



# Not My Type, Not Yet.

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**Category:** Romance

**Description:** Austine Yohan Sevilliana, a brick headed man who loves to play games for his own leisure.

He loves to play with people's emotions as it entertains him deeply, he finds joy in people's agony.

He was branded as a wolf in sheep's clothing by those who knew him while others remain clueless with his true nature and twisted mind.

He loves drama, and for that he found himself locked up in a boarding school together with his friends where he met the enigmatic, cold blooded (they say) school president Knox Cyrus Villanueva.

Austine's was piqued by his indifferent behaviour towards every one of his attempts to make him lose his temper.

He never met someone like that so he vowed to himself that he needed to see Knox lose his temper, however, in the process he found himself feeling restless whenever Knox would ignore him and pay him no mind.

Is he frustrated because his efforts bear no fruit or is he slowly falling in love?

he's not. never.

maybe.

just a little.

probably my type.

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# Page 1

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Less is more they say.

"Fuck off Austine! Turn the sharp gaze down a notch, would you?" he let out a groan while avoiding making eye contact with me.

The corners of my lips rose into a wide fat smirk. "A bet is a bet, my horse won, so money down Alvarez," I extended my hand clearly amused by his troubled expression.

I rested my back against my seat, looking over the finish line where I saw my horse standing first in line. I'm currently at the arena, because this jerk challenged me into a horse race, well not that we will be the one racing but you know the drill. A bet is a bet.

He ruffled his hair in frustration, he clearly didn't anticipate that course of events. Good thing my horse is always in condition to race, guaranteed to always win. Wag kang magyabang kong sa huli olats ka rin pala.

He handed me a stack of cash that I gladly received. There's some resistance but I pull it away forcefully. This one is mine.

"Fuck you!"

"Oh yeah?" I chuckle. I brought the cash into my lips and kissed it. Hmm... it smells like success. "Thank you for your kindhearted donation." I added.

His cut eyebrows lifted in annoyance, "Tangina wala din pala yung ginawa ko," I

heard him murmur under his breath.

I threw my head back and sigh, boring. "Clearly, hindi mo chinicheck kong kaninong kabayo yung napuryada mo," I lazily cocked my head in his direction.

Napahinto sya sa pagtayo at bahagyang kumunot ang noo. "Pinagsasabi mo?!" singhal nya.

I shrugged my shoulder at naunang tumayo, I put both of my hands inside my pockets, together with the stack of cash he gave me, "Check your horse, ikaw na mismo ang gumawa ng paraan para matalo ka."

I turn my hills away from him and walk away, easy money. Nilabas ko ang pera mula sa bulsa ko. I licked my thumb and start counting.

"39... hmm 40 not bad," I bob my head as I keep counting. "Alas 50 thousand," I counted the last bill.

I slapped the bills in my palm before clicking my tongue. Well, what goes around comes around. I know from the fact that he will play dirty, so I play dirtier. There's no such thing as fair play in this generation. If you want to win, play the dirtiest.

Bumaba ako at pumunta sa kwadro kong nasaan ang kabayo ko, Thomas grin at me when he spotted me.

"Rack some big cash?" he playfully asked.

"Yeah," I handed him a few blue bills. He's also basically the reason why I won cause he's the one riding it.

"Kaya sayo talaga ako eh!" aniya nang matanggap ang pera.

Walang masyadong tao dito sa arena, halos iilan lang, I bet they just come here to watch the drama unfold between us. Alvarez, I don't know what's with him but he will always find ways to challenge me, and of course everytime he does, he always loses just like now.

In the distance I hear his earful of profanities, A smirk slowly tugging my lips. Before the race, I asked Thomas to switch the stable of our horses. Pinalipat ko ang kabayo nya sa stable ng akin, at don ko nilagay ang kabayo ko sa stable ng kanya.

He probably hired someone to severely injure my horse, pero malas sya at ang kanya ang nadali.

How petty.

Umalis naako don sa arena, I fixed my disheveled jacket before hopping on in my Bentley car. I drove exactly 30 minutes before I reached our hacienda. Agad namang bumukas ang gate when I honked the horn of my car.

Once I parked my car, I heard a small voice from the distance calling out my name.

"Kuya Austine is here!"

I chuckled when I saw my sister running towards me in her pink floral dress.

"Elise," I welcomed her in my embrace when she jumped to hug me, she giggled when I kissed her cheeks. "How have you been?" I asked her as I started making my way inside our house.

"I played with pepper, and I picked some flowers, here!" pinakita nya saakin ang daisy na kinuha nya mula sa harden. She put it in my ear and giggled, "You look very handsome kuya, I also made some flower crown for pepper," She's pertaining to our

2-year-old golden retriever.

I tuck her long wavy hair behind her ear, "Did you have fun?" I question her.

She put both of her hands up, "Super! But pepper keeps biting my dress, he even jumps when I put the flower crown on him," she hooted with laughter.

I put her down once nakapasok na kami sa bahay, this house has been passed down from generation to generation, you can tell because of its classic charm with modern functionality.

"You're home," obviously?

I just nodded at her and walked past her. Ayaw kong makipag-usap sa taong naging dahilan kong bakit nasira ang buhay namin. I heard her sigh, and I just ignored her.

"Kumain kana?"

"Nah, I'm good," I answered boredly, making sure that she knows that I don't want to talk to her.

Binaybay kong muli ang hagdan papuntang kwarto ko, I don't want to talk nor see her. I shut my door. I took off my jacket and threw it in my bed. Fuck! My mood is ruined.

I fished out my phone when it vibrated, I saw my two idiots' friends had been messaging our gc. I open it and flop myself in my bed.

Austine's been quiet for so long, are you dead?

Been busy racking up some cash

Nagnanakaw ka? Sabagay

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko dahil sa nabasa ko, sa gwapo kong to magnanakaw?

Gago! ano ako ikaw?

Tanga! hindi naman ako si Rayne, na nagnanakaw ng hindi sakanya

Ulol! wala akong ninakaw na kahit ano

Si Hannah, pre ninakaw mo kay Josh. Halos mapatay ka nya na nga

Napatawa ako ng makita ang reply ni Rafael. Matinik sa chicks ang isang to.

I turned off my phone and sat at the edge of my bed when I heard a knock on my door. I sigh in exasperation, I think I already know who that would be.

"Come in,"

The door opened and I saw my father's tall frame entering my room wearing his tuxedo. He looked at me before sighing, he looked at me with his chilly eyes. I scoff mentally, really?

"What did you do?" he asked firmly. His voice bold and rough.

I snorted, crossing my arms around my chest. I shrugged my shoulders, "Nothing." I lazily answered him. I'm just giving back the vibe that he's giving me.

He clicks his tongue, looking so done with me. "Mind your manners young lad when you are talking to your mother."

Mother? That woman who ruined my entire life? I scoff, almost laughing. Fuck.

"Who? My mother is dead."

I saw how his jaw clenched; veins are now protruding in his neck. "Kelan ka magtitino?" he utters with forbearance. He closed the door behind him and walked towards me. Tumayo sya sa harap ko.

"Learn to respect Kianna, she's your mother now."

"And what? pretend like I'm a good son? para san pa?" I sarcastically utter. Tumayo ako sa harap nya at pinantayan ang kanyang malamig na tingin. "I will never accept her as my mother. Baka nakalimutan mong kasalanan nyo kong bakit namatay si M---"

I didn't get to finish my words when my ear rang, sear sensation started creeping in in my left cheek- it burns, his heavy and rough hand landed on my face with an immense force that almost knocked me out of my feet. He slapped me.

"Kuya?"

Natigilan ako. Fuck! I looked past his shoulder when I heard someone's gasp. Walang kabuhay-buhay kong tinignan ang ama ko, pati sya ay nagulat ng makita si Elise, na nakatayo sa labas ng kwarto ko. Things got heated so I didn't notice her opening my door.

"Now you've done it," I whisper harshly.

Elise, eyes swelled up with tears, "Daddy? Why did you hit kuya?" I walk past dad and walk towards Elise.

Yumuko ako and patted her head, "Kuya's ok baby, don't cry."

I picked her up and she immediately cupped my face, my eyes twitched because it stings. Her eyes water again, oh no!

"You're hurt," she sobbed. She buried her face in my neck while I caressed her back to try and coax her. "I hate daddy!"

I close my eyes tightly. Damn that father of mine. Elise might be his and Kianna's daughter, but I bear no ill intention towards Elise, Afterall she's still my only sister.

"Elise, come to daddy,"

My father tried to coax Elise, but she refused to leave my side. He sighs and brushes his hair up, clearly frustrated. You brought this upon yourself.

"Hush now Elise, I'm fine don't mind it ok?" I coax. Umahon sya sa leeg ko and softly cupped my face. Lumubo ang bilogan nyang mukha. I caress her hair and fix her bunny hair clip.

"But it looks masakit Kuya," mahina akong napatawa dahil sa kaconyohan nya.

"If you kiss it para mawala ang sakit," nilapit ko ang pisng ko sakanya. She hesitated at first, but she leans in and softly kissed my cheeks, na para bang natatakot syang saktan ako.

"Pain, pain, go away please never come back," she sang softly with her small and angelic voice. Napangiti ako, I love her more than I love myself.

I should be hating her dahil sya ang bunga ng kasamaang ginawa ng tatay ko at ng nanay nya, resulting for my mother to perished in agony. I witnessed it. I fucking

witnessed it.

But for some reason, when I saw her cutely smiling towards me, all that had vanished. I just couldn't accept the fact that my mother is now gone, because of those two loathsome adults.

"No more pain na?" Tumango ako sakanya, and kissed her forehead.

I put her down once na nakarating na kami sa kwarto nya.

She ran to her closet and pulled out some pink box that she'd hidden behind her clothes. I followed her and I saw how she clumsily opened the lid of her box. A small smile tugged at my lips when I saw that it is full of candy, mga candy na binibigay ko sakanya.

Kinuha nya ang mochi at binigay sakin

"Sure kang ibibigay mo sakin to?" I teased her. Ngumuso sya at dahan-dahang tumango.

"I'll give it to you because you're hurt, Yaya Melda said that whenever you're upset eat some candy because it will help lift your mood," I ruffled her hair. Ang daming alam ng batang to.

I crouch down, "Thank you Elise, kuya will eat this," niyakap nya akong muli, mahina akong napatawa when she kissed my forehead.

"Whenever I'm upset you always kiss my forehead, and it made me feel better, so I figured because dad slapped you, you might be upset."

Tanginang tatay to.

"Look Elise, kuya did something wrong also so don't get mad ok?" kinarga ko syang muli. Nilapag ko sya sa kama nya.

"But when I did something wrong you did not slap me. That's not very nice, just because one person is in the wrong that doesn't mean na pwede na silang saktan, so daddy is mean!" kinuha nya ang teddy bear na nasa tabi nya lang ang niyakap yun. She's upset.

"Really?" I chuckle.

"Of course!" she screams with conviction.

She then nagged about how dad should apologize to me for hurting me, she's quite upset when she saw me being slapped by our father. It was the first time that she'd witnessed that so I'm sure she's shock.

I stayed by her side until she started drifting off to sleep.

Gabi na kasi, she stayed up late para lang salubongin ako.

Pinatay ko ang ilaw sa kwarto nya, I kissed her forehead before heading out. I sigh and put both of my hands in my pockets. I lean against the wall just outside Elise's room. What should I do?

"Come to the balcony, let's talk," I crane my neck to see the owner of that voice. Father stands at the distance glancing at me seriously.

Tumalikod na sya at naunang maglakad, I heave in exasperation before following him to the balcony.

"Why are you so stubborn?" tsk.

"Well maybe I took after you that's why," I shrugged my shoulders. Gosh this is boring.

"You should know how to respect your mother, you're not a kid anymore Austine," agad na napantig ang tenga ko.

My hands balled into a fist; my jaw clenched as my blood boiled but I restrained myself.

"Like I said, my mom is dead," kalmado ngunit madiing saad ko.

Nilingon nya ako, "Kianna, she's your new mom,"

Putangina.

"Why the hell you always pushed me to accept her as my mother? Dad, tangina! isa lang ang nanay ko at yun ay patay na dahil sa kagagohang ginawa mo!!" I snapped. "She will never be my mom,"

"You!!! how can you be so disrespectful?!!!" he yelled at me.

"And how can you be so shameless? you have no idea how much mom suffered because of you, and now you're what? demanding me to just accept her? Putangina!!" I shouted back. Nakakuyom ang mga kamao ko, habang matalim syang tinitignan.

"You can't force someone to just do whatever you want. Wala akong respeto? sige! edi wala! but no, kahit ano pang sabihin mo isa lang ang nanay ko at yun ay pinatay mo." I roughly utter, making sure na ramdam nya ang puot at galit na nararamdaman ko.

Mom should have been alive kong di lang dahil sa taong to. Tumalikod naako at

akmang maglalakad na when he pulls me back and slapped me. Tumabingi ang ulo ko dahil sa impact ng pagkakasampal nya saakin.

I laughed bitterly yet somehow harsh; I clicked my jaw before licking my lips. Puta.

"You know what, you're stressing Kianna, I will send you to your grandparents para naman tumino ka," he sighs as if nothing had happened.

Kianna, that damn woman.

I bob my head with a smug smirk tugging my lips.

"Fine, mas gusto ko don kesa dito, nakakasakal. Nakakasakal ka."

And with that I left.

I hate liars, he was acting so sweet in front of my mother, saying that he loved her while cuddling another woman behind her back. He's good at playing with people's emotions and that same reason killed my mom. She suffered because she believed in him.

I saw Kianna standing at the hallway, looking so fucking miserable in her night gown.

"August," She uttered, her voice trembling.

My eyes twitch, "You're not my mom, so don't use that name." I walk past her without sparing her a single glance.

Nakakasakal. Nakakaputangina.

## Page 2

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"Idiots like you belong 6 ft below the ground," I mocked him. His jaw clenched as I held him down. I cocked my head with a smug smile on my lips to mock him even more.

"Fuck you! You're such an asshole Austine! Putanginamo!" he spat. Napahalakhak ako before I threw another punch in his jaw, knocking him down.

"I've heard it so many times to the point that I already consider that as a compliment. Thanks James, I appreciate the compliments," I bend my knees and grab him by the collar before punching him again.

The wind made the trees sway to its rhythm, birds started chirping, resonating their heavy breaths.

"Chill Aust," Rayne chuckled from behind. I looked past my shoulder and saw him leaning against the tree while crossing his arms, puffing his cigarettes.

Rafael sat at the nearby tree trunk, smirking.

"Kalmahan mo, baka mapatay mo yan baka nakalimutan mong pwede ka ng makulong," he laughs. Napaikot ang mata ko dahil sa sinabi nya.

"Gago." Binitawan ko ang kwelyo ni James. He groaned when he met the ground with a loud thud.

Pinagpagan ko ang uniform ko bago tumungo sa pwesto ni Rayne. I snatched the cigarette from his hand and puffed a smoke out of it.

Nilibot ko ang paningin ko and saw that seven guys were lying on the ground, some of them are unconscious and some of them are groaning in pain. Nasa likod kami ngayon ng University kong nasaan nakatayo ang isang abandunadong building.

Hinamon ng suntokan eh kaya ayun.

"If it's not Rayne, its Austine," Nabaling ang tingin namin kay Rafael. He shook his head while grinning. Nakapamulsa syang tumayo at naglakad papunta saamin. "You guys are trouble itself, nadadamay ang good boy na kagaya ko," he chuckles.

Rayne sway his jacket at him, he clicked his tongue, "Tangina kasi kasalanan ba naming nilalandi kami ng mga syuta nila? di naman ako pumapatol sa taong makatali na, di tulad ng isa dyan."

I snorted, binuga ko ang usok bago bumuntong hininga. "Did you see their faces when they realized they've been cheated on?" I puffed another smoke. "It's hilarious."

"Malala kana," Rafael patted my shoulder as if taking pity on me. Gago. I yanked his hands off of my shoulder and started walking away.

"Let's go, baka malate pa tayo," aya ko.

"Diligent asshole," Tumawa si Rayne na sya namang sinundan ni Rafael. Napailing nalang ako.

Trouble and Studying are two different things. Gago lang ako pero gusto kong pumasa. Tangina ba ang mahal ng tuition tas magbubulakbol ako? kurot sa tagiliran aabotin ko nyan pag nalaman ni Lola.

I fished out my phone out of my pocket when it vibrates.

Elise smiling face welcome me kaya napangiti ako.

When she learned na luluwas ako ng maynila para mag-aral, she won't stop crying dahil malalayo daw ako sakanya. As much as I hated to be away with her, I have no choice dahil nasasakal ako sa pamamahay na yun.

I quickly pressed the answer button.

"Kuya! how have you been?" Elise energetic voice rang through my ear dahilan para mailayo ko ang cellphone sa tenga ko.

"Hey Elise, I'm fine, did you miss me?" I asked. I heard her giggling on the other side.

"Yes po! I'm currently learning how to bake. I'll bake some cookies for you when you get home so come home quickly ok?!"

Napatawa ako dahil napaka hyper nya talaga, "Then, made sure you learn lots dahil uuwi ako dyan samakalawa."

"Really?!!! Yes!! I'll make you a cookie you never had before---Ms. Elise, tapos napo yung break time ninyo." I heard nanay Melda's voice on the other end. Looks like breaktime nila and she chooses to call me instead of playing.

"Looks like times up little girl," I chuckle.

I heard her tsk before sighing. "Boomer. Sige na nga po, basta umuwi ka ha! hihintayin kita."

"I promise."

She shouted once again kaya nalayo kong muli ang cellphone sa tenga ko. "Sige po babye kuya!!"

I just hum a reply and end the call. Binalik ko ang cellphone ko sa bulsa ko.

"Elise huh? quite hyper, ilang taon na nga sya?" Rayne asked.

"Mag aanim na taong gulang this year," I answered boredly.

Umiba naako ng daan dahil nasa kabilang wing and department ng Architecture. I'm minding my own business while peacefully walking not minding the eyes that's been following me. Hirap talaga pag gwapo. Habang binabaybay ang daan tungo sa classroom ko, some random girl stopped my tracks.

"Umm... Austine right?" I did not answer her. I just looked at her jadedly, I'm afraid I don't have the energy to face yet another confession.

Tiningala nya ako pero agad din syang nag-iwas ng tingin. She handed me a letter na syang walang gana kong tinignan. "S-sana mabasa mo, I pour my heart into that letter," she timidly utter.

I was about to reject her when I saw someone from a distance glaring at me. Kong nakakamatay lang ang tingin siguradong kanina paakong nakabulagta dito. I smirk, oh boy! this is gonna be fun.

I accepted her letter, agad na dumako ang tingin nya saakin, she beamed at me. Pinasadahan ko sya ng tingin, she's cute. Probably my type.

"What's your name?" I asked. She fiddles with fingers before answering.

"Jessie." She answered.

"Hmm...Jessie huh? Pretty name, like its owner." I lower my head and cup her cheeks with my left hand. Her eyes widen, I run my thumb in her lips. I lick my lips and meet her gaze.

I lean closer "Say Jessie, wanna go out with me?" I whisper to her ear. Agaran naman syang tumango habang namumula ang kanyang mukha.

"Y-Yes," I grin with satisfaction. Lumayo ako ng unti sakanya.

"Good girl, I'll see you later." I brush my lips against her cheeks and walk past her.

Hindi paako nakakalayo when I heard her squeal, follow by the screams of delight by her friends who was at the corner. Dumako ang mata ko sa lalaking kanina paako pinapatay gamit ang mata nya. I grin. That's it.

When I walked past him, he grabbed my wrist forcefully.

"Putanginamo." Napatawa ako dahil galit na galit ang boses nya.

"Yeah?" Binawi ko ang pulsohan ko and stood firmly. Mas matangkad ako sakanya kaya naman halos tumingala na sya. I look down on him, a mischievous smile plaster on my lips. Irereject ko na sana eh, but you showed me with such contempt, so I have no choice but to play with you.

"Stay away from her! alam naman nating pinaglalaruan mo lang sya!" he yelled at me. He looked at me with pure hearted hatred.

I snicker, I brush my hair up and look down at him, but I really can't contain the joy I'm feeling right now so I burst into laughter. He balled his fist and was restraining himself to punch the hell out of me. Damn. It's so refreshing

"Sorry not sorry, if you want her, go and snatch her." I challenged him. Once I caught you there's no turning back, and it seems that Jessie girl got caught in my trap, thanks to this guy.

Don't show what you desire or else I might take advantage of that desire for my own leisure.

I sneer at him before turning my back. My, my, what a pleasant day.

I spent the rest of the day in a good mood, hay nako.

Humans are so easy to read, to sway, to manipulate, the driven force? of course, their emotions.

They're like fire that ignites your soul with underlying passion, a force that pushes you forward, fueling your every step. But that same fire, once it burns out of control, becomes the very thing that consumes you. It eats you away from the inside leaving you hollow and broken.

From flames to ashes and you're left as a mere fragment of what you once were. And when that happened you became insignificant, unnoticed, invisible, and the very last thing, useless. That very essence drags you down into despair, leaving nothing but regrets.

Once the bell rang, I immediately jump out of the class. And there I saw Jessica waiting for me. Nang makita nya ako agad syang lumapit sa kin.

"Hi Austine," maligalig na bati nya. I grabbed her waist and pulled her closer to me making her face red and her friends scream.

"Hey, baby girl," I whisper.

She hugged me tightly, "Wanna go out together?" she prompts.

I chuckle from her boldness, "I would love too, but I couldn't," kumalas ako sa pagkakayakap nya. She seems upset but I don't mind it.

Timing naman na dumating sina Rafael, they smirk when they saw the girl. Palipat-lipat ang tingin nilang dalawa saamin. Tumaas ang gilid ng labi ko bago magkibit balikat.

Rayne immediately rested his arms on my shoulder when they reached our spot.

"Quite a pretty girl," he said with playfulness in his voice. Jessica's face reddened even more from his compliments.

"Iniwan kalang namin sandali tas may syota kana agad," si Rafael habang nakapamulsa. "Would you mind if we borrow this guy," he pointed at me.

She shook her head, a small smile tugging her lips. "Not at all."

"Great! let's go. Bye ladies," Rayne wink, making the other girls squeal in excitement. Gosh this one.

Agad naakong tumalikod at naunang maglakad. What was her name again? Jessica? Jessibelle? well, I don't know. I forgot.

"Gago ka sino yun?" hagikhik ni Rayne.

"Jessica ata, I don't know I forgot her name." I shrugged. "Nag confess pero I was about to turn her down when opportunity presented itself to me, so I took it."

"You're like a wolf in sheep's clothing, masyadong tuso ang gago, I pray na sana

makahanap ka ng katapat mo balang-araw," ayun na nga nanermon nanaman ang tatay Rafael.

Katapat sus! Walang magtatagal sa ugali kong to.

We went to Xylo after our long day, damn just what I needed.

A cup of good beer and a sight of good looking fucking chicks.

Once we entered the bar we were welcome by a stench of cigarettes and spilled beer.

The lights were blinding, flashing in all sorts of chaotic patterns.

The inside was lively, full of feral animals, by means ang mga tao dito.

Their shouts resonate with the bass of the speaker, it feels like it's vibrating through my bones. Agad kaming umupo sa pwesