

Father nodded. "Just tell me how you want me to handle it," he said. The guards must have informed him about what happened today.

"About Tawan..." I turned to Porsche, who'd gone still, and squeezed his hand. "I don't want his family to be involved with our business any longer." Although they'd already sold their shares, Tawan's family was still involved with the business, and I wanted to cut things off at the source so nothing this dire could happen again.

"Very well. I've already talked to Mr. Methi and informed him of his sons' conduct. He is sending both Tawan and Mek back to the U.K., and he promises they'll have nothing to do with our family in the future. Do the two of you have anything to add?"

"No, Father," I said.

"Mm," Father hummed in acknowledgement.

"One more thing... After dinner, I need to talk to you," I said. Father and I stared at each other. It was the matter of Big, Vegas, and the missing documents—we needed to handle it as soon as possible.

"Mm-hmm, let's focus on dinner first... Khun, what is going on with you?!"

We all turned to look at Khun. Father's expression morphed into confusion as Khun gripped his fork tightly in his fist and vengefully glared at his plate.

"*Won't back down, won't be beaten, I don't care who you are!*"[28] Khun burst into song without any warning. "If I can't have him, no one can! Remember that!" He slapped the table once and got up from his chair, storming away from the dining room in a huff.

"He's truly gone insane," Father said, watching in bewilderment as Khun hastily retreated.

"Heh." Porsche leaned over to whisper to me. "Tell your brother not to follow his dick or he'll get lost."

I nearly spat out my water as I laughed. Porsche was still Porsche, and his smart mouth was unmatched. Especially when he

said these things with a completely straight face. I loved him just the way he was.

After finishing dinner, Porsche and I retired to my room. He'd pecked at his food, so I wasn't sure if he was full or not. Would he get hungry late at night and take it out on me? I was being particularly careful around him right now, knowing that I hadn't yet made up for all of my mistakes.

When we got inside, I came up behind him and looped my arms around his waist. I rested my chin on his shoulder and asked, "Are you tired?"

"Don't change the subject," Porsche said as he elbowed me lightly.

"What do you mean, change the subject? I just missed you," I said, turning my head to look up at his sullen face.

"You keep saying that..." Porsche's voice still held a trace of irritation. I pulled away and grabbed hold of his shoulders, spinning him around to face me.

"Didn't you miss me?" I gently swept his hair from his face. Porsche wasn't acting as stubborn as before, but he still looked everywhere except at me, not daring to meet my gaze. He looked lost in thought. At length he let out a long sigh, but he didn't say anything.

"What are you thinking...? If you're thinking about leaving me again, I won't let you." I pressed my nose to his cheek, giving him another kiss. He just stood there, letting me plant kisses on both cheeks, one after another, until he grumbled in irritation.

"Enough! That's too much!" He lightly pushed me away. I reached out to muss up his hair fondly.

He looked pensive for a moment. "Kinn... I don't want to get hurt anymore," he said hesitantly, then pursed his lips and looked down at the floor. My heart dropped at the sight of him so despondent. The images of Porsche getting hurt because of me came rushing back to the forefront of my mind. I wanted to apologize to him a hundred more times—no, a thousand—to make up for how I'd wronged him.

“I promise I won’t do anything to hurt you anymore. I promise.” Right now, I only had my words to prove my sincerity, but hopefully the promise would help reassure him, at least a little bit. After this, I’d prove to him that I would never let him suffer like he had before.

“But what if you do…?” Porsche looked at me doubtfully.

“How? How would I hurt your feelings…?” I asked in response, combing my fingers through his hair. I had to ask because I wanted to answer him clearly. I wanted to eradicate every doubt he had. I was ready to be serious about love again.

Porsche went still for a while before he mumbled, “You…being with someone else.”

I smiled. “I’m serious about you, Porsche. I want you to be certain of how I feel.” I bent down to kiss his forehead.

Porsche stared at me silently.

“I’ll prove it to you—not just with my words, but with my actions. From now on, our love will start anew, and I’ll do my best for us,” I said solemnly, staring into his eyes. I wanted to convey to him that everything I said was true.

Porsche stood in thoughtful silence. I had to try harder—I had to make sure he could trust me.

“Porsche, everything I’ve said is true… Please give me another chance.” I held both his hands in mine and brought them to my cheeks. We stared at each other for a while until Porsche closed his eyes and slowly nodded.

“…Mm,” he hummed quietly, before he leaned in and kissed my lips. I froze in surprise.

Porsche quickly backed away. “You said it yourself,” he pointed out. I broke out into a wide smile and pulled him into a tight hug. His arms encircled my waist as he nuzzled his face into my shoulder.

“In the end, I’ve got to admit it—you have an effect on me.” Porsche was mumbling against my shoulder, but I heard and understood every word. We held each other even tighter. If I could, I’d hold him like this forever. He’d never slip through my fingers again.

“And another thing… I don’t like liars,” Porsche said, tilting his face to look at me. “You’re forbidden from lying to me.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. “You don’t like liars? You told me your name was Jom.” He broke away from me and punched my arm.

“That’s…because I had to! I’m going to shower,” he said, panicked, before he limped away to grab a towel and escaped into the bathroom.

“Can you shower by yourself?” I shouted to him. “Do you want me to help?”

“Fuck off!”

“Can I shower with you? Please…please let me shower with you.”

It sounded like Porsche chucked something at the bathroom door again. I could only smile. I swore that after this, I’d put us first. From this day on, I would strive to keep our relationship strong and steady. My life would be more colorful with Porsche in it—and it would come with a few more headaches—but I was happy to accept the chaos that came with loving him. As long as he was by my side… that was enough for me.

When Porsche finished showering, I laid out a pair of my pajamas for him. We agreed to go retrieve his belongings in the morning. He took his painkillers and got ready for bed.

I reclined on the bed, one arm pillowing Porsche’s head as I held him from behind. How long had it been since we last slept like this? Aching with how much I’d missed him, I covered his face in kisses.

Porsche fell asleep just like that. He must’ve been exhausted from everything that had happened today. I was, too, but I had one last obligation.

It was now 10:00 p.m. I could see that Porsche was fast asleep, so I carefully pulled my arm out from under him and got up from our bed as quietly as I could. I didn’t want Porsche to know about this; he was too closely involved. If this reached his ears, I was afraid he’d storm Vegas’s house and explode like a bomb. There was bound to be a bloodbath. I was going to wait for the right moment to tell him—he needed to be at ease first.

I made my way to Father's office. He was still working at his desk, even though he was already in his pajamas. I handed the documents and video over to him. As expected, when he saw the evidence, he was furious. He had P'Chan transfer all the information we could collect from my phone so we could analyze the damage done in more detail later.

"Father, what do you want to do next?" I asked, sipping at a cup of tea.

"Big is an easy problem to solve, but Vegas and Kant... They require more careful consideration."

"About Vegas and my uncle... We need to be careful—we can't let them know that we know. We'll wait for the right moment and catch them red-handed. Even with all of this evidence, the Minor Clan will find a way to pass the blame."

The Minor Clan was far too cunning. They probably had a way out planned already—no matter how incriminating our evidence looked on paper, we needed to catch them in the act.

"Mm. I agree. However, we need to make an example out of Big. There's certainly more of his ilk in this house—we need to dissuade them from following in his footsteps," Father said, his expression tense. The normally gentle light in his eyes faded away to reveal a more sinister side of him that I rarely saw.

Knock, knock.

Nont walked in, panting heavily.

"I have Big, sir," Nont said with a bow of his head. His face looked a little roughed up—probably from going up against Big.

"You take care of him first. I'll be there in five minutes," P'Chan said coldly. Nont bowed, then backed out and closed the door. P'Chan brought out his gun case, calmly wiping the pistol down and slowly loading bullets into the magazine.

"P'Chan. Let me talk to him first, before you...take care of things," I said. P'Chan nodded.

"Then go now," said Father. "I'll follow you."

Father and I walked out to the garden. The bodyguards were gathered in a circle around Big, who lay sprawled on the ground in

a pitiful state. It was plain to see that he'd tried to resist and got his ass kicked before they managed to drag him here.

As soon as Big saw me, he crawled toward me, his hands pawing at my leg. "Mr. Kinn… Mr. Kinn, please help me," he begged, slowly raising his bloodied, bruised face to look up at me.

"Don't touch him!" Pol shouted, lifting his leg to kick Big, but I lifted my hand.

"Mr. Kinn…I didn't…I didn't do it!" Big shook like a leaf, clutching tightly onto my leg and refusing to let go.

"Apart from you…who else knows about this?" I asked slowly, stressing each word. I knew he couldn't have done it alone. There must have been others involved in the house still—at least two, maybe even three.

"I…I didn't do it, Mr. Kinn. I didn't," he insisted.

"How could you do this…?" I stared down blankly as Big clung to me.

As expected, he hurriedly shook his head, denying everything and pleading for mercy. "Mr. Kinn, you've…misunderstood me… Please…give me a chance to explain."

"I trusted you… The things you've done to me, to my family? I can't forgive that." I stepped away from Big, but he crawled after me to hug my leg again. Damn it, the more I looked at him, the more I was reminded of Vegas and his backstabbing ways. I despised people who went behind my back—like they thought I was easy to fool. No matter how well Big had served me before, I was already suspicious of his actions. Whatever happened to him today, I wouldn't lose sleep over it.

"All of you, stand back!" Father ordered the bodyguards to move away from Big, probably because he saw P'Chan emerging from the house.

"Please don't… Mr. Kinn, please help me!" Big pushed himself up from the ground, looking fearfully between me and P'Chan as he pulled back the slider. "Mr. Kinn… I love you, Mr. Kinn. Please…" Big rambled on in his panic. His words grew muddled; they were the words of a man terrified for his life.

“Big…you know very well what happens to traitors in this house. Why did you do it?”

Big shook his head and looked around at his surroundings before hugging his knees and bowing his head. It seemed like he’d completely lost his mind.

“…I know…I know that I love Mr. Kinn more than *he* ever will,” Big spoke strangely. “There is no one else on Earth who loves Mr. Kinn more than me. Why does it have to be *him*?!”

“What are you talking about?” I asked him.

Big slowly lifted his head from his knees, eyes glazed over as he stared into the distance. “Mr. Kinn, Mr. Vegas…even Mr. Korn keeps paying attention to him! What has he got? What’s so damned great about Porsche?!”

I frowned. “Shut up, Big! Don’t you dare say his name! The things you’ve done to Porsche… You’re lucky I’m not killing you myself!”

“Hah! I can’t touch him, can I? You love him so much, huh? I should’ve been faster when you were drunk that night. If I were yours, you’d realize who the better man is—”

Thwack! A foot smashed into Big’s face. I whirled around to find its owner.

“Porsche!” I called out to him in surprise. How had he ended up here? But to hell with that, because now Porsche was pulling Big up by the collar and throwing punches. I had to move in and physically stop Porsche, hauling him away.

“What did you just say?!”

“Porsche, calm down.” *How many times have I said this today?*

“Fucking hell, I’ve had enough of him! Let me at him!” Porsche made to rush toward Big again. Arm and I had to quickly grab hold and restrain him.

“Porsche! Calm down!” I shouted.

“Motherfucker!” Porsche cursed loudly, shaking me away.

“So, it’s true, then, what Tankhun told me.” Porsche spun round to yell at me. “What did Big do to you? Talk!”

I took a deep breath and quickly placated him. “He didn’t do anything. Khun came in and saw him before he could. But please stop—you can be jealous later. Father’s here,” I whispered. Porsche froze when he finally noticed my father, who was watching us with his arms crossed over his chest. Porsche stared awkwardly, then turned back to me.

“Why didn’t you mention that earlier?” he scolded me softly.

“I didn’t have time to,” I said, pulling Porsche back.

“All right, all right,” Father cut in. “I’ll handle this. Kinn, take Porsche back into the house.”

I dragged the still-fuming Porsche back down the path to the house.

“How did you get here? I thought you were asleep.” I tightened my grip, holding him close.

“I noticed that you weren’t there,” he said. “I couldn’t find you, so I came down to look.”

I rubbed soothing circles into his arms, trying to calm him down.

“Motherfucker!” Porsche kicked at the gravel. “Fuck! I’ll be back to beat him up tomorrow! If your father wasn’t here, I’d have kicked him a few more times! How can he say he’s better than me? And what about *you*?! Did you really not know how he felt about you? Fuck!”

“Come on… I didn’t even think about him like that. No matter how good a man is, I don’t want him if he’s not you.” I tried to sweet-talk Porsche, hoping to soothe his temper.

“I’ll kick his ass tomorrow. I’m pissed just thinking about it. Don’t you dare stop me, or I’ll punch you instead!” Porsche jabbed a finger at me. I could only stay silent. Porsche probably didn’t know what was going to happen to Big.

He didn’t have to wait too long to find out, however, because as the both of us were about to walk up the stairs…

Bang!

The gunshot made Porsche jump, stopping him in his tracks. I closed my eyes, a little shaken as I thought of Big. He was gone

now, but he used to be a close confidant—he'd served me for a long time.

"Don't tell me..." Porsche turned to gape at me in shock. I knew what he was about to ask.

"Traitors to the Major Clan...this is their fate."

"But did you really have to *kill* him?" Porsche asked, looking perturbed. "Just beating him up to teach him a lesson... Shouldn't that be enough?" Porsche had been here for a while, but although he'd seen several shootouts, he'd never experienced death like this. Not this close.

"Things have gone too far for such a light punishment... Don't overthink it. Let's go upstairs."

"But what did Big do?"

I stilled at Porsche's question, then slowly began to explain. "He leaked the documents. There are other things, like colluding with our enemies to betray us, but let's forget about it for now—I'll tell you the details later. Let's go back to bed."

I guided Porsche back to our room, but he wouldn't stop asking questions about Big, from the missing documents to the identities of our enemies. I answered him with curt replies and got him to wash up and change again.

The things I needed to tell Porsche were sensitive matters, and no matter how curious he was right now, he was already stressed out and on edge, shocked by what happened tonight. So many things had happened today; I didn't want to burden him further with my own feelings on the subject, nor did I want to put more troubling thoughts in his head. It was enough for one day. That could be tomorrow's problem.

No matter what happened in the coming days, I promised to stand beside Porsche. I would deal with the people wishing us harm as quickly as I could...but now, I needed to rest.

As I waited for Porsche in the bathroom, I took off my clothes. I tried to remember something, but I couldn't for the life of me figure out what it was. My mind was all fogged up; it felt like I'd forgotten something important.

"Kinn... Kinn!"

I startled a little when Porsche came to a stop in front of me.

“Hey,” I replied.

“Are you okay?” Porsche picked up a fresh pajama top and shrugged it on.

“I don’t know. It’s like I’ve…forgotten something. But I don’t know what.”

“You’ve got a test next week. Did you forget to study?” Porsche asked as he collapsed onto the bed and pulled up the covers.

“Probably. I probably forgot about the test,” I said, throwing a towel over my shoulder.

“Hey! Tomorrow, you have to tell me about what happened with Big. I can’t believe he…” Porshe clearly couldn’t let the subject drop.

“Don’t overthink it… Go to sleep,” I told him.

Porsche still looked ill at ease. I didn’t know what else to say that would make him feel any better. In my family, betrayal was punishable by death. It was what we’d always done. Then again, it felt far too personal this time. Even I was shaken up—so how must Porsche have felt? No matter how much he hated Big, this punishment must have been far more severe than he’d expected.

I was getting frustrated, still unable to remember what I’d forgotten. It must have been something important, too, but I just couldn’t remember—like it was stuck somewhere in the back of my head and I couldn’t pry it out.

Something was missing. I just couldn’t quite put it together. What was it…?

Whatever. It could be nothing. I was so drained after everything that had happened today—I might just have been imagining things.

Forget it!

Side Story:
Vegas × Pete 3

VEGAS

"YOU AND MR. KANT need to help me, or else I'm taking you all down with me!"

As soon as Big stepped out of my room, my simmering annoyance with him boiled over into full-blown rage. Big had fucked up big time, sending information to whoever wanted it without a shred of forethought. It would be the fatal blow—the evidence they would use to implicate me for acting against Kinn and the Major Clan.

"Damn it!" I cursed. The more I thought about it, the more enraged I became. Just how stupid *was* Big?! Why did I have to keep dealing with these idiots who acted without considering the consequences? Tawan was the same; he rushed into things like a raving lunatic.

I took a swing at my desk, letting out my frustrations on the furniture. People kept making messes for me to clean up all day today—starting with Tawan, who managed to get his ass cornered and dragged me down with him. He let it slip that I was the one sending him Kinn's movements. I wouldn't deny that—I didn't want to keep lying to Porsche anymore—but no matter what I'd done, I would never hurt the man I loved.

Why did it have to be like this? All I could do was admit my guilt and try to explain everything to Porsche, even if he refused to hear any of it. I had to start all over with him. After this, I didn't know what else I could do to repair our relationship.

Damn it! I was surrounded by incompetent fools! I should've known that one day they'd bring trouble to my door. I knocked over whatever was near me, throwing shit onto the ground, not caring about the mess I was making. My mind raced with the multitude of issues I had to deal with; I barely knew where to start.

Which of my problems will Father give me hell for? Will I get caught by the Major Clan? Will I lose the man I love to all of this?

I wanted to stab myself, to inflict some kind of pain to remind me that I was just as useless as Father always said. Where would I be without my father? *Useless, stupid, always the loser.* I swept everything off the table to the floor, out of my sight, until my hand brushed against my computer. I paused; the heat emanating from the computer and into my palm brought me back to my senses. I hadn't turned on my computer at all today—why was it warm?

I took a deep breath, holding my hand up to my computer. I swept my gaze around the room, searching, checking my desk and my balcony. Something was off in here. The balcony door was still closed and locked. My documents were in the correct order, but they looked hastily arranged. Our housekeepers had been with us for a long time; they knew not to fuck with my documents.

I looked left and right, certain now that someone had been in here without my permission. If they were lucky, they'd have escaped by now. If not, they were still hiding somewhere in here. My eyes swept the room before they stopped on the glass door leading to my bedroom—it wasn't fully closed. I felt a smile slowly form on my face. My little intruder couldn't have made it far.

Hah! If you dare to enter the tiger's den, don't think you can escape so easily.

I opened my bedroom door to find two guards making their rounds outside. "Come clean this up," I ordered them. I wasn't being a neat freak at a time like this; I wanted to catch that pesky spy red-handed, and I needed my men at the ready if anything happened. I knew an enemy wouldn't come here unprepared. If they dared to trespass, they wouldn't be unarmed.

I put my hands in my pockets, casually looking around. I could've ordered my men to search the room, but I didn't want to cause alarm over something that could turn out to be nothing. I had a good feeling about this, though; my pulse quickened in excitement.

"Heh..." I came to a stop in front of my wardrobe. I was merely guessing, but there was no better hiding place in this room than here. I had a feeling I was right.

Slam! I opened the door—and smiled, satisfied by what I found. My instincts never steered me wrong.

“You’re good,” I said.

Pete had his gun aimed at my forehead, his face a perfect portrait of fear. I didn’t wait for him to pull the trigger. I swatted at his hand to redirect the gun before I slammed into him, knocking him down.

“Mr. Vegas!” Pete shouted as he sprang up, still clutching his gun. He delivered a swift kick to my stomach. My men ran over to help, grabbing Pete’s neck and dragging him out from my wardrobe. They grappled and kicked at him, but Pete wouldn’t relent. He fought back, grabbing whatever he could and lobbing it at my men. They drove him into the center of the room, leaving chaos in their wake. All three men traded punches, neither side backing down—however, Pete still had his pistol. He took aim again, but I dove into the fray to stop him. I punched him in the face so hard that he swayed and lost his balance, then kicked his wrist, making him loosen his grip. The gun went flying.

“You’re good, Pete, to make it all the way here!” I remarked, bending down to pick up the gun on the floor. I examined it from the barrel to the grip.

But no matter how talented Pete was, he was outnumbered. He lay sprawled on the floor, but my men hauled him back up to pummel him with fists and elbows until blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

“Don’t tell me your boss ordered you to tail me all the way here,” I said evenly. I shifted my gaze from the gun to stare at the bruised and battered Pete. I had to admit that this guy had balls. He’d put up a good fight. In fact, my men looked just as wrecked as he did—the numbers were simply in our favor.

“Mr. Vegas! How could you do this?!” Pete shouted, holding his arms up in an attempt to block the blows from my men.

“Mr. Vegas, I found his phone and earpiece!” one of my guards shouted, tossing them to me. Pete launched himself at me, trying to grab his phone, but my guards held him back.

If I had to guess, Pete probably had all the evidence stored on his phone already. I don’t know what he’d managed to get his hands on or if he’d taken a video of Big when he was in here with me, but his phone battery was dead, so there was no way to find out. If he

did take any videos, he'd probably already sent them all to Kinn—especially considering the office was in clear view of my wardrobe.

I needed to call Big and caution him. But the minute I tapped at my phone, Pete kicked out, wrenching himself from my men's hold and staggering over to snatch my phone from my hands.

"What are you doing?!" he yelled.

"Pete!" I shouted as we struggled for the phone.

I found an opening to smash his face with the butt of his gun, making him crumple to the floor. "You're a loyal dog, I'll give you that!" I hissed through gritted teeth as I stepped on his chest, pinning him to the ground.

"Mr. Vegas! Please stop this! Fuck, what did Mr. Kinn ever do to you?!" Pete's face was scrunched up in pain. His brow was split open, blood streaming down into his eyes, but he still had the gall to yell back at me. This family's guards were impressive. Not only were they skilled in combat, their tongues were sharp.

One of my men opened the door to shout outside, "Who's around here?! Come up and help!" His hand clutched his stomach and his face contorted in pain as he called for backup to deal with the rabid dog upstairs.

I wasn't surprised that Pete had gotten in here so easily or that only two of my own guards were around to chase Pete down, because my father had taken all our best men with him to the casino today. It left the house quieter and our security more lax than usual.

"What's so great about Kinn? His men are so loyal... Even his old flame is obsessed with him. Isn't he the lucky one?" I muttered, pressing my foot down onto Pete's chest until he started to asphyxiate.

"Let...g-go of me...Mr. Vegas!" Pete used both hands to try to push me off, but his efforts were futile. I smirked, staring at his face twisted in agony.

Pete gathered the last of his strength to punch the bend of my knee. My leg buckled and I lost my balance, and Pete hurriedly scrambled up to grab a small decorative vase, swinging it at my head.

Crash!

“Mr. Vegas!” my men shouted.

I shook my head, trying to chase away the dizziness. The vase wasn’t heavy, but he’d swung it with enough force to crack my head open. Blood seeped from the cut and dripped down my left temple. It didn’t sting, but I was disoriented for a moment.

I raised my hand to touch my face and stared at the sticky, bright red blood on my fingers. Fury surged within me; I glanced over to see that Pete was now held in place by both of my bodyguards. They had his arms in a lock behind his back, but he was still kicking at the air. Three more guards rushed in to help—they should subdue him soon enough.

“Let go of me!” Even totally surrounded, Pete refused to give up. They’d beaten him half to death, but he just wouldn’t admit defeat—truly a tenacious man.

“Mr. Vegas, we should get you looked at,” one of the guards said, helping me up. The iron tang of blood filled my senses. I closed my eyes, my rage surging.

“Out of my way!” I barked, striding over to Pete. I kneed him in the groin as my men held him up by the arms.

“*Oof,*” Pete gasped out, slowly crumpling to the floor, his expression twisting in agony.

“I warned you before, didn’t I? I told you not to let Kinn lead you, or else he’d lead you to your death!” I grabbed Pete’s hair and yanked his head back, forcing him to look at me.

“Why are you doing this…?” Pete rasped. He was in quite a sorry state. I smirked and squatted down in front of him.

“You’re one tough son of a bitch. What did Kinn feed you to make you keep fighting like this?”

Pete squinted at me, his eyes flashing with stubbornness. “You’re as fucked up as they say you are.”

“Keep barking while you still can. A dog like you will do whatever your master orders, is that it?” I tightened my grip on his hair, running my eyes up and down his battered body.

“Hah… At least Mr. Kinn doesn’t backstab—he’s nowhere near as fucked in the head as you are!”

I hauled Pete back to his feet. “Shut up!” I snapped, letting go of his hair and slapping him across the face. “What did you send to Kinn?!” I grasped Pete’s chin with one hand, turning his face toward mine and squeezing.

“…Sooner or later, karma’s gonna catch up to you!” Pete growled, his eyes as hard as steel.

I fucking love his refusal to submit. How long can he keep this up?

“You’d better tell that to the Major Clan! What they’ve done to us—can they even remember it all?! Tell them I’m the spirit of vengeance, here to collect what is rightfully mine!” I snarled, glaring at the man in front of me.

“What has Mr. Kinn ever done to you?!” Pete stared back at me, defiant as ever. I didn’t know where he got this daring attitude of his. Even though he was cornered, he still protected his master to the very end.

“Someone like Kinn… He’s pathetic,” I said. “Just breathing the same air as him is sickening enough.”

“You’re the one obsessed with revenge and competing with Mr. Kinn!” said Pete, looking at me with contempt. “Is it because you know you can’t compare to him that you’re like this? You’ve failed at everything—you’ve even failed Porsche.”

I closed my eyes to gather my thoughts before I lifted my palm and struck his face again. He stumbled, about to collapse onto the floor, but my men held him up, not letting him out of their grip.

“Don’t you fucking dare, Pete! Tell me—what did you send to Kinn?!” I roared. My men hurriedly looked away.

“You must bear a multitude of sins if you can’t pick which one you think I’ve sent to my boss,” Pete answered. He was bleeding from his mouth, dried blood intermixing with wet.

“…Do you *want* me to kill you?!” I took a deep breath, wiping at my face. It was getting harder and harder to keep myself under control.

“Then kill me now! Go on! I’m not going to survive this anyway,” Pete said, lifting his head up to survey the room, which

was now filled to the brim with my men.

"So you're aware. Good! Don't worry, you'll die like you so clearly desire!" I shoved him before walking to my computer to check the usage history.

"Ah... You knew the password, too... Watch him," I said. One of my guards held a gun to Pete's head, a warning for him to stay still. He glared at me.

I went through the usage history, frustrated that he'd found the most important documents. I'd need a good excuse when I spoke with my father later. But these were older documents—hopefully, Pete hadn't found the latest client records.

The longer I looked, the more I wanted to shoot Pete dead where he stood. I kept at it until I saw a certain folder. My heart skipped a beat—but then I smirked. I hadn't expected him to open this folder as well. I tried to stay levelheaded, even if I was fuming inside. If he sent these to Kinn, at least there'd be something for me to feel good about.

I reached over to grab a cigarette from my drawer and lit it, sinking into my chair and swinging both feet up onto my desk. White smoke escaped my lips, calming me down somewhat.

I pushed away the thoughts of our business troubles. No matter how worried I was about getting berated by Father, I knew he could take care of it. We'd have to kill Big before the Major Clan could get to him, just in case he let slip something he shouldn't. I stared at the smoke drifting through the air and tried to tell myself that there was always a way out, even if I couldn't see it yet.

As the nicotine entered my body, I began to relax. I buried the stress deep down inside, because in this shitstorm of a day, there was at least one thing worth celebrating: Kinn must be frothing at the mouth by now. "Which video do you think Kinn enjoyed the most?" I asked.

Pete didn't reply. I turned the screen toward him, shamelessly opening up one of the videos, but he turned away, refusing to look. My men all bent their heads, not daring to watch.

"Do you think Kinn is dead from rage by now?" I asked, letting out a laugh.

Pete was actually quite useful. He must've sent the most explicit videos to Kinn, at least. Just thinking about it filled me with glee. I was lucky that someone had volunteered himself to send these to Kinn—I didn't have to plan out how to reveal them to him anymore. Since we'd all but declared ourselves enemies, there was no need to hide.

"Pervert," Pete muttered.

I smiled widely, lighting another cigarette. "What about you, Pete? Which is your favorite?" I asked, flicking ash into the ashtray.

"Hah... All of them are shit. Waste of a good education, acting like a degenerate," Pete muttered without looking at me. To tell the truth, his appeal grew by the minute. Especially when he was huffy like this—it excited me.

"Watch your mouth—unless you want something stuffing it," I remarked, pointing at his face.

"Urgh. I'd rather let the maggots eat me right now," he muttered, so quietly I nearly missed it.

Whatever! I turned the screen back, reminiscing. But then a thought dawned on me—fucking Kinn's boytoys to mess with him was one thing, but what if I deflowered one of his trusted men...? Kinn had practically delivered him to my door; it would be a shame to pass up the opportunity. I stubbed out my cigarette and approached the restrained Pete.

"Your boss really knows my preferences," I said.

Pete turned to glare at me. "What are you dragging this out for? Will you just kill me already?"

"Oh...how brave. If you want to beg for your life, there's still time!" I reached out to grab his neck and slowly applied pressure. Pete's eyes flickered, but he kept feigning indifference.

"Hah! I'd rather beg to a dog. That'd be more honorable," Pete spat, brazenly staring into my eyes. I knew he was scared, but he refused to show it. Someone like him wouldn't bow down to anyone that easily. Why did I love that haughty, prideful gaze of his? Just looking at him made my heart race in anticipation.

"Heh! I like it when they're feisty." I kneed him in the groin again. This time, he sank to the floor, biting his lip hard. It was clear

his energy was flagging.

“Let go of him,” I ordered my men to back away from Pete, letting him curl up on the floor. “All of you can go.”

They looked at each other nervously, confused. “Should I take him outside to be shot?” one of them asked.

“No. Get out! Leave him here.” I rested my hands on my hips, staring delightedly at Pete’s slowly writhing form.

“But he’s going to…”

“I said get out!” I snapped, making the bodyguards jump and scramble for the door.

“Oh, and call Big to tell him to be careful,” I ordered the last guard as he stepped out. “Pete knows everything now.”

I slowly knelt next to Pete. “Hey, you… Do you know how cute you are when you’re in pain?” I had to admit that Pete had aroused my interest. His body, his face—everything about him was captivating.

“Y-you won’t get away with it… Mr. Kinn…will end you,” Pete bit out.

“Kinn this, Kinn that… What’s so great about him? Why does everyone keep singing his praises?”

“You can’t even compare to him…”

“Heh… Really? Wanna test that out?”

Pete’s words had pierced straight through my heart. More than anything, I hated being compared to Kinn. It fueled my rage to new heights. I seized the collar of Pete’s shirt and dragged his limp, wiry body into the bedroom, tossing him onto the bed.

“*Oof*… Shit,” he cursed, curling up on himself.

My rage had been building all day. I needed a way to let off steam, and if it was with smart-mouthed Pete, so be it. He’d been provoking my ire with his arrogance. It made me want to see him beg for his life. I wanted to punish him for his loyalty to his master.

I want everyone involved with Kinn and the Major Clan to bow to me, to let them know the taste of failure.

Anyone who defends Kinn will suffer.

I'll make sure of it…beginning with his trusted bodyguard here. How long will he keep defending his master?

"Wh…What are you doing?" Pete whispered hoarsely, narrowing his eyes at me in fear.

"Making you beg me for your life," I replied.

Pete flailed around weakly. I straightened up and took off my belt. I gathered his hands, pulling them up above his head, and tied them securely to the bedpost with the leather.

"Let go… V-Vegas!" Pete began to struggle, but in his weakened state, he couldn't escape.

"You're really something! But you haven't given me an answer yet. Which video did you like the most?" I asked, leering at him. I wanted to swallow him whole.

"Let…let me go!"

I slowly took off his blazer and unbuttoned his shirt, revealing sculpted muscles. The more I looked, the more pleased I became. I took a deep breath and placed my palm on his torso, slowly stroking all over. *Look what he's been hiding under his clothes. He's exactly my type.*

"What did you say? That I can't compare to Kinn…? I'll tell you now, I'm leagues beyond him—just wait and see." I smiled, bending down and pressing my lips to his strong abs. I licked and bit at him, tasting the sweat on his skin.

"You shithead! What are you doing?! Let me go!" Pete trembled as goosebumps formed all over his body. I stroked along his arm and slid my hand over to squeeze his chest.

"Not calling me 'Mr. Vegas' anymore?" I taunted him. "Forget it…this suits the mood better." I bent back down to sink my teeth into his stomach, making him tense up.

"I-I don't… Let go… Don't." Pete shook from side to side, his thick eyebrows furrowing. He threw his head back as he tried his hardest to resist.

"But I want to," I said, pulling away and moving to unbutton his pants. It took quite some effort—Pete swung his legs around to stop me. One of his kicks caught me in the chest. "Pete!" I snapped,

stumbling back. I pushed myself back up and straddled him this time, making sure he was subdued.

Smack! I slapped him hard, a faint red mark blooming on his cheek.

“If you do this…I…I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you!” Pete whipped his head back to glare at me, his voice hard and his eyes burning with fury.

“Go on,” I said, using the opportunity to rid him of his pants and underwear in one swift movement. “I like them feisty.”

“Vegas… Fuck you!” Pete shouted curses at me. I could only smile and stare smugly at his dick. Of course, Pete wasn’t in the mood, but I was, and that was all that mattered.

“You’re not so bad yourself,” I remarked, shifting to kneel between his legs, forcing his knees up in the air.

“No… No… Vegas, let me go,” Pete’s voice shook as he squirmed, trying to escape.

“Stay still!” I hissed, gripping his legs tightly.

“Let me go, you bastard! You’re lower than scum!” Pete tried to struggle away, snapping his legs back together. I was starting to sweat from the exertion. *How do you still have all this energy?*

“Pete, cut it the fuck out!” I growled, clenching my hands into fists and punching his groin. He went still, his struggling movements slowing as he squeezed his eyes shut in pain. He couldn’t curl up even if he wanted to. I forced his knees back up again, undoing my pants and pushing them down to my knees. I didn’t know why, but when it came to rough sex, I barely needed any foreplay. My cock filled up easily. I gave myself a few lazy strokes, twisting around to grab condoms and lube. I spread Pete’s legs wider. He still thrashed around, but he was getting tired.

“What’s this tattoo of yours say?” I asked in a low voice, staring at him. “‘No legacy is so rich as honesty’? Such a badass, huh?” I smiled, my fingers circling his hole.

“Let go… Let me go,” Pete whispered weakly. I slowly and carefully inserted one finger, but he still tensed up in pain. Just one knuckle and Pete was biting his lip and writhing.

“That hurts…”

“Shut your mouth, or I’ll really make you squirm!”

I removed my finger. I hastily tore open the condom wrapper and rolled it on, then spread lube onto my hot length. I stroked myself unhurriedly, positioning myself right at his entrance. I pushed in without giving Pete time to adjust—no prep, no kindness, no foreplay. I wanted him to suffer.

“Ugh… That hurts! D-don’t!” Pete cried, throwing his head back. He tried to find purchase with his bound hands, clutching at the bedpost so tightly that the veins in his hands bulged out. I smirked, knowing that no one had ever fucked this tight hole. I was barely halfway inside of him, but I could feel his ass tearing.

“Ah… *Sss*… So good!” I moaned, adjusting my grip on his hip. I lifted his ass off the bed to make it easier for me to penetrate him. I looked up at his face, watching as he bit his lip hard. Sweat beaded on his body and he trembled uncontrollably.

“Don’t… Don’t do this…please,” Pete begged, his face all scrunched up.

“Didn’t you say you weren’t going to beg…? Are you going to now?” I asked, pushing in further. I was met with significant resistance. I had to furrow my brows in concentration as I tried to go in deeper. Pete dug his feet into the bed, his whole body tensing, shaking his head and shouting at me to stop.

“H-hurts… I can’t,” Pete frantically sobbed in his torment. I held my breath, enduring the crushing pressure. I forced myself inside until I was balls deep—there would be no mercy here. I knew perfectly well how important it was to take things slow the first time you fucked someone, but for one of Kinn’s men? I wanted it to hurt.

“Ngh! Bastard… Fuck!” Pete cursed, his words slurring.

“*Ahh*… So good…”

Pete felt amazing. So warm, so tight. His walls clenched tightly around me; I could feel my breath stuttering from how good it was. I was close.

“Let…let me go… Please, Vegas,” Pete brokenly gasped out.

I began to move my hips, setting a slow, shallow rhythm, afraid it would end too soon—especially when I stared at Pete’s

sharp features, his eyes closed in pain. I had to be careful not to lose myself to the pleasure.

Pete had strong features: long lashes, an upturned nose, cupid's-bow lips. He wasn't exactly pale, but his skin was smooth and delicate. I reached out to stroke his body in fascination before picking up the pace.

"Hah… Don't squeeze me so tightly," I groaned in overwhelming need.

I fucked Pete hard and fast, aiming for the spot inside of him that made him shudder and convulse with every thrust. Although his cock wasn't hard, I could see him starting to respond.

"Vegas… L-let me go… I…hate you!" Spiteful eyes squinted at me, tears beginning to form. It didn't make me pity him at all—it only turned me on. I pounded faster until Pete swayed with the force of it. I shoved my face into his muscular chest, breathing him in and biting his skin, leaving teeth marks all over.

I licked along his tattoo—his mark of fealty. I wanted to laugh. Someone like Pete was meant to be a loyal little dog. *Look at him now—crying and whimpering just like one.*

"*Mmm*… Damn, I'm close." I moved inside of him without resistance now. Pete gasped for breath, not arguing with me anymore. I bit and sucked at his nipples, alternating between both sides of his chest. The more I inhaled the scent of his body, the harder it was for me to stop.

"Enough… *Ugh…!* Please…Vegas, *please*," Pete whined, making muffled sounds.

"Please what? *Ahh*…"

"Let…let me go…fuck, please," Pete pleaded, pursing his lips. His previously stubborn gaze was softening, now, his eyes full of fear.

"Heh. You're finally begging me now. Good! Just like that… Ahh… I'm close," I said, pleasure coursing through my body. I was no longer thinking about all of today's headaches. Just staring at Pete made my heart pound with excitement. His muscles, his face… Seeing him submit to me while knowing he was straight… I fucking loved it.

“Let…*ngh*…let me go, you bastard!” Pete continued to curse at me. I smiled, rolling my hips.

“Beg me to stop… *Mmm*,” I bargained with him. Every time he pursed his lips or showed a shred of pain in his expression, I fucked him harder.

“Vegas, please…I’m begging you…please,” Pete begged, his voice soft and trembling, staring at me with pleading eyes. This was exactly what I’d wanted all along.

But was I going to stop? Never.

“Ah… So good. Just like that.” I bit my lip, pleasure coursing through me.

“Bastard! It hurts…ugh…”

I sped up as I felt my orgasm approaching, lifting my head up from his chest and looking down at where my cock was sliding in and out of his body. Finally, I let go, whiting out with pleasure; my muscles tensed and relaxed as I panted heavily. It was like I was releasing all the troubles in my mind.

Pete went still, his eyes closed and his chest heaving. Maybe he fainted—I couldn’t tell.

I pulled out; unsurprisingly, there was blood, dripping hot and red onto my sheets. I tore off the condom and tossed it into the wastebasket as I watched Pete’s unmoving form. *If I’d known you were so exciting, I wouldn’t have let you escape my clutches for so long.* What would Kinn think when he learned that his best guard was forced to submit to me? If I couldn’t have his lover, then at least I could have one of his right-hand men.

The mere thought of it delighted me.

Side Story:
Vegas × Pete 4

PETE

PAIN SHOT UP MY SPINE, and an agonizing ache seeped through every part of my body. Just one little movement, and it was like my body was ripping apart piece by piece.

I slowly opened my eyes from my nightmare, my blurry vision adjusting to what little light filtered through the thick black curtains. I tried to piece together what had happened, and images came flooding back to taunt me.

Please don't let it be real. Let it just be a nightmare…please.

Memories flashed through my head: breaking into this house, getting caught, fighting off Minor Clan lackeys, and how I…

There was one person whose face haunted me. Remembering was torture. I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth at the sharp sting coming from my ass and the dull ache of my naked body. I tried to reach out to pull myself upright, but I couldn't—my arms were tied with a leather belt. I felt the muscles of my arms aching and cramping. I tried to jerk my arms to free my hands from their binding, but it was no use. I was running out of strength, and I was so bruised that I almost couldn't bear it…

"You're awake?" asked a familiar voice, making me jump in fear. I looked to see Vegas slowly walking inside.

"Let me go, Vegas," I rasped. I tried to project my voice, but my throat was dry and sore.

"You're a morning person, huh, Pete?" Vegas remarked, entering the room with a water pitcher. He poured some into a glass, smiling lightly, then turned to me with a calculating expression. His eyes practically sparkled with glee. My apprehension grew as he stared at me.

I used my feet as leverage to push myself up, since my hands were still bound. I wanted to cover up somehow, to do anything to make myself feel safer.

“Here, have some water first.” Vegas raised the glass to my mouth.

I immediately shook my head. “No!” Even making a sound was painful, but no matter how thirsty I was, I would never accept anything from this man.

“Hah… You’re about to die. Why keep up the tough-guy act?” Vegas asked, smirking. I didn’t even want to turn around to look at him. I didn’t want to think about those disgusting things ever again. Seeing his face was pure torture.

“Drink!” Vegas exclaimed, chuckling. He squeezed my chin, forcing my face toward him as he raised the glass to my mouth.

“I won’t! *Mmph!*” I tried to shake my head, but I couldn’t escape his hold. He tipped the glass, heedlessly pouring water into my mouth.

I spluttered and coughed, water flooding my mouth and nose. Tears pricked my eyes as I choked.

“Heh… You really don’t like doing things the easy way, do you? You’re lucky I even brought you water,” Vegas said, setting the empty glass next to the bed.

I coughed again. “I didn’t ask for it! Let me go—or kill me!” I tried to twist my arms, hoping to loosen the belt.

“Hah! You get fucked once and you want to die already? Doesn’t matter…you’ll get used to it,” Vegas said, like this was all a big joke to him. He casually sat down on the edge of the bed.

I wanted to kill him. I wanted to shoot him or stab him; anything would do, as long as he was dead. I wouldn’t share this world with him. I refused. Either him or me—one of us had to die.

I wouldn’t speak, either.

“Do you know, Pete, how tempting your eyes are when you’re acting this stubborn?” Vegas asked, shuffling closer. I backed away until my bound arms kept me from retreating any further.

“I hate you!” I yelled, my voice shaking, fear and disgust filling my heart. No matter how brave I tried to act, I’d never felt so helpless.

“I’m not expecting you to love me, Pete,” Vegas drawled, smirking. “I’m doing this for my own satisfaction.”

I glanced at him before turning my face away. He was a total psycho. Just breathing the same air as him made me sick.

“If Kinn knew that I’ve ruined his trusted bodyguard, how do you think he’d feel?” Vegas asked mockingly.

“…You’re a coward,” I whispered.

“What did you say?” Vegas grabbed my face, forcing me to look at him again.

“I said you’re a *coward*!” I repeated, spitting the words into his face.

“…Pete! You—!” Vegas made to slap me, but I leaned toward his hand, shouting as loud as I could:

“Go on! Slap me! Or you can beat me to death! Someone like you will always lose! You’re only good at scheming behind Mr. Kinn’s back, because in front of him, you know you’d never win. That’s why you’re always trying to stab him in the back. If you’re proud of yourself like this—lying to yourself that you’re better than him—then you can keep on doing it!”

I stopped to pant angrily, staring at Vegas’s face as his eyes flashed dangerously. I could tell he was about to erupt in rage. Although my heart trembled with fear, I didn’t care. Even if he did end up killing me, I was fine with it, because I couldn’t live with myself like this.

“And another thing,” I went on, “if you think doing that shit to me will make Mr. Kinn feel anything? You’re wrong! I’m not that important to him. But, well…you really must really be out of options, huh? You’ve got no more tricks. You can only be a loser!”

Smack! His palm struck my cheek hard enough to make my head turn. Dazed from the impact, I felt my cheek go numb for a moment before I tasted the metallic tang of blood filling my mouth.

“Pete, do you *want* to die?!” Vegas yanked my hair, forcing my head up.

“Go on! Kill me! Kill me now! But you have to make sure I’m really dead—because if you leave me alive, I’m going to kill you with

my bare hands!" I glared fiercely at him. *If I die, I die. I don't care anymore.*

"Why do you keep asking for death?! Don't worry, Pete, you'll die. I'll make sure it's slow and painful!" Vegas let go of my hair before getting up on his knees, looming over me.

"What are you doing?!" I shouted.

Vegas pulled down his sweatpants and underwear. I looked up warily, my heart racing in horror. Last night's events came rushing back; the helplessness, the disgust—it was repulsive. This monster—I'd never forgive him! Not in this life...

"So mouthy," Vegas said. "Let's put that mouth to the test."

Understanding dawned on me. I struggled, using all my strength to pull my wrists against the belt until they were rubbed raw. I didn't care about my injuries right now—I wasn't going to let him humiliate me again.

"No, you bastard! No!" I kept trying to yank my hands loose; blood began to drip down my arms.

Vegas looked on with a gleeful smile. "Oh, you're scared? Someone like you knows how to be scared? Heh..." He yanked my hair again. I winced in pain. This was hurting both my body and my heart—"hurt" was really the only word for it. I was terrified of what he was doing to me. Even in the face of death, I'd never been this scared.

"Vegas... No... Don't do this! Let me go!" I babbled in fear. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Vegas stroking himself, his erection slowly growing.

"What? Where's the fearless Pete from before? What is this timid little thing in his place?" Vegas asked, smiling smugly at me.

"...You can beat me up, shoot me, kill me—do whatever you want. Just don't do this!" I pleaded, my voice trembling. I never thought I'd end up like this, with my pride trampled and crushed under Vegas's heel.

"Heh... I told you already that I'm gonna kill you, but you have to suffer first... Oh, and I'm not doing this just to get back at Kinn. I know you're not that important. Even when you die, I doubt he'll be

sad. You're just one of his stupid, loyal dogs… And now, you're *my* chew toy!"

I didn't care about his degrading words. They didn't affect me. Right now, I was only focused on how I could escape his horrific actions.

"…Let me go!" As I struggled, Vegas grabbed my jaw and squeezed, his other hand positioning his dick near my mouth. I shut my eyes and tried to keep my lips tightly sealed, but he managed to pry my jaw open.

"If you bite my cock, I'll crush yours," he cautioned.

The instant he put it in my mouth, I nearly gagged in disgust. It was so vile and revolting that I wanted to spit it out, but his other hand slid to my dick and squeezed—insurance that I wouldn't bite his off, no matter how much I wanted to. I could only take it and endure the most shameful experience of my life.

"…Ugh!" I kept my eyes shut. I couldn't face myself right now. Vegas's hand fisted in my hair, moving my head however he wanted.

"Ahh… Mmm," Vegas groaned. I hated hearing him moan; it was a reminder of the humiliating act I was being forced to perform.

The thing in my mouth moved in and out slowly, and I tasted bitter liquid on my tongue. I winced and gagged, but Vegas held onto my head and kept rocking into my throat.

"Hah… Do you have a fever or something? Your mouth is so hot," Vegas said, hissing in pleasure. I refused to open my eyes—I didn't want to see what kind of smug look he had on his face. I only knew that if I didn't die first, he would!

I was disgusted with myself for letting Vegas violate me like this. A sheen of sweat covered my body, and the veins in my temple throbbed in my rage.

"Ugh!" I jolted and tensed up when Vegas's hand began to stroke me. I refused to feel anything or give in to this foul act.

"Suck me off," Vegas demanded with a moan, thrusting his hips faster.

"…*Ack!*" I choked as Vegas shoved all the way inside and stayed there before thrusting shallowly. His dick hit the back of my throat,

making me gag. I retched against the intrusion.

Vegas just giggled. “Heh… Ah, I like that. Suck me… *Mmm*… Do it!”

I opened my eyes and glared daggers at him, but I had to squeeze them shut again when his thumb circled the tip of my cock. I could only make whining noises in protest.

“Mmm… Mmph…”

“…Shit… *Ah*… Suck me off! Or else I’ll fuck you,” he threatened me. I gave in out of fear, hesitantly sucking on his length.

I felt the corners of my eyes getting damp, tears sliding down my face involuntarily. It wasn’t because I was weak or a coward—I just couldn’t live with myself like this. The burning desire for revenge flared in my heart, nearly driving me mad.

“Just like that… *Ahh*… Mmm… So good.” Vegas gripped my hair harder as he thrusted with abandon, not giving me even a second to breathe. Every time he drove in, his rigid dick slammed into the back of my throat.

“Ugh…”

Vegas sped up, rolling his hips and jerking my head up and down until I was winded from the force of it. His hand kept toying with my cock even though it was soft. To my horror, every time he flicked at the head, I had a slight reaction.

“*Ahh*… So good! Suck harder…”

My mind was hazy from lack of air, so I did as he said. There was nothing else to lose by fighting him; I just wanted it to be over.

“Mmph… Ugh…”

“Mmm… Ohh, Pete… So you *do* know how to be obedient. Good boy,” Vegas crooned, but it didn’t make me feel anything at all. I kept sucking at the pace Vegas forced on me.

“*Ack!*” My chest tightened with agony. I had nothing left. I didn’t even feel human anymore. I was broken; my body and my mind were utterly destroyed.

Vegas hissed in pleasure. “So sexy.”

I didn’t even dare to open my eyes to look around me. I was at my limit. I felt Vegas let go of my dick and brace himself against the

headboard instead, slamming inside faster and faster.

"Mmm... I'm close!"

Vegas stiffened, and thick fluid burst into my mouth. A metallic smell flooded my senses, and the salty, bitter taste made me retch. As soon as Vegas pulled his cock out, I convulsed, and the thick fluid in my mouth spewed out with my vomit.

"Really, you had to throw up? Surely it can't taste *that* bad." Vegas twisted away to grab some tissues, cleaning himself up and pulling his pants back on. He stood up and walked away to grab something from a drawer.

I coughed and gagged, goosebumps forming all over my body as I gasped for breath. My head swam, and I felt so dazed and muddled that I could barely stay conscious.

Click! Vegas snapped something onto my wrist before he loosened the belt and pulled it off.

"You can go wash up. You've still got last night's blood on you —along with everything else," he said.

I pulled my arm toward me, barely able to lift it with how much it ached. Vegas let go of my right hand, but my left wrist was chained up with a large padlock on the end.

I tugged on the chain, testing it. I couldn't pull my wrist out— I'd need the key. The chain he'd bound me with was long and heavy.

"I'll tie you up with the belt when you sleep," he told me. "But when I'm out, I'll put the long chain on you."

I whipped around to glare at him. "I'm not a dog!"

"But you are! I said you were a dog, so you are. Heh... Are you going to the bathroom or not?" Vegas pointed to the bathroom, looking smug.

I bit my lip hard and turned away from him.

"Or..." Vegas bent down to whisper in my ear. "Do you want *me* to take you there...?"

I shoved him away as hard as I could. I gingerly pushed myself up from the bed and made my way to the bathroom.

I'd thought it was bad when I was sitting on the bed, but as soon as my feet touched the floor, an indescribable pain shot up my

legs and spread to every part of my body. My legs shook. I was so weak that I could barely find my balance.

I tried to brace myself against the wall and whatever furniture I could reach until I finally dragged myself to the bathroom, seething at the sound of Vegas's laughter echoing after me. I didn't want to die anymore—I wanted to live so I could have my revenge on that bastard!

"You can't fully close the door. It's stuck on the chain. Don't be shy, Pete—I've already seen it all!" Vegas shouted as I tried to close the bathroom door.

Damn it!

I turned on the shower and stood there, letting the warm spray wash away the filth from my body. I braced myself with both hands on the wall and tried not to sink down to the floor. At least I had this time to be alone. Hopefully I could figure out a plan to get the hell out of here.

What was I going to do now?

I used one hand to scrub at my skin, but just the touch of my fingers made my body throb in pain. It hurt so much. I didn't even know where to focus first.

However, nothing was more bruised than my heart. I'd never been so thoroughly humiliated. Vegas treated me like I wasn't even human. I swore that after this, I'd haunt him like a vengeful spirit.

I stood there for a long time as the water washed over me, thinking of ways to escape. Right now, I was locked up and chained, and the other end of the chain was attached to the bedpost. If I could move the bed and get to the balcony, would I be able to cry for help? *Fuck! This is* his *house, Pete—who's going to help you here? Argh!*

The more I thought about it, the more my head hurt. I was completely at a loss, unable to see a way out of this. This was hell on earth. What bad karma had I committed to be subjected to this torment?

Bang! The bathroom door slammed open against the wall. I jumped in fright, my thoughts flying out the window as I focused on

the figure leaning casually against the doorframe with his arms crossed.

"I thought you slipped and hit your head," Vegas said evenly, but his eyes were sly. I hated his face. I wasn't someone who hated easily, but this bastard? I hated him to the core.

"Why did you come in here?!" I backed up, plastering myself against the bathroom tile instinctively.

"I came to check on you. Don't even try to think about offing yourself in my bathroom. I'll tell you now—even if you become a ghost, I'll keep you right here."

I took a deep breath and looked away from him. *Bastard! Wait until I'm recovered—I'll beat you to death! Just you wait!*

I panicked when I saw Vegas taking off his clothes, leaving them strewn on the floor. "What are you doing?!" I shouted.

"Showering," Vegas remarked flatly as he walked straight toward me.

"*I'm* showering! Can't you wait outside?!" I shouted, scrambling for a way to escape. *Motherfucker! What is he trying to do?*

"I'm showering with you. What are you going to do about it?" Vegas pressed against me and placed both hands on the shower wall, caging me in.

"Vegas, you bastard! Let me go!" I yelled and tried to push him away, lifting a foot to kick him, but it was useless. Just holding myself upright was a challenge—how was I supposed to fight Vegas off in this state?

"I think you've got a fever," he said, spinning me around to face the wall. "Let me check your temperature." He caught my flailing hands and tied them up with the shower hose.

"Let go of me!" The more I resisted, the faster I ran out of energy; Vegas had clearly anticipated this.

Vegas pushed me down by my hip. I punched the wall with my bound hands as I tried to buck him off. When I saw him rip open another condom wrapper and toss it to the floor, my heart jolted with dread. Vegas wasted no time, immediately forcing himself into my ass.

“Ugh… That hurts! It *hurts*!” Although I thrashed and fought like hell, I couldn’t break free from this scumbag’s hold. The searing pain made my knees give out, but Vegas held me up with both hands.

I couldn’t even describe the pain. It was like my body was being ripped apart and my pride as a man was trampled upon. It was like getting stabbed relentlessly, over and over again, until I went numb. Vegas didn’t say anything else; all I could hear was the groaning that escaped from his lips.

When he began to thrust, the fire inside me blazed until it threatened to consume me. I never thought getting fucked by a man would be such torture. How did other people put up with this? It hurt so fucking bad.

Vegas was like a demon, so insatiable that I feared he might eat me alive. He moaned louder and my mind went hazy; I was so dizzy that I couldn’t hold onto my tenuous grip on consciousness.

“Mmm, Pete… Don’t you dare die on me… *Ahhh*.”

I could barely make out his words. It felt like I was hearing his voice from far away. My legs trembled with the effort to stay upright, and after a while, I couldn’t bear the pain of my injuries any longer. My mind went blank as I slipped into nothingness.

“Pete! Pete! Damn it… Can’t you hold on?!”

***

I was on my back, resting against something soft. Something was covering my body. In my mind, I was seeing my childhood home out on the islands, feeling pleasantly warm.

The warmth was coming from my grandma. The moment I saw her, I leapt toward her. I was weary and yearning for the safety of her arms, away from the pain and suffering. A cool ocean breeze brushed my face, a soothing reminder that I was no longer in danger.

I had grown up with my grandparents. My mother passed away when I was very young, and my father left with his new family.

All my life, I only had my grandparents, who raised me with love and care.

"Grandma… I'm so tired," I mumbled into her embrace. Her warm hand gently patted my hair as I burrowed into the loving hug.

Grandma didn't say anything. I let my tears of pain and weakness flow, staining her shirt. Ever since I was a kid, I'd never let my grandparents see me cry—I didn't want to burden them. But right now, I couldn't hold my tears back. I hugged my grandma tight for a long time, until she slowly faded away.

I blearily opened my eyes. My head felt so heavy, like it was weighed down by a stone. When I could focus on my surroundings again, my heart dropped into my stomach—I was still in hell.

I was lying on Vegas's ridiculously huge bed, made up with fresh, clean sheets. I was wearing long pajama pants and no shirt, with a duvet covering my body. But most importantly, my left hand was still chained up.

I sighed, feeling a hollowness in my chest. It was just a dream… It was such a good dream that I didn't want to wake up. Not when I had to face this crushing reality.

The room was empty, with not even a shadow of Vegas to be found. I checked the clock and saw that it was 11:00 a.m.—a new day. A bit of light shone through the black curtains, but the room was mainly lit by the orange glow of the overhead light by the headboard.

I slowly pushed myself up. The pain hadn't gone anywhere. Every part of me still throbbed terribly, the most painful place of all being my backside.

I sat up against the headboard, only to find something stuck to my forehead. *A fever-cooling sheet?* I peeled the gel patch off. It was completely dried up. *I must've had a fever last night and… Vegas put it on me?* Someone like him never had good intentions. He was probably afraid I'd die too soon and ruin his fun. He really must've crawled out of hell.

I looked around. There was rice soup and Tylenol neatly arranged by the bedside. The light fragrance wafting from the bowl

was making me hungry, reminding me that I hadn't eaten for an entire day. Maybe I should starve myself to death.

But still, last night's dream had let me see Grandma's face, and that was reason enough to keep on living. If anything happened to me, who would look after her? My grandparents only had me. I'd eat, if only to get my strength back up to fight that bastard.

I picked up the bowl of rice soup, my eyes darting around for a way to escape. I noticed that several things were missing from the room: the vase, the decorative lamp, even the desk and chair near the balcony. Vegas must've ordered his people to take them away, worried I'd bash his head in again. There was no hope for sharp objects like knives or scissors, or anything I could use to pry the lock open, either. He wouldn't be dumb enough to leave those where I could find them.

I ate and drank my fill, then took the medicine he left me. *All right—let's see who's the tougher man.* I'd patiently wait for the day I could exact my revenge. I would remember everything he did to me and get my payback in full.

It's you or me, Vegas!

I got up from the bed, forcing myself to walk through the pain and search the room for something I could use as a weapon or anything that could help cut this chain off of me, but it was just as I'd expected. Vegas had stripped the room bare, only leaving the bed, the wardrobe, and the dressing table, which only held his cologne and skincare items.

"He's too fucking paranoid!" I cursed in frustration. Should I yell for help? I opened my mouth to shout, but my throat was so raw that I couldn't get a single word out—I coughed miserably. *Damn it! Just how stupid am I? Even if I shout my lungs out, who's gonna come to help me? This is Vegas's house! Focus, Pete!*

I sighed and shook away my idiotic thoughts, going back to searching the room. I couldn't just sit around and mope about how I… *Fuck it!* When I escaped from this place, I'd go make merit at nine temples. But as I was bustling about next to the bed…

Crash!

I startled at the noise. I was jumpy and paranoid about every little thing; my whole body was uncontrollably nervous. I walked toward the door but couldn't quite reach it before the chain stopped me. I strained my ears, trying to listen to the commotion outside.

"I knew it! I knew you'd fuck this up! You're useless! I shouldn't have trusted you with this job in the first place!"

That was Mr. Kant's voice echoing through the house—I knew it well. He couldn't have been here in Vegas's room. They must have been outside. He must've been incredibly angry to shout so loudly that I could hear it from here.

"What do you want me to do?! It already happened!" Vegas's voice cut in. I frowned, trying to make sense of the conversation.

"I can't even find the right words to scold you! In the end, you're just fucking useless! One simple job and you've completely botched it!"

Crash!

The shouting was matched by the sounds of objects being thrown around and smashed. I could guess that this was about the evidence I'd sent to Mr. Kinn, but I was a little surprised—I thought Mr. Kant loved Vegas and Mr. Macau to death. What was going on?

"Mr. Kant, please calm down," someone said. "Hold him back!"

"If I can't do anything right in your eyes, why don't you stop calling me your son?!"

"Mr. Vegas, please, that's enough…"

"Do you think I *want* you as my son? It's a good thing your mother decided to off herself instead of living to see her son keep returning home empty-handed, you useless faggot!"

"If I were Mother, I'd choose to die too! If I knew this was going to be my life, I wouldn't want to stick around either!"

"Vegas!"

"Mr. Kant, please! Take him away—what are you all standing around for?!"

"What did your mother even feed you for both of her sons to grow up to be such failures?!"

“This has nothing to do with Macau! If you want someone to blame, then blame me! And when you say you don’t want me as your son, is it because that new whore of yours is pregnant? What will you do then—are you gonna disown us?!”

“Don’t you dare speak to me like that, Vegas! You two would be nothing without me!”

“Hah! Remember to raise that kid well! If it’s a boy, don’t let him follow in my footsteps. If it’s a girl, don’t let her be a whore like her mother!”

“Vegas!”

“Mr. Vegas, please, that’s enough. We’re going upstairs!”

The shouting match continued until the office door finally opened, revealing a pair of guards dragging Vegas. He was still screaming back at his father. I sprang into action, quickly flinging myself onto the bed while I thought about what to do next.

Fuck! Should I pretend to be asleep? Should I just sit here on the bed like an idiot?

I peered through the glass and watched as Vegas stood there silently before he abruptly swept everything off the table in his rage. Vegas was terrifying when he got angry—his eyes were like Yama’s, ready to annihilate everyone around him.[29]

I hurriedly pulled the duvet over my head and pretended to be asleep. After a while, Vegas threw the door open and stormed in. I silently prayed that he wouldn’t take out his wrath on me.

“Damn it!” Vegas cursed.

I didn’t know what expression he was making; I didn’t dare to meet his eyes. Vegas grabbed something, quickly changed into casual clothes, then stomped away.

I heaved a sigh of relief as Vegas slung his bag over his shoulder and disappeared from the room. Fuck! I was going to have a nervous breakdown. What was this shit?! Just being imprisoned here was bad enough, but now I had to survive Vegas’s batshit moods, too. *Shit, shit, shit!*

I’m stressed out! I’m exhausted! I’m fucking desperate!

Mr. Kinn! When are you going to come help me? I've been stuck here for days! When will you send someone to come and deal with this crazy motherfucker?!

Argh!

Chapter 35:
Porsche's Day

PORSCHE

I SAT THERE tapping away at a game on my phone after getting through a whole day of grueling exams. *Fuck this shit!*

The test questions asked about things I'd never even heard of, like I was supposed to learn a completely new topic. Had I even taken this class? I couldn't remember. My mind was as empty as a clear sky, with no answers to be found. So I figured, fuck it, and decided to use this time to sleep. At least I was left with a healthy glow from plenty of rest—isn't that great?

"You're done early." Kinn's voice couldn't pull me away from my phone screen. I nodded in acknowledgment and continued playing my game—I'd been sitting here waiting for him under his college building for more than ten minutes.

Kinn sat beside me, and his friends gathered around my table. He leaned over to poke my cheek with his finger.

"Mm." I shook my face, shrugging him off.

"Damn! You've got a probation officer now?" Time teased with a smirk. I ignored him and kept tapping at my phone. I didn't really want to sit here and wait, but a certain asshole must've been feeling lonely. *He forced me to—he's a tyrant!*

"If you want to go out with someone from our group, you have to keep an eye on him," said Tay, with a pointed glance at Time, who looked away like he didn't know what Tay was talking about. "He might be slippery, even when you keep a close watch."

"Hah. After this, where are we going to celebrate?" Mew asked.

Tay looked at him in disbelief. "I'm surprised. Someone like you wants to go out?"

I glanced over at Mew, who'd taken off his glasses to massage the bridge of his nose before he looked back down at his own game. "Exam week was stressful as hell. I've been pulling all-nighters all week. Of course I want to let loose."

“You bastard!” Time joked. “Not sleeping for a week? Are we really in the same major? I didn’t even know where to start studying!”

“Look at your score and then look at Mew’s,” said Tay. “You were playing DotA with Kinn last night.”

“Even when he’s gaming with you, Kinn’s scores are on par with mine,” Mew teased. “Kinn, how many subjects are you planning on acing this time?”

“If I get the top score for every subject…is there a prize?” Kinn trailed off, turning to me and leaning in close.

I hurriedly pushed him away. “Yeah, your prize is a swift kick in the ass,” I said, kicking his leg lightly, then turned my attention back to the game in front of me. It was a good thing I was on a winning streak, otherwise I’d be raging at him.

“What? I’ve been losing sleep for days, and you don’t have anything for me?” Kinn pouted, gazing at me with his chin on his hands.

“You lost sleep because you were gaming, asshole! Don’t even start,” I said, twisting away. Kinn was making me lose focus on my game.



“But I was gaming with *you*!” Kinn reached over to ruffle my hair, but I dodged him, scowling. This asshole really liked to bother me when I played video games, even when he knew I was trying to focus. If I lost, he was going to get an earful.

But Kinn didn’t give up. He leaned over to whisper in my ear, “Do you want to bet like last night…? If you lose, we’ll go one round.”

“Shithead!” I grumbled. My hands were occupied, so I nudged him away with my leg.

“Yeah? Let’s see, last night… One… Two…” Kinn began to count on his fingers. I was this close from quitting my glorious duty as a Warrior[30] to punch him in the head, but all I could do was growl Kinn’s name in warning as I glared at him from the corner of my eye.

“Ah, fine, fine, I won’t tease you anymore. Come here.” Kinn pulled my arm so that I was sitting flush against him. I huffed and went back to playing.

“Damn, you’ve lost your touch, my friend,” muttered Time. “What a waste. He’s a mafioso and he’s afraid…”

“…Afraid of the ball and chain!” Tay finished for him, poking at Kinn. Kinn swatted his hand away and sat up straight.

“*Ahem*… So where are we going after this?” Kinn quickly changed the subject, making his friends tease him even more ruthlessly. I glared at them, which made them back down somewhat.

“You’re changing the subject… All right, all right. I’ll stop out of respect,” said Time, looking at me warily.

“So where are we going?” said Tay. “The rooftop? Or my hotel’s bar?”

“Too basic!” Time cut in, making Tay frown at him. “I want to go to Madam Yok’s… That night was wild.”

“Sounds good,” said Mew. “Let’s switch things up.”

“Uh-huh,” Tay agreed. “Yeah, their music *is* good. So let’s go! Porsche, come with us! Invite N’Tem and Jom, too.”

Everyone else nodded along with him. I gave him a cursory nod, and then an unfamiliar voice piped up: “I couldn’t help but

overhear—who's going to celebrate where?"

The entire table turned to look at the newcomer. Luckily, I was still waiting to respawn, so I had a chance to look up, too. But as soon as I saw the sweet-looking face of the guy brazenly standing there with his hands on the table, I narrowed my eyes in suspicion.

"Oh… N'Pheem," I said. "Hello."

Everyone else looked nervous. I felt the corner of my mouth lifting; I remembered this one very well.

"Where are you going, phi?" he asked brightly. I looked back down at my game casually, acting completely unconcerned. I wanted to know how Kinn would react to this.

"Er…"

The previously chatty table suddenly went silent.

"I have a suggestion… After finals are over, I'm hosting a party at my condo. Do you guys want to come?"

I glanced at Pheem and then at Kinn, who sat there sporting his best poker face. *Oh, he's good at keeping his cool. This guy is one of Kinn's old boytoys who I used to drive around—of course I remember.*

In the end, it was Tay who broke the silence. "Ah…we were thinking of going somewhere more chill."

"Aww, what a shame. P'Kinn…?"

I saw Kinn gulp, acting confused and staring at Pheem blankly.

"My dad just bought me a new condo," Pheem continued. "If P'Kinn is interested…"

"Fucking hell!" I cried out, my eyes glued to my phone. All eyes turned to look at me in a panic.

"Behind you! Can't you see he's right there?!" I yelled again, pretending to be angry at my phone, as if I had no idea what was happening next to me.

"Uh… P'Kinn, won't you come? We don't even have to wait until after finals week. I can move the party for you… When are you free?"

"Hey! This bitch is fucking annoying! Why are you still shooting? I'll kick your ass!" I swore, glowering at my phone. "You're at the base and you're still shooting?"

“Uh… So, when are you free, P’Kinn?”

“Motherfucker! And this idiot is frozen stiff! Stiff as a fucking board!” I made sure to emphasize each word, glaring harder at my phone. “This Mage is fucking useless,” I muttered.

“Ha ha… That game must be intense… Anyway, P’Kinn?” Pheem plopped down on Kinn’s other side, grabbing onto his arm. “If you’re interested…”

Pheem leaned in and whispered something in Kinn’s ear that I couldn’t quite make out. Kinn still sat there with his back ramrod straight, but he wasn’t exactly shaking Pheem away, either. I was starting to lose my patience.

“Oh! Oh! Still not smart enough to figure it out?! You can start picking out your grave!” I shouted at the top of my voice.

Finally, Kinn had to blurt out, “That’s enough! I won’t go; please let go of me—or else my base will really collapse!” Kinn hurriedly pried Pheem’s hand off of him.

“What are you talking about, P’Kinn?” Pheem asked. “I don’t understand…”

“Thank you for inviting me, but it wouldn’t be convenient for me.”

“Then what day would be convenient for you?”

“None of them.”

“But why…? Before…”

Kinn cut in quickly before Pheem could bring up the past. “Think of it as sparing my life…please.”

I let out a long sigh as I finished up my game—I ended up ranking as MVP, of course. I set my phone down on the table and turned to look at Kinn and his old boytoy.

“P’Kinn… Why?”

“Just tell him your boyfriend is too scary. I’ve got goosebumps just sitting here,” Time said, rubbing his arms.

“P’Kinn…?”

“How long are you gonna keep calling his name? You’ll keel over with just one slap,” I said, staring at Pheem, who refused to meet my gaze. He quickly stood up.

“Isn’t your game finished?” Kinn asked me. *Don’t think I can’t see that your back is covered in sweat, Kinn.*

“I’m still raging. You got a problem with that?” I asked.

“No…”

“I’ll get going. Goodbye, phi.” Pheem looked at me nervously and made a quick wai before scampering off.

Clap, clap, clap! Tay stood up and applauded me, looking at me in admiration. “That’s how you do it! That’s how you handle them! I’m impressed, Porsche. You’re my idol now. One day, I’m going to have you teach me some of your tricks.”

I shrugged. “I was just playing my game. I didn’t do anything.”

“Oh, so you’re just cursing at the people in your game?” Kinn threw an arm over my shoulder, pulling me into a loose hug.

“Mm-hmm.” I stared at Kinn. “Cunt!”

Kinn raised an eyebrow. “You’re…still cursing at the people in your game, right?”

“I’m cursing at you!” I groused, and Kinn smiled and lightly tapped my nose.

“Ba-dum-tss!” Time slapped the table, cackling. Fucking hell, were these business majors or a bunch of failed comedians?

Kinn waited for his photocopies from Mew before we all split up to go home. As we drove home, Kinn asked about my tests, so I enthusiastically told him everything—not the stuff on the paper, but the dreams I had in the exam room.

“It was so realistic. I was walking in the woods, and I had a gun! Then I started shooting!”

“So you were asleep?”

“Uh-huh.”

Kinn sighed. My face immediately scrunched up.

“When was I gonna find the time to study? You were always encouraging me to do dumb shit with you.” I bit my lip. “And you… kept me up at night. Of course I’m sleepy.” If Kinn had let me have some time to myself, my grades might turn out somewhat sufficient. The way things stood now, I’d consider myself lucky if I didn’t fail!

“Fucking traffic,” Kinn softly cursed. Afternoon rush hour always came with traffic jams. I’d offered to take us home on my bike, but he didn’t believe me when I said traffic was gonna suck—so now we were stuck here.

I reclined my seat and lay back, closing my eyes as the cool air from the AC breezed across my face. Kinn’s warm hand played with my hair. It felt so nice, so comfortable, that I fell asleep in record time. *Have fun driving, Kinn! Good night!*

***

“We’re here? Why didn’t you wake me up?” I asked, yawning and stretching. The sky was indigo blue as dusk began to fall; it was the perfect time to sleep. I was thinking of going up to our room to sleep some more, but Kinn was still sitting in the car, both hands clutching the steering wheel. He was staring off into the distance at the bodyguards walking around.

Kinn had been zoning out like this a lot the past few days. I didn’t know if something had happened. Maybe he had something on his mind. Whenever I asked him about it, though, I always got the same answer.

“Kinn! Kinn! What’s wrong?” I asked, shaking him.

Kinn sighed. “It’s like I’ve forgotten something.” He glanced at me, then went back to staring into the distance.

“Forgotten what?” I prodded. His behavior was beginning to annoy me. He was clearly dwelling on something, but no matter how much I asked, he still said the same thing, the bastard. How could someone be this forgetful?

Kinn continued to sigh. I crossed my arms as I observed his baffling behavior.

“...Why?! What did you forget? Or better yet, *who* can’t you forget?” I grimaced, disgruntled. He’d been acting like this so often that I was starting to wonder if he really was thinking of another man.

Kinn sighed again. “Don’t be like that, Porsche... That’s not what it is. I just...”

“Don’t think that just because I agreed to stay here with you, you can hurt my feelings whenever you want! I have people on my side now. If you hurt me again, I’ll get Pete, Arm, and Pol to beat your ass! Just you wait!”

“Shit!” Kinn blurted out, swearing loudly. I was only running my mouth—well, actually, I *was* a little mad at him, so my mind did go there. When I finished speaking, Kinn’s eyes widened.

“What’s wrong with you?” I asked, alarmed at his sudden cursing.

“*Pete!* I remember now! Fucking *Pete*!” Kinn was in a frenzy, totally panicked. I’d never seen him like this before. He rummaged around for his phone as I looked on, confused.

“What about Pete? Wait—I haven’t seen him for a few days now. Kinn! Where’s Pete?” I hardened my voice and stared at him.

“Damn it, there’s been so many things going on around here. You, all that shit with Tawan, then it was finals week…” Kinn pulled out his phone and hurriedly scrolled through his contacts. “I really didn’t mean to forget!”

Knock, knock.

Someone rapping on the car window stopped Kinn in his tracks. He rolled down the window, and Tankhun’s voice floated in.

An overly excitable Tankhun poked his head into the car, beaming. “Heyyy, you two!” he crooned. “What are you two doing in the car? Ooh! A change of scenery?”

“What do you want?” Kinn twisted to avoid Tankhun, his back bumping into my shoulder.

“Hah. Where are you two going? Bring me along.” Tankhun let out a long sigh.

“Bring you where, Tankhun? We just came back,” I answered flatly. Since the day I cussed him out, I couldn’t go back to calling him “sir” anymore.

“Aww, really? I’ll die of loneliness… All my guards have gone home for their leave… It’ll be next week by the time they get back! I’m so lonely!” Tankhun threw both his arms over the car window’s edge and propped his chin on his hands.

“What?! What about Pe—” Kinn tried to ask, but Khun interrupted him.

“Each and every one of them! Left me all alone in this cold, cruel world! And when they take their leave, they all go at the same time!”

“Including P—”

“Yes! Everyone! All gone home! Damn it! Kim had Nont come stay with me, but he’s no fun. He doesn’t react to anything I say!”

“By ‘all the bodyguards,’ you’re including P—”

“Yeah, yeah… So if you’re going anywhere, remember to bring me along, okay?”

Having finished his rant, Khun peeled himself off the window and stomped back into the house. I was frustrated for Kinn. He couldn’t even finish one sentence without Khun butting in. He clearly just wanted to vent at us and leave, the bastard.

“Hah… Well, I’m relieved I figured out what I forgot. Fucking *Pete*! He’s been through a lot, so he probably went home to rest and recuperate.” Kinn leaned back onto his seat, closing his eyes.

“Pete’s my friend! How can you forget an entire person?” I grumbled. *The thing you couldn’t remember for so many days was my friend? Unbelievable.* I’d been thinking this house was quieter than usual. At first, I’d thought Father had gotten rid of all the bodyguards involved with Big, but no shit—my friends were gone!

“It’s an oversight on my part. It’s because sometimes Pete is with Khun, and sometimes he’s with me. Always coming and going —even I get confused.”

“How can you work him so hard? He’s a person, not a dog!”

“He’s probably happily back home by now. But damn, he really should’ve told me he was going on leave. Running away as soon as the job’s done… At least he told Khun.” Kinn tilted his head and looked up at me through his lashes before reaching over to brush his hand against my cheek. I swatted him away.

“How can you be sure that Pete’s already gone home?” I asked.

“He probably finished the job and went straight home. There’s…probably nothing to worry about. But you’re right. I’ll call

him to check," Kinn said, finding Pete's name in his contacts. He put it on speaker so I could listen in, too.

"We're sorry. The number you are trying to reach is unavailable. Please try again."

Kinn pointed at his phone. "See? He's definitely back home."

"Bastard! There's no signal! Don't bullshit me," I said.

"Pete's family live on an island," Kinn said confidently. "Every time he goes back home, there's no cell signal. This is normal."

I let out the breath I was holding. With how hard Kinn was working Pete, he was probably exhausted to the point of collapsing. At least he was relaxing at home now.

"Fine, fine," I relented. "If you say so."

"Come on, let's go in."

I followed Kinn inside. I felt a lot more at ease now that there was no one constantly staring me down. Big's sympathizers had been dealt with—some had resigned, and others had fled for their lives. I felt sorry for them. They probably had their reasons, whether desperation or greed. Although Kinn tried to comfort me every time one of them died, I wasn't *that* cold-blooded. Fuck, if I ever made a mistake one day, would it cost *me* my life? Being in the mafia was no fucking joke!

After dinner, I went to the bathroom to clean up. I showered until I finally felt relaxed, trying to focus so I could get back to studying for finals. As I brushed my teeth, I texted with Tem and Jom.

Jom Jukkrit: When will finals be over???

Jom's status perfectly described his frustration, but I knew that no matter how stressed he was by finals, he'd be calling me up in a while to play games anyway.

[Comments:]

Tem Taran: Just a bit longer! We'll get through this together!

Jom Jukkrit: Fuck off! I’m going to study

Tem Taran: Thoughts and prayers

Jom Jukkrit: I’m going to get drunk as a skunk

Tem Taran: I feel sorry for the skunk

Porsche Pachara: +1

Jom Jukkrit: Fuck off! Where are we going? I need something to get me through finals.

Tem Taran: Sounds good. It’ll be Porsche’s birthday, too. Let’s go to Madam Yok’s

Jom Jukkrit: Deal

Porsche Pachara: Were you gonna ask me?

Jom Jukkrit: Have we asked your daddy, you mean?

Porsche Pachara: Bitch

Tem Taran: Let’s go, Porsche. Make time for your friends!

I put my phone down and continued brushing my teeth. These bastards—any excuse to drink. It was like this every year. I never really got excited for my birthday, because I usually had to work. The last time I’d gotten to blow out birthday candles was when my parents were still around, and that was a long time ago. Chay tried to give me a card and some small gifts every year, but I really saw it as any other day.

I dried off my hair and walked into Kinn’s office to find him with his eyes glued to the computer screen, his brows furrowed. As soon as he saw me, he startled in his seat.

“What, are you watching porn?” I teased, squinting at him in suspicion.

“No… Why would I? I’ve got the real thing right here,” Kinn said, schooling his tense expression to smile at me. He was so annoying! I gave him the middle finger.

I gathered my textbooks from the sofa, holding them with both hands, and spun around to walk out of the room.

“Where are you going?” Kinn asked.

“I’m going to study downstairs,” I replied.

“Why don’t you do it here?”

“Like I’ll be able to focus here. You keep distracting me!”

I closed the door and walked down to the foyer, collapsing onto the long sofa to study. I was glad there was no one around to disturb me. Luckily for me, Mr. Korn wasn’t here—he was traveling abroad for a few days. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have dared to lounge around in the middle of the house like this. I wanted to be respectful, and I was still a little nervous around him. His kindness and generosity just made me more anxious. Sometimes, I was surprised when he said I was like one of his own sons. I wasn’t completely convinced yet—it’d take some time.

Kinn had already taken Porchay and I to the townhouse to move our personal belongings back here; we were officially moved in now. It was a little hard to get used to, being here with a different status. According to Kinn, I wasn’t here as his bodyguard, I was here as his heart—but that made me uncomfortable. It wasn’t right for me to just lounge around their house, so I tried to help Kinn with his paperwork like before, promising myself that I’d help out when I could. I couldn’t convince myself that I could live without him—I wouldn’t lie to myself anymore.

He had such a profound effect on me. When I was awake or asleep, when I was eating and when I was dreaming, I’d see his face. Those days when I tried to convince myself that I would be fine without him were torture. I couldn’t deny my feelings for him any longer. I wanted him beside me, and he wanted me beside him. If it seemed like I forgave Kinn too easily, well, I wanted to see whether he could really live up to his promises.

I didn’t want to ask for anything more from Kinn. I simply wanted him to prove I could trust him again. I wanted to regain the feelings for him that I had lost; I wanted our relationship to be stronger than it was before. Right now, I still wasn’t completely convinced that he’d changed, and I wasn’t quite sure how to act. I didn’t even know what was expected of me in this house—how was I supposed to act in order to be a worthy match for the second son of such a powerful family?

I’d accepted the fact that I loved Kinn, but I still couldn’t accept that I had to appear as…the man standing by his side. The people

closest to us had all easily accepted it, but sooner or later, we'd have to face the rest of society. I had no idea how hard it was going to be, but I'd cross that bridge when I got there.

The letters on the page I was reading began to look like black squiggles; I couldn't make out any of it. My vision grew blurry, my eyelids drooping as sleepiness took over me. *Damn it!* I was half asleep already. I had two exams tomorrow, and both were going to be tough—plus, my grades were already awful. If I were to wing it tomorrow without studying, I was definitely gonna get an F.

"Porsche…it's time to sleep."

I wasn't sure when I fell asleep, but the next thing I knew, Kinn was calling my name and bringing me upstairs. I abandoned my studies and obediently followed him to our room. As soon as my back touched the soft mattress, I drifted off again.

***

These finals were only getting worse. I was dying. The moment I saw the test sheet, I wanted to fling myself into the sun. *Fuck it! I've been studying for so long, but today I'm learning just how stupid I really am!* I was such a fucking idiot. The questions made me dizzy just looking at them. I knew I was reading Thai—why couldn't I understand a single word on the page?

Kinn was busy these days, and he was more stressed than usual. He told me his exams were in English and they all involved essay questions. I felt sorry for him—he studied so hard and stayed up so late. All I could do was tell him good night and nod off in my own pile of textbooks.

I could tell there was something fishy going on with him, though. He'd been acting secretive, talking on the phone and smiling. It was making me wary. Just getting through finals was bad enough, but Kinn would often duck outside to take business calls with his clients—he said that since his father was abroad, it was his responsibility.

"Should I go with you?" I asked. Kinn had been exhausted for days on end, and he still had one more test tomorrow—which was

also the most difficult and important one—so I offered to go with him tonight to meet his client.

"It's fine. Just keep studying."

Kinn had been leaving me behind in the evening for several days now. I'd eaten dinner with Khun, Kim, and Chay without Kinn at the table. I didn't know why the business was so hectic lately, but by the time Kinn came home, it would already be midnight. I couldn't help feeling insecure, since he'd slept around before. Trust couldn't be rebuilt that easily.

Rrrrr. Rrrrr.

Kinn's phone vibrated. He looked at the screen, then glanced at me. He turned away to take the call far away from me. That bastard was acting more suspicious by the day! Was he getting bored of me again?

"I'll be going now," he came over to tell me. "I'll be back late, so you can go to sleep first."

"I always fall asleep first," I said evenly. "You say it like I'm waiting up for you or something." When I was tired, I went to sleep, and when I was hungry, I ate. There was no point in waiting around for anybody. But lately, I felt like something had changed.

Kinn smiled and reached over to touch my hair, but I twisted away. "If you're going to go, then go!" I complained, chasing him away. Kinn smiled slightly, then walked out for real.

Argh! I can't stand it anymore!

I paced the length of the room. I didn't want to make a big deal out of nothing, but if someone who was basically stuck to you like glue began to change like this, you'd be able to sense it, too! He had to be seeing someone else—I was certain of it.

Don't go thinking second chances are a dime a dozen, Kinn! I might've forgiven you before, but that won't always be the case! Remember that, asshole!

Someone like Kinn had plenty of choices when it came to romantic partners. People were constantly trying to approach him—I was surprised that he'd decided on me. Up until now, I'd still doubted whether I could actually be the man to stand beside him. But the answer was clear to me now.

But if he wants to choose someone else…doesn't he have the right to?

I kept asking myself if I was crossing the line—whether I had the right to be jealous or not. Most of the time, I just acted on my feelings, but I forgot to consider what he and I actually were to each other. He never gave me a clear answer, which was another reason why I was so uncomfortable about staying in this house. I still wasn't sure what exactly I was staying here as—his fuckbuddy? His latest fling? Or was I someone who'd stand next to him forever? *Argh!* Deep down, I thought about it all the time—but I didn't dare to mention it out loud.

Am I only here for Kinn to trample on my feelings? That bastard! I've been back for less than a week and he's already showing his true colors!

Love really was complicated. With Kinn, it kept circling back to the same problems in a never-ending loop. I was overthinking things because of him. Young love really was like lighting a candle in the rain… If the flame went out now, I'd be lost in the dark.

I was so fucking pathetic. I was failing at school *and* at love. Couldn't I have just one nice thing in my life? Please!

I shook my head, chasing away my jumbled thoughts, and went back to studying. I'd been reading this fucking sentence over and over, but I couldn't make sense of it at all. What did it even say?!

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[22 AUG 2020]

"Your last exam is this morning, right?" Kinn asked.

I nodded, buttoning up my uniform shirt.

"Mine starts at noon, so I'll be done later. Why don't you drive my car today? I'll take a different one." Kinn placed the keys to his beloved BMW down on the table.

I grabbed my backpack, threw it over my shoulder, and walked out without looking at him. "I can go by myself!" I snapped.

Kinn hadn't come home last night until it was almost 1:00 a.m. And just this morning, I'd seen him jump out of bed when his alarm went off. It was so out of character that it confirmed my suspicions. *Kinn, you bastard! Are you having fun? Acting hot and cold, pestering me, then ignoring me? Is it all fun and games to you?!*

I hated myself for letting him run circles around me like this. I was such a fucking idiot!

***

"I shouldn't have believed a single word out of his mouth! That motherfucker!" I crushed the soda can in my hand.

"Calm down," Tem said, rubbing my shoulder soothingly.

After I was finished with my exam, I holed myself up in Tem's room. The same feelings from before came rushing back. I didn't want to go back to that house ever again.

"I hate him! I'm going back to my place!" I declared, glaring resentfully.

"Again?" Tem smiled. "I'm not gonna help you move your things a third time."

"Think about it: You want me to live in that house without knowing where I stand? His father says I'm like his own son, but I doubt I'm getting a share of his inheritance."

"Ah, you're feeling neglected," Tem said softly. I could barely hear him over the noise of my racing thoughts.

"Think about it!" I said again. "These last few days... That shithead disappears to fuck-knows-where and comes home late, acting all secretive. If he's not going to do what he promised, why did he want me back in the first place?"

I popped open another soda can and chugged it. I didn't know if it was the sugar or what that was making me ramble like this.

Tem raised his eyebrow as he stared at me. "Why don't you just ask him?"

"How am I supposed to ask that? 'Hey, Kinn! What am I to you?' Just like that? Hell no! We've fucked so many times that if I were a

girl, I'd be pregnant by now! That asshole!"

"It *is* pretty blunt when you put it that way. But when it comes to stuff like this…if he doesn't say it out loud, shouldn't you just ask him?"

"I've still got my pride, damn it," I growled, slamming the can onto the floor. "Don't you try to goad me into doing something stupid."

"No… He really does love you," Tem insisted.

"He's faking it! It's all an act. Someone like him can never truly love anyone! That twisted son of a bitch! Cheating bastard! Insufferable fuckwad!"

Tem sighed and scratched his chin, looking fed up with me. "It's because you're like this. So quick-tempered and foul-mouthed, not sweet at all. Kinn might *want* to say he loves you, but he doesn't because he's afraid you'll kick his teeth in."

"Why?!" I whipped around to glare at Tem. "I've always been like this!"

"No, no, you can still be yourself. Just turn it down a notch." Tem leaned in close. "Didn't you say that Kinn likes the sweet and innocent type?"

"Yes! And he can go fuck one of those twinks for all I care!"

"Are you sure…you won't regret saying that?" Tem narrowed his eyes.

"Fucking hell!" I'd truly lost my temper. I was getting more and more worked up. Kinn hadn't called or sent me a single message today. Not a peep. Not even when he knew I left the house by taxi instead of driving his stupid Beemer. *You're a fucking moron, Porsche! Why would he want someone like you?!*

"Ah… I think… Do you want to try and change things up a little?" Tem asked.

"Change what?"

"Your horrible temper! Heh," Tem giggled. I glowered at him and he continued, "I'm joking… Maybe change up your look? Be a little sweeter, tone down your roughness a bit. Increase the cuteness…starting with your clothes!" Tem pinched my cheek.

“What?! What’s wrong with my clothes?” I looked down at my outfit. I’d already changed out of my uniform and into a pair of sweatpants and a T-shirt I’d left behind the last time I was here.

“It’s not bad… Just, if you were holding a two-by-four, you’d look like a thug. A hot thug! But still, a thug.”

“Thug, my ass!” I tried to kick Tem, but he jumped away.

“Hah… Come here.” Tem pulled me in front of the mirror and walked in circles around me, his eyes sweeping me from head to toe. “This…is going to be difficult. How are you going to be cute…? How about you go rub one out first? You’re such an asshat when you’re tense.” He twisted away to dodge another kick from me.

“Shut your mouth! What are you trying to do? Change me? I won’t do it! If he can’t accept me like this, that’s his problem!”

“No! Just think about it, Porsche. I’m not telling you to change for someone else, I’m telling you to change for yourself. Think about it—the day you turn your back on Kinn, make it be the day you look your best! You’ll make him regret it! He’ll be coughing up blood in despair!”

Tem’s words hit their target. Kinn had been like this twice before—I wouldn’t let him see me break down this time. I’d make him realize I had options. I was the one choosing him, not the other way around.

“…What do I have to do?” I asked.

“I’ve got you, my friend!”

Tem dragged me out of his dorm and drove me all the way to a fancy department store full of expensive clothing brands. As soon as my foot touched the polished floors, I realized something.

“It’s good that you brought me here. Before I turn my back on Kinn, I’m going to bankrupt him! What do you think? Doesn’t that sound good?” I pulled out the credit card that Kinn had stuffed into my wallet. He’d said there was no spending limit on this thing, and as far as I knew he was telling the truth. *Now I’ll have my revenge for everything you’ve done to hurt me! I’ll burn through your family’s fortune and make sure you have nothing left! You’re going down!*

“That’s it, my friend! Yes! Go for it!” Tem clapped his hands and pulled me inside. He dragged me into various shops—at each one,

we grabbed a few things and swiped Kinn's card.

I was so fucking proud of myself! *Just you wait, Kinn. I won't walk out empty-handed! Everything you've done to me, I'm getting back with interest!*

"Is this okay? One shirt is nearly a hundred thousand baht![31] What even… Does it give you fucking superpowers?" I flipped the shirt over, inspecting the back. These designer brands were so damned expensive that I was getting goosebumps reading the price tags. How many lifetimes would I have to work for Madam Yok to afford a single pair of these pants?

Tem just encouraged me, that motherfucker. "That's perfect! It's calling your name! It suits you! Don't think about it; you're not the one paying for it!"

We'd bought so much crap that we could barely carry it. I felt like a thief again, like when I'd swindled Kinn and sold his watch all those weeks ago. A nervous thrill went through me knowing I was doing something bad and getting away with it.

"Oh! Tem… Hey, Porsche. Why are you here?"

I glanced over to see Time and Tay approach Tem, not forgetting to look behind them just in case Kinn had already caught wind of what I was doing and come here to confiscate his card. I wasn't giving it back!

"To make merit, I guess," I said nonchalantly, once I'd made sure Kinn wasn't here.

"With that mouth, it's definitely the real Porsche! Why are you here, though?" Tay still wasn't done asking odd questions.

"I can go wherever I want. You got a problem with that?" I asked, passing another article of clothing to the shop assistant to ring up. I wasn't even sure what I'd just bought.

"Oof… I'm just asking nicely. N'Tem, aren't you going to get changed? It's almost ti—"

Time hurriedly slapped a hand over Tay's mouth. I stared at them in surprise. What was up with them? Why was everyone around me acting crazy, especially when I was in such a shit mood? Even Jom had gone back to sleep, saying it was because we were going to Madam Yok's later.

Whatever, we'll see. I'm going to cover myself head to toe in designer clothes! That might catch some girl or guy's eyes. Ugh! I'm getting a headache just thinking about it.

"Er... Porsche, do you think maybe you bought too much? Kinn's probably passed out by now." Time took his hand away from Tay's mouth and turned to point at the plush sofa behind us, lined neatly with an eye-watering array of shopping bags.

"That's my problem, not yours! Tem, which one do I pick? Tem!" I held up two shirts in front of Tem. He'd gone still, staring blankly ahead.

"...Hmm?"

"Which one...between these two?"

Tem silently pointed to one shirt, his expression lifeless compared to earlier when he was cheering for one shirt or another.

"Whoa... The color is so bright. This one, really? I wouldn't be caught dead wearing it," I said.

"Then this one," Tem said, pointing to the other shirt.

"Are you serious?!" I put both shirts back.

I was beginning to understand the appeal of retail therapy; it really did help. I could forget my anger for a little while because I was so focused on the clothes. Especially the expensive stuff—it felt so satisfying to buy that I nearly forgot why I was mad at Kinn.

"Tem, what happened... Are you all right?" Tay asked, holding a hand up to Tem's forehead, but my friend quickly took a step back.

"I'm fine," said Tem. "Just a little tired."

"Mmm. Oh! If you're picking out clothes, you should ask an expert like me," said Tay. "Come on, I'll take you to another shop. I guarantee Kinn's going to love it."

"Come on, Tay, leave them to their shopping. We've got somewhere to be," Time said.

"Shush... If you're in such a hurry, you can go first. But don't let me catch you going to visit that bitch of yours." After scolding his boyfriend, Tay dragged us into another shop.

"Fuck!" Time cursed and ran a hand through his hair. Both Time and Tem had matching disgruntled expressions. Were they

hiding something from me?

Tay, on the other hand, dumped everything onto Time and made him carry the shopping bags for us. Tay was the one having fun; everyone else was beginning to drag their feet as we continued shopping. He forced me into a T-shirt and an oversized, patterned button-down with matching pants. Adding equally expensive shoes and jewelry into the mix—rings and a necklace—I couldn't imagine how I was supposed to go outside in this getup. Tay even took me to get a new haircut, styled so neatly that I almost didn't recognize myself. *But looking at it... Hmm... I think I can actually pull off the "cute" look!*

"You look adorable! Wear this home," Tay said, looking at me with sparkling eyes. I was a little embarrassed by everyone staring at me. Although wearing fancy clothes made me feel more confident, I was getting uncomfortable being the center of attention.

"Let's go, Porsche... It's getting late. I'll take you home." Tay took the shopping bags from Time's hands. I helped grab a few, too. I'd make bank if I held a yard sale with these.

"My home?" I asked with a huff.

Tem smiled stiffly. "Er...home."

"Then let's go straight to Madam Yok's. Jom is probably there already, considering he ran off so quickly this morning. Let's go. We'll leave the bags in your car."

"No!" all three shouted in unison. I looked at them in bewilderment. *What is wrong with them?!*

"Put these away at home first, so we can go out without worrying about them," Tem urged.

"My house, then. I don't want to go back to that place," I said darkly. I'd finally managed to forget about Kinn for a while, but now that I was reminded of him again, I could feel my anger returning.

"...What now, Tem?" Tay asked, nervously nudging Tem. It wasn't just Kinn acting weird; it was all of them! What the fuck was going on?! Why did they keep looking at each other like that? I was really starting to get annoyed!

“Oh! Should we go pick up Chay? He might want to come with us. We can ask Madam Yok to sneak him in. And another thing…” Tem looked thoughtful as he circled around me. “I think you *want* Kinn to see you as this new Porsche. Show him your rebirth! Make a point that you’re not the same old Porsche who’s going to sit around moping about him anymore. Ha! When he sees you dressed up like this, I bet he’ll beg you not to leave.”

Then, Tem broke into song:

“*I beg you, please don’t go,*

I’ll kneel down and cling to you

Hands clasped to say don’t go

But it’s useless when the one I love is gone!”[32]

Tem leaned in, eyes shining with hope. “Show it to him! Let him see you’re the one with the choices now!”

I stood there in silence, pondering his words. *Actually, Tem has a point. Kinn’s got no more chances left! The old Porsche is gone!* I nodded. “Mm-hmm. Fine.”

Tay and Time smiled, waving goodbye as we parted ways and left the department store. Along the way, I slowly sank into my rage, letting the fire of resentment burn within me—and Tem was enabling it! What the hell was wrong with him? He was gloomy one second and beaming the next. He’d shout his face off and then go back to sulking again. What the fuck?

“When Kinn sees you like this, you’re gonna rock his world. Heh! I can’t wait to see his face when he lays eyes on you for the first time! Don’t worry, my friend, I’ll be right there with you. We’ll get through this together!” Tem turned to look at me, clearly in high spirits.

“Fine, fine, I get it. Remember to call Jom, too, in case he’s already there waiting for us.”

“Yup, I’ve got it,” Tem replied.

“I should call Chay, too,” I said. “So he can get ready.”

Tem winced as I called my brother’s number.

“Hey… Where are you?” I asked.

“H-hia! What’s up…? Khun! Be careful with that… Don’t touch it… Hey…! A little bit to the left… *My* left!”

There was so much shouting in the background of the call that I could barely hear Chay’s voice.

“Where are you?!” I strained to hear him clearly.

“H…home, hia. What is it?”

I was a little surprised that he was at the house. With all that noise, it sounded like he was at a market or a temple fair.

“Get ready. I’m going to pick you up,” I said.

“Okay… How much longer until you get here? Hey, you’re ruining it, Khun!”

“What’s all that noise?”

“How many minutes until you get home?!” Chay shouted over the commotion.

“Ten minutes, maybe. Get dressed. If you can pack your bags, even better!”

“Mmhmm. Gotta go, bye!”

What?! What was up with Chay? Wasn’t he going to ask where I was taking him or why he had to pack? He was weirdly obedient today! I could feel how odd this all was. Tem wasn’t acting like himself, either. Every time we stopped at a red light, he started texting furiously. Suspicious! Everyone was acting suspicious!

I pulled out my phone. I was getting birthday greetings from my university friends here and there, but that asshole Kinn… I’d been gone the whole day, and not once had he thought to call or send me a message! Maybe I was overthinking it, but who could’ve predicted that something like this would happen? That I would want attention from Kinn all the damn time? Ugh, I was gonna stay mad at him. *Just watch me!*

When I got out of the car, the whole house was silent.

“Why is it so quiet?”

Just now, Chay had said he was home, so what was all that noise I heard—like a night market in full swing?

“Where is everybody?”

Even the bodyguards who should have been making their rounds were nowhere to be seen. Everything was deathly quiet. I squinted at a flickering light in the garden near the front of the house and immediately marched over as Tem ran after me. I heard giggling coming from behind. The moment I reached my destination, before I could make out what I was seeing, my face was full of confetti—the world exploded in light and noise.

"Happy birthday!"

I squeezed my eyes shut, swatting the paper strings off of me. Before I could make sense of what was happening, someone's arms looped around my waist from behind and a chin rested on my shoulder.

"Happy birthday, my love," a voice whispered in my ear. The pressure on my cheek brought me back to my senses, and I turned to see Kinn smiling at me as he held me tight.

"What are you playing at?!" I pushed him away in alarm, looking around me to see Khun, Kim, and Chay. Jom, Mew, even Tay and Time—everyone was gathered here. They were smiling and laughing as Kinn clung to me.

"What are you doing?!" I turned to yell at Kinn, my brows furrowing. But as I slowly started to piece things together, a warm, happy feeling settled inside of me.

"Hey...don't be mad at P'Kinn for neglecting you and coming home late—it's because he's been planning your surprise party," Tem explained. "He planned everything himself, too, from the food to the gifts. He went all in." Calling him P'Kinn? Tem sure switched sides fast. "And don't look at me like that. I was working under P'Kinn's orders." He pointed to Kinn, who smiled wryly at me as he helped brush off confetti from my hair and clothes.

"Did you really have to do all this?!" I lightly jabbed Kinn in the stomach to hide my embarrassment. No one had ever done anything like this for my birthday. I wouldn't even have remembered that it was my birthday if I hadn't gotten the Facebook notifications.

"You deserve it. But you've been so dramatic—you've been blowing up my phone!"

I tried not to laugh. The anger and resentment I'd been holding onto these past few days faded away. Damn it! I couldn't say anything now.

Kinn pulled me into a hug and gently petted my hair. "I don't have anyone else. I'm not bored of you. I've been thinking about you and planning your birthday party the entire time. I'm sorry for making you worry," he said, pressing a soft kiss to my temple.

Asshole! What am I supposed to say to that? I was so mortified that I buried my face into his shoulder. There was no anger left in me—not even a trace of irritation. I was barely myself; I felt practically off-kilter. I smiled until my cheeks hurt, touched by what he'd done.

"All right, all right, that's enough," said Tankhun. "This is a birthday party, not a wedding... As the owner of a renowned chocolate factory, I present to you...this gift basket!"

I turned to receive the basket full of stupid chocolates from Khun, pulling a face. "Thanks." Was he really not going to get me anything else? I'd already eaten so many of these that I was gonna get diabetes.

"Happy birthday, hia. I hope you're always happy and all your wishes come true. I don't have anything to give except all of my love," Chay said, spreading his arms and trying to hug me.

I gently pushed his head away.

"Mmph—!"

"All right, what's next?" I asked, smiling.

"Here. Happy birthday, my friend." Jom threw a card at me with "HBD" scrawled on it. *Ugh. You really can't come up with something more creative than that?*

"Happy birthday, brother-in-law. Your brother and I picked this out, but I paid for it." Kim tossed me a blue box stamped with a fancy label.

More people handed me gifts, including Tem. "I saw you holding onto this for a long time, but you didn't buy it, so I got it for you. Happy birthday," Tem said, handing me an eyeglass case. *Would he feel bad if I told him the truth? That this pair of glasses looked*

so weird that I was just staring at it out of curiosity? Well, it's the thought that counts, I guess.

"Thank you, Tem," I said. "Thank you for everything."

"Mm-hmm. I *am* a good friend."

I saw Khun walk away to mess with his sound system. He frowned at it for a while before music started blaring out.

"Why are you playing 'Auld Lang Syne'? I told you to play 'Happy Birthday to You'!" Kim shouted at Khun.

"Calm down, I'm just confused!" Tankhun started back. "None of my men are here, so I had to do everything myself! I had to find the songs and assemble the sound system myself! Any more and I could open my own music store!"

It was a familiar chaos that I couldn't ignore. I couldn't keep a straight face anymore—I broke into a joyful smile. This lively celebration had a familial atmosphere that I hadn't experienced for so long. It filled the empty corners of my heart to the point of bursting.

"Can we drink now? I need a fucking drink," Jom groaned.

We all crowded around the drinks, including the bodyguards. The garden was starting to feel a little like Madam Yok's place, with Luk Thung music blaring from Khun's playlist. But it would've been better if Pete, Arm, and Pol were here to enjoy it, too. I didn't know why, but I really missed Pete. When was he going to come back from his leave?

"It would be nice if Pete was here," I remarked, turning to look at Kinn.

"Eh, let him relax," Kinn said, sipping from his glass. "He'll be back in a few days—you can take him out for drinks later."

I took a sip of my own expensive drink. "Mm... I want to see him soon."

Eventually, a rather tipsy Tankhun started to dance, showing off his oddball moves. It hurt my eyes to watch him. The later it got, the rowdier the party became. We all got drunker and drunker, until we switched from yelling at Khun's questionable music choices to happily dancing to them.

I excused myself from the party to take my gifts and shopping bags up to my room. In the bathroom, I splashed water on my face, hoping to clear my head. I felt dizzy, and I knew I was close to being totally plastered.

Once I felt a bit more levelheaded, I walked over to the balcony, drawing the curtains open to look down at the garden. The party was still going strong. I couldn't help but smile. How long had it been since I'd had such a good time? Probably since before I lost my father and mother.

It was rare for me to smile fully, but today I smiled until my cheeks ached. Although I hadn't quite wrapped my head around this enormous gift Kinn had given me, my heart was full. Seeing Chay's carefree smile as he let loose at the party—I wanted to thank Kinn a thousand times over for making my beloved little brother so happy. We weren't on our own anymore. We had people around us now bringing color into our lives.

The loneliness disappeared in an instant just from watching the party unfold. In the gloom of my life, I could finally see the light in the distance, and it was enough for me to keep walking forward. My heart could go on beating.

I heard the *click* of the bedroom door opening.

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!"

I turned to see Kinn as he entered the room, singing and holding a small cake with three candles on it. I hadn't turned on the lights, so the room was completely dark save for the light filtering in from the balcony door. The candlelight burned so much brighter in the darkness.

"You're so corny. What are you doing?" I chuckled when Kinn came to a stop in front of me, holding out the cake for me to blow out the candles.

Kinn smiled. "I made it myself. It took me ages to learn how to bake it. Can you see how hard I tried for you?"

"Oh, is *that* what you've been doing late at night? Baking cakes?" I asked. Kinn nodded. I couldn't resist the opportunity to tease him. "It's a good thing you're studying business," I said. "If you

were studying Communication Arts, I think you'd have to put on a show for me."

"I would've, but Khun and Kim weren't free to practice, since they've been helping me plan this."

"Poor you... Oh well, I'm already so touched by everything."

"Make a wish... Whatever you want." Kinn held the cake closer to me.

I looked at the cake, a multitude of emotions whirling within me. Growing up, I'd had to work all the time, so my memory of blowing out birthday candles got fuzzy with time. But today, Kinn had made those long-blurry memories clear again. I was reminded of the warmth I'd felt seeing my parents coming over with a cake; it was no different from what I felt now with Kinn in front of me. I felt so loved, safe, and secure, so much so that I had to bite my lip to stop myself from yearning for the past.

"I wish...to be happy," I said. "For Chay to be happy. For you to be happy and smile at me like this forever."

Kinn nodded, and I blew out the candles.

He put the cake down on his desk and pulled me into a tight hug. I eagerly hugged him back.

"Thank you," I said.

"I'm trying my best for you, Porsche," Kinn whispered softly in my ear. "And I have something to say..."

"What?" I mumbled into his chest.

"You look so cute today... It suits you. You're *so* cute." Kinn hugged me even tighter.

"Hah," I huffed. I'd felt Kinn's eyes on me since the party started, following me all the way up to our room. His hands roamed all over my back as we embraced.

"But no matter how cute your clothes are...it's better when you wear nothing at all."

I clenched my fingers, making a fist and hitting Kinn's back as hard as I could. "Bastard!"

"Heh... What do you want as your gift?" Kinn asked, nuzzling into my neck. "I haven't given you anything. I'll let you choose one

thing."

"I don't want anything else. This is enough for me."

"Are you sure...?" Kinn grasped my shoulders, pushing me away as he stared at my face.

I nodded. "Yeah. This is enough."

"But I want to give you this," said Kinn, pulling something out of his pocket. I stared at him, curious.

"Give me your hand," he continued, and I did as he asked, slowly holding out my left wrist. My heart thundered inside my chest—suddenly I was so nervous. Kinn always had this effect on me.

Kinn looped a white leather band around my wrist and fastened it for me. My heart raced as I read the letters engraved on the bracelet: his name. What I had been wanting was ever so close. My breath hitched as I tried to contain my excitement.

Kinn pulled out an identical black leather band and looped it around his own wrist, holding it up for me to see. It had my name engraved on it.

"Porsche... I love you... I told you that, right?"

Looking into Kinn's eyes, I could tell he was nervous. A bead of sweat slid down his face. I was nervous, too, but it was tinged with joy.

"Yeah."

"And there's something I haven't told you," he continued.

I could tell that Kinn could barely control his emotions. He was just as anxious as I was, not quite sure of himself or what he should do. He reached over to hold my hand, but his clammy palms gave him away.

"...Shit! I'm nervous!" Kinn took a deep breath, then said, "Porsche—please be my boyfriend!"

My heart skipped a beat. I bit my lip, looking away to hide how flustered I was. I didn't reply.

"Say something," Kinn pleaded.

"I'm shitty," I said slowly.

“Huh?” Kinn raised an eyebrow.

“I’m rude. I’ve got a foul mouth and an awful temper. I’m hostile, I’m rough… I’m not innocent or sweet or…*cute* at all. Can you accept me like that?” I wanted to be sure. This was the question that I kept asking myself—was I really worthy of someone like him?

“Be my boyfriend, Porsche,” he insisted. “We’ll stay together just like this… We’ll look after each other. We can fight and argue all you want, but just stay with me, okay?” Kinn squeezed my hand. As I stared into his eyes, I could see his nervousness fade away, replaced with conviction.

“Are you sure about this?” I asked.

“Will you be my boyfriend, Porsche?” he asked again.

I stayed silent for a moment. Then, I gave him my answer, carefully and clearly: “All right.”

Kinn broke into a smile and pulled me close, kissing me gently and tenderly. I could feel his warmth and sincerity in his kiss. He slid his hands up to cradle my cheeks; I tilted my head as his hot tongue slid into my mouth, licking slowly but firmly. I looped my arms loosely around his waist and responded to the feelings he relayed to me.

We kissed for a while. This kiss held no expectations; we were simply confirming our deep commitment to each other. Once he’d made his feelings clear, Kinn slowly withdrew his lips.

“But can I ask you for one thing?” he whispered.

“What?”

“Next time you get angry with me, please don’t go shopping again… My knees nearly gave out when I saw the credit card statement!”

“Don’t be a dick!” I laughed, pulling him into another kiss.

This was the best birthday I’d ever had. I’d been given the greatest gift of all: the man in front of me. He was mine, and I promised to cherish him forever.

Special Chapter:
KinnPorsche 2

KINN

[FLASHBACK]

AFTER I WENT BACK up to my room, Porsche went to sort himself out. I turned my computer on, ready to continue working. Exams were stressful enough on their own, but they weren't the worst part. For the sake of my own pride, I had to give my all to the family business. Although I didn't oversee everything, I had to know about it all: from the casinos and real estate to shipping, both by land and sea. I even kept track of the sale of certain less-than-legal goods.

The responsibility weighed heavily on me. Father expected a lot from me, and although he never scolded me when I made the occasional mistake, I didn't want to disappoint anyone.

Having so many responsibilities on my shoulders at this age… I could admit I felt the pressure, but I didn't exactly choose this life. I was born into this family, and with all our influence in the business world, of course I would be scrutinized and have expectations placed upon me. I didn't ask to carry the burden until my back was about to break, but what could I do? I couldn't exactly go up to my father and demand my freedom—my Agong[33] would surely return from the grave to berate me.

My duty as a Theerapanyakul was to the Major Clan. It was my responsibility, but it was also my pride and joy. Even when I had to face all sorts of challenges, every time I saw how exhausted my father was, I'd banish the thought of living a life of leisure. My entire life, Father had always understood me. He never scolded me, never raised his voice, and even indulged me when it came to matters of the heart. Whenever I did anything, I remembered to be especially respectful of his wishes. Especially now that he'd given me the green light regarding Porsche, I wanted more than ever to make my father proud.

But even then… Please let me just play some games and relax for a bit before I start working. I won't be wasting too much time, hopefully.

I scrolled through my phone, tapping around to various apps. I didn't use social media much, but I'd check it every once in a while just to see what was happening. I mainly checked Porsche's socials to see if he was saying anything about me.

I kept scrolling. Porsche wasn't big on social media either, only using it to reply to his friends now and then. Like now, when he was in the bathroom with his phone—because my notifications showed that he was chatting with his friends on Facebook.

Jom Jukkrit: When will finals be over???

As usual, Jom posted a status to complain. I'd already added all of Porsche's friends just so I could keep up with them. I didn't want to make Porsche uncomfortable; I just wanted to know more about him.

[Comment]

Tem Taran: Just a bit longer! We'll get through this together!

Jom Jukkrit: Fuck off! I'm going to study

Tem Taran: Thoughts and prayers

Jom Jukkrit: I'm going to get drunk as a skunk

Tem Taran: I feel sorry for the skunk

Porsche Pachara: +1

Jom Jukkrit: Fuck off! Where are we going? I need something to get me through finals.

Porsche was still Porsche, even if on the outside he seemed like someone who took life seriously. He'd always worked to support his brother and rarely got the chance to live like a regular guy. I knew that if he wasn't with me right now, he would still be working his ass off at Madam Yok's. Porsche was like me—he probably wanted the freedom to live life leisurely but couldn't because of his responsibilities... Truthfully, I wanted him to be able to spend time with his friends, to put himself first for once, but I didn't know how

he'd feel if he heard me saying that. I scrolled down, putting the thought out of my mind.

[Tem Taran]: Sounds good. It'll be Porsche's birthday, too. Let's go to Madam Yok's

...Wait! I stared at the screen. *Birthday? When's his birthday?* I looked for it on Porsche's profile. *August twenty-second? Shit! Why am I only finding out now?! Damn it!* No matter how much importance I placed on love—I loved my family and I loved Porsche, and I wanted the very best for them—I was still just a guy who would forget important dates. *Even when I promised to treat him well and give him everything!*

I turned to my computer, quickly searching "birthday presents for your boyfriend." Fuck, I wasn't good with this kind of thing. My mind was going haywire. I didn't know what to do.

I frantically kept searching. *Gold? Diamonds? Some sort of gemstone—is that too old-fashioned? Porsche is always teasing that I'm like an old man. Should I get him a cake? With money in it? Maybe a hundred grand? How big should the cake be?! Argh! I have no idea!*

I had no idea when Porsche had come in. I jumped when I saw him and quickly schooled my features to not look suspicious.

"What, are you watching porn?" he asked.

"No... Why would I? I've got the real thing right here," I said. He flipped me off in response, and I smiled at him, amused.

Porsche gathered his textbooks and made to leave the room.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"I'm going to study downstairs," he replied.

"Why don't you do it here?"

"Like I'll be able to focus here. You keep distracting me!" With that, he marched out. I heaved a sigh of relief and went back to worrying about what I should get him for his birthday.

It was then that I remembered I had a hopeless romantic of a friend who lived like a hedonist and walked down the path of life

like it was scattered with rose petals, even though most people didn't realize those roses came with thorns. I hurriedly called Tay.

"What is it, darling?" Tay's saccharine voice cooed from the other end of the call.

"Tay, you've got to help me."

"Oh, so when you need me to fix your problems, you call. Do you ever think of calling your friend when you're in a good mood?" He was really rambling on. It sounded like his boyfriend had hurt his feelings again…

"Are you going to help or not?!" I snapped.

"Of course I have to, right? Aww…"

I gave Tay a rundown of the situation—how anxious I was about finding a birthday present for Porsche. To me, being able to care for my boyfriend grounded me and strengthened our bond. Even though I didn't seem like the type, I placed a lot of importance on love. Look at what happened with Tawan—I'd been so gutted by all of that that it exposed my weak side. A side I never knew existed…

"All right, Kinn, what does Porsche like?" Tay asked me.

"Money," I answered honestly, because Porsche really was a greedy bastard. Just look at what happened the night we first met!

Tay sighed on the other end of the line. "What is he like as a person?"

"Blunt, foul-mouthed, stubborn, quick-tempered." I rattled off a whole list. "Even quicker to act without thinking."

"Really… Does he have *any* redeeming qualities?"

"Well, he's been through a lot in his life, so he's like this because he needed to protect himself," I explained. "He's got a lot of burdens, so he never got to live a normal life. I want to let him know that when he's with me, he doesn't have to shoulder that burden. That he can just be himself and love me how he wants. That's what I want to tell him. We've been through a lot together, so for his birthday, I want us to have a new beginning."

"So melodramatic. Have you been watching movies with your older brother again?"

“Mm… So what do I do?”

“Well, if you want him to start anew…to give him a new life and new happiness… What are you to each other right now?” Tay asked, making me realize something. I’d told him I loved him, but I’d never…

“Huh.”

“You were boss and employee before this. For his birthday, make your relationship official and treat him the way you’ve been wanting to treat him—how’s that?”

“Thanks, Tay,” I said. Tay was a genius. It wasn’t like I *forgot* to ask Porsche to be my boyfriend, but there was always some kind of trouble getting in the way. I’d actually wanted to ask him to be official with a grand gesture, but it was only a fleeting idea. I hadn’t thought about it much lately, not when we’d been going so strong despite the recent turmoil.

“Hey! Don’t forget to give him a gift from the heart!” Tay quickly cut in before I could hang up.

“What?” I asked, confused.

“Don’t you have a single romantic bone in your body, Kinn? You’re totally hopeless!”

“What do you mean? Just tell me.”

“Rings, necklaces, bracelets, that kind of thing! A gift from the heart! If you say you want to be like a normal couple, not a mafioso and his bodyguard or the oh-so-great young master Kinn and his latest boytoy, get him jewelry! That’s what normal people do for their significant others!”

Tay, why are you slandering me? “Fine, fine. I got it,” I said. I was starting to get annoyed by Tay’s sass. If I got Porsche to kick him for me, would that cure Tay of his snide tendencies?

I sat there pondering everything Tay said. I’d thought that caring for Porsche and ensuring his comfort was enough of a statement of my love, but Tay was right—sometimes a touch of romance was required. Maybe I’d been too stiff and boring lately. I was going to start fresh with Porsche, giving him new experiences he’d never had before. *I’ll give him what he’s been missing. I’ll give him happiness and excitement. I’ll be everything he wants me to be…*

“Khun!” I burst into my older brother’s room, not at all surprised by what I found him doing. He was half sprawled on the sofa, his legs casually propped up on the table and his hands digging into a bucket of popcorn. His eyes stayed glued to the screen, which was playing his latest TV series.

“What’s up, Kinn? Where are you going? Let me come with,” Khun said.

“I have something I need your help with.” I plopped down next to him, hoping he’d tear his eyes away from the TV to glance at his brother for once.

“If it’s work, then don’t forget to shut the door on your way out. I’ve got a headache. I can’t do anything. Pol and Arm are gone, so I’m stressed enough already. Are you really bringing more trouble to me?!” Tankhun lamented, turning to stare at me broodingly. His eyes were red and puffy, as if he’d been crying nonstop.

“Are you *that* sad? They’ll be back soon enough. What is up with you?” I asked, passing him some tissues. He looked terrible!

“Yes, I’m sad!”

“Let Pol, Arm, and Pe—”

“You don’t know how sad the ending of this series is! If Pol were here, then at least he could share some of my pain… No, Won Bin, don’t die!” Khun wailed.

I looked at him expressionlessly. I couldn’t believe it. I thought he was sad because he was missing his guards. Fucking hell, Khun was shouting at the TV like his Won Bin or whoever could hear him! *I’m the one who’s got problems right now!* Had I really come to the right person for help?

“Quit dicking around and listen to me,” I said.

“Then say what you have to say. Quickly.” Khun waved at me to continue speaking, still staring at the TV.

“The twenty-second is Porsche’s birthday,” I told him. “I was thinking of throwing him a small party here at home. I wanted to ask you for help, since you like that kind of stuff.”

Khun immediately perked up at the word “party,” grabbing his remote and turning the TV off. He spun around and leaned in so

close that I had to scoot back. “What did you say, Kinn?”

“Not so close.” I pushed him off.

“You want me to help you throw a *party*?!” Tankhun looked at me with sparkling eyes. I paused, having second thoughts. Did I really want this crazy guy to help?

“Yeah. Something simple and cozy in the front garden,” I said, feeling my throat dry up. Getting Khun to plan the party would have two possible outcomes: It was either going to be a garish event with weird, headache-inducing colors and even weirder music, or it was going to be the most impressive party anyone had ever seen.

“I’ve got a few party packages for you to choose from. If you buy now, I’ll get Nont to go out and pick up all the string lights. It’ll be dazzling! It’ll be magnificent! If a plane flies by, the pilot will be blinded by the sight of a thousand glittering lights!”

“Kh-Khun. Khun. Calm down. What you’re going to buy, and how you’re going to arrange everything… Please run it by me first.”

“Kinn, believe in me. I’ll only choose the best for you,” Khun said, determined.

“Let me repeat myself—I want something simple and cozy, not extravagant!”

“Fat chance, Kinn. It’s my brother-in-law’s birthday. Hey, if I get a stage set up in the middle of the garden and play some Mor Lam, would Father get mad?”[34]

“Yes!” I immediately put a stop to that idea.

“But I don’t think Father would scold me much if it was in the garden. It’s not like it’s his bedroom. And if he complains, we’ll definitely move it to his bedroom!” Tankhun broke out into a mischievous grin, ready to give our father a headache just for the hell of it. He got up to grab paper and a pen and started sketching a layout for the party. It made me want to put my head in my hands.

“Khun, I’m begging you…”

“There will be a stage in the middle of the garden… We can set up a projection screen over here and put the food over there. Do you think we have enough space on this side for a Ferris wheel?” He turned to ask for my opinion.

“I’m not throwing a party anymore.” I tried to get up from the sofa, but the nutjob held me back.

“What?! You’re stopping me again? Did Father teach you nothing? Don’t get in your older brother’s way, or you’ll never prosper!”

“Enough! I’m going back to my room!” I snapped. *I’ve talked to you for a whole ten minutes and gotten nowhere!*

“Fine, fine, fine. I’m doing this for Porsche, so I’ll help. And before I do anything, I’ll ask you first. Okay?”

“You’re only concerned about your own amusement,” I grumbled.

Khun just kept laughing at me.

***

The day before Porsche’s birthday, I was incredibly busy. I’d dedicated myself to planning his party, and there was a lot I had to manage. For example, when Tankhun bought decorations, I had to check them first, afraid he’d go so overboard it’d turn into a festival. Tankhun, of course, didn’t disappoint. I had to tone down pretty much everything he chose. *What kind of lunatic buys a million string lights and wraps them around the entire house? How is Father supposed to get in?! Fuck!*

But the one aspect that had me all worked up was the gift “from the heart.” I had Tay reach out to a leather goods brand, whose prices were so astronomical that even I had to hold my breath before transferring the money.

I chose something we could both wear that didn’t clash with our styles: engraved leather bracelets. I was going to give Porsche the white bracelet with my name engraved on it, and mine was black with Porsche’s name. I wanted the bracelets to symbolize me bringing profit[35] to his life. To show that no matter what, I only wished to be worth everything we’d gone through…

“Should I go with you?” Porsche asked when I made my excuses: I told him that I had to go to meet a client and I had a

difficult exam coming up. I said that I had one test left, but in truth, I'd already finished all my finals. I'd also moved all the company work back a couple of days so I could fully concentrate on planning Porsche's birthday party.

"It's fine," I said. "Just keep studying."

Porsche went still. I could tell that he'd been feeling neglected these past couple days. When he sulked or got unhappy with me, it always showed plainly on his face. He couldn't hide his downturned mouth and pitiful gaze. Seeing him pout... It was cute. I wasn't sure where he learned to do that. Porsche put up a tough front, but in my eyes, he was someone I wanted to protect.

***

"You have to stay focused! Even if he's angry, try not to let it get to you," Tay said, bringing over more dishes. I was at Tay's hotel to sample the food we were going to serve at the party.

"That won't work, Tay. Porsche hates vegetables," I said, pointing to the salsa. I could guarantee that Porsche wouldn't touch it. He was such a picky eater that I needed to personally supervise the food.

"Does he... What if we changed from Mexican to Japanese?" Time suggested. "I remember he liked Japanese food when you took him last time." Both Time and Tay were trying very hard to present the hotel's offerings.

"No! Japanese would bring up bad memories! He liked the same thing as Tawan. I'll be dead if we do that." I flipped through the menu.

"You've been so focused on the food. Don't forget to think about how you're going to get him out of the house on the day of," Time reminded me, trying to help me plan.

"I haven't forgotten about that. If I suddenly tell him to go out, he'll think I'm chasing him away again. Then he'll be even more angry with me. He's hard enough to appease already," I said.

"How about this? Tell N'Tem to invite Porsche out, then get him to get Porsche a makeover, so he won't feel self-conscious when you

actually ask him to be your boyfriend," Time said, offering more ideas.

"Why? I like him the way he is," I said, smiling. I finally decided on the food, pointing out the dishes to Tay. We settled on Italian—pasta and pizza and the like—with minimal vegetables. Tay nodded and went to instruct his chefs.

"Kinn, you dumbass! These days, Porsche dresses like a petty thug! If I saw him on the street, I'd think he was about to start a brawl! He dresses far too casually. If you weren't my friend, I'd never believe you were dating him." Time leaned back in his seat, raising his brow at me. "What do you even find appealing about him, Kinn?"

"Everything," I said.

"You're head over heels," said Time.

"I just wish Time could be half the man you are, Kinn," Tay sighed as he returned with a tray of drink samples. "I wouldn't have agreed to go out with him in the first place if I knew he'd be so terrible."

"Oh, just keep talking, Tay." Time turned to me, trying to change the subject. "Kinn, don't forget to call N'Tem and tell him to get Porsche out of the house."

"Mm-hmm."

***

Once we'd sorted out the food, I called Tem to work out a plan to get Porsche out of the house. But I had a feeling that since Porsche was mad at me already, he wouldn't need his friend to trick him into leaving. It wouldn't be long before he'd protest by running away to his friends. Porsche had done this before. Every time we were mad at each other, he'd leave to stay at Tem's dorm. I knew him well.

It didn't matter if the entire world thought he was ill-tempered and foul-mouthed, or that we were unsuitable for each other. In my eyes, he was kindhearted and put other people's feelings before his own. He was easily worried, a little lonely, and maybe just wanted someone to stand up for him for once in his life.

When I was with him, his smile was relaxed and the light in his eyes seemed so relieved. I wanted him to be able to depend on me, because to me, he was everything.

Hold on just a little longer, my love. I'll make you so happy…

CHARACTER & NAME GUIDE

Characters

The identity of certain characters may be a spoiler; use this guide with caution on your first read of the novel.

MAIN CHARACTERS

‘Kinn’ Anakinn Theerapanyakul

GIVEN NAME: A-na-kinn

NICKNAME: Kinn

SURNAME: Thee-ra-pan-ya-kul

The second son and de facto heir of a notorious mafia family. Has a habit of getting rough with his partners.

‘Porsche’ Pachara Kittisawasd

GIVEN NAME: Pa-cha-ra

NICKNAME: Porsche

SURNAME: Kit-ti-sa-wasd

A normal college student who is extremely skilled at martial arts. Since their parents died, he takes care of his younger brother.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

‘PORCHAY’ PITCHAYA KITTISAWASD: Porsche’s beloved younger brother.

UNCLE THEE: The younger brother of Porsche’s late father. Has a severe gambling problem.

TEM AND JOM: Porsche’s best friends and fellow university students.

MADAM YOK: Porsche’s former employer and owner of the Root Club.

KORN THEERAPANYAKUL: Kinn's father and the current head of the main branch of the Theerapanyakul mafia family, aka the Major Clan.

'KHUN' TANKHUN THEERAPANYAKUL: Kinn's eldest brother.

'KIM' KIMHAN THEERAPANYAKUL: Kinn's youngest brother.

'VEGAS' KORAWIT THEERAPANYAKUL: The eldest son of the Minor Clan.

'MACAU': The youngest son of the Minor Clan.

ZEK-KANT: Korn's younger brother and head of the Minor Clan.

TAY AND TIME: Kinn's friends.

'BIG': Kinn's former lead bodyguard, before Porsche took over his position.

'PETE': Tankhun's lead bodyguard, who temporarily switched positions with Porsche.

'POL', 'P'JESS', AND 'ARM': Tankhun's other bodyguards.

'NONT': Kim's lead bodyguard.

'CHAN': Korn's secretary.

TAWAN: Kinn's ex-boyfriend.

MEK: Tawan's younger brother and a friend of Kinn's from high school.

Names Guide

Thai names follow the western pattern of a given name followed by a family name. Thais are also given a nickname, which is more commonly used when Thais refer to their family, friends, and close acquaintances in their daily life. Thai nicknames can be anything the parents find appealing, a nickname their friends prefer to call them, or even nonsensical words in foreign languages.

In Thailand, it is unusual for people to use someone's surname in casual conversation, unless specifically required. To formally refer to a person, given names are preferred.

Thai honorifics

P'/Phi:(IPA pronounciation: /pʰiːˑ/): A gender-neutral honorific term used to address older siblings, friends, and acquaintances. It can be used as a prefix (P'[name]), a pronoun, or informally used to address unknown people (e.g. store clerks, or shopkeepers).

N'/Nong:(IPA pronunciation: /nɔːŋ1/): Used to address younger people, in the same manner as "phi."

Teochew honorifics

The Thai Chinese are the largest minority group in Thailand, integrated through several waves of immigration. Of these, just over half are Teochew, from the Chaoshan region. Families with Teochew roots may still occasionally use the Teochew dialect, especially when referring to other family members. Some of the terms that appear in this novel are as follows:

HIA: Elder brother

BE: Older brother of one's father

ZEK: Younger brother of one's father

GOU: Older or younger sister of one's father

AGONG: Grandfather

Thai Dialects

The Thai language has four major regional dialects: Central, Northern, Northeastern, and Southern, corresponding to the major geographical/cultural regions.

Central Thai is the official language of the country, used in official settings, education, news reporting, and media. Most Thais are able to communicate in Central Thai, though those from the north, northeastern, and southern parts of the country typically also speak their regional dialect.

Northern Thai (Kam Mueang) is considered soft and pleasant-sounding. It is derived from the language of the Lanna Kingdom (now part of northern Thailand).

Northeastern Thai (Isan) is heavily influenced by the Lao language. Although it is very similar to Central Thai, the difference in tonal patterns, vowel qualities, and common vocabulary can make Northeastern Thai challenging for people who only speak Central Thai.

Southern Thai (Pak Tai) is the fastest-spoken dialect. It has a more distinct intonation and sharp rhythm that lends it a melodic quality compared to Central Thai. Since the south of Thailand is close to Malaysia, the Southern dialect has influences from the Malay language and has several Malay loanwords.

The main dialect used by the characters of this novel is Central Thai. However, there are various instances of characters using other dialects, to show a character's roots or for comedic effect—for example, Pete and his family speak Southern Thai, as they come from the islands off the coast of Chumphon in the south. These instances of other dialects have been localized to other American English dialects/accents, which may not be an exact match, but the closest possible equivalent to preserve literary style.

Footnotes

Chapter 26: Return

[1] “Tawan” is the Thai word for the sun.

[2] ลงใจ (Longjai) by Bowkylion.

Chapter 27: Enough

[3] A program prevalent in Thai universities where students are assigned a mentor from the years above them, to form a line of peer mentors through the year groups. Peer mentors in your “line” are addressed using family titles.

[4] Man Khong Pen Kwam Rak by Stamp Apiwat.

Chapter 28: Questions

[5] Love That’s Fallen Apart Won’t Depart No Matter How Much I Drink by Sam Linethai feat. Nunae.

[6] Yoo Tor Loey Dai Mai (Can I Stay?) by Singto Numchok.

Chapter 30: Too Late

[7] ตุ๊กตาเสียกบาล: A clay doll used as an offering to spirits to take bad karma in place of the person making the offering, often made with a smiling face.

[8] ปีชง (Pi Chong): Thai-Chinese belief of a “cursed year” where a person’s Chinese zodiac sign is incompatible with the current year’s zodiac sign, resulting in difficulties and general bad luck.

Chapter 31: Rectify

[9] Dogs abandoned at Buddhist temples and taken care of by local monks.

[10] Kam Paeng by Zak Chumpae. The song is in Northeastern (Isan) dialect.

[11] A genre of Thai country music.

[12] Thailand is divided into four regions: North, Northeast (Isan), Central, and South, each with its own distinct culture and dialect.

[13] Jingjok and tokay are kinds of gecko.

[14] Jakkim and Toktoe by Toktoe R Siam.

[15] Longjai by Bowkylion.

[16] Thai idiom; the first problem hasn't been resolved yet, but a new problem appears.

[17] Khao Tom (ข้าวต้ม): Rice boiled in broth with herbs and a protein, similar to but distinct from congee (โจ๊ก).

[18] Slang; if you go looking for trouble then trouble will find you.

[19] Teochew for "uncle," specifically a father's older brother.

Side Story: Vegas × Pete 0

[20] Yoo Tor Loey Dai Mai (Can I Stay?) by Singto Numchok.

Chapter 32: Resolve

[21] Private schools' uniforms in Taiwan have blue shorts, whereas students at public schools wear black shorts.

[22] Speeding tickets are sent to the car owner's registered address. In this case, it's Tem's car, so Tem would be getting the ticket.

Side Story: Vegas × Pete 2

[23] "Nu" is a first-person pronoun used by children. Adults may also use it as a diminutive pronoun when talking to someone of higher seniority or status, or to emphasize the youth or cuteness of the speaker.

Chapter 33: Stolen

[24] My Baby Went Astray (Dek Phi Mee Chu) by Inam.

[25] The term 'nak' is used to refer to a man who is about to be ordained as a Buddhist monk.

[26] Nak Sung Sika (Nak Instructs the Lady) by Tossapol Himapan.

Chapter 34: Again

[27] Mai Bok Ter (Won't Tell You) from Hormones OST.

[28] Laew Gwa Nee (Worse Than This) by Parn Thanapon.

Side Story: Vegas × Pete 4

[29] Lord Yama (Phra Yom) is the King of Hell and god of the dead in Thai Buddhist belief.

Chapter 35: Porsche's Day

[30] A class of playable character from ROV/Arena of Valor, a MOBA game.

[31] Approximately $3,000 USD.

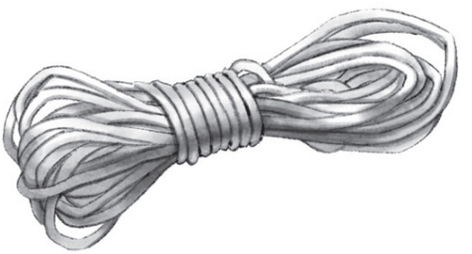
[32] Kukhao (Kneel) by Cocktail.

Special Chapter: KinnPorsche 2

[33] Teochew for grandfather.

[34] Mor Lam is a genre of traditional music from Northeastern (Isan) Thailand and Laos, known for distinct vocalizations.

[35] In Thai, the words for bracelet (kumlai) and profit (kumrai) are spelled differently but sound almost identical.



Old Flames

Kinn and Porsche have finally found their way into each other's hearts, but their happiness is short-lived. Kinn's enigmatic ex, Tawan, has returned—and he's determined to reclaim his place by Kinn's side. As Porsche uncovers the truth about Kinn's past with Tawan, insecurities begin to take hold. How can he compete with someone as polished and handsome as Tawan? Does Kinn truly care for Porsche—or is he just another fleeting affair?

When Porsche is accused of leaking the family's secrets, Kinn swears to stand by him and prove his innocence. But is Kinn really on his side, or could this all be part of a plan to push him out and make way for Tawan instead?

Meanwhile, Porsche's fellow bodyguard Pete delves into the betrayal threatening the family. His investigation into Vegas exposes hidden truths and draws him into a dangerous game he never expected to play.

FOR MATURE READERS

BOYS' LOVE

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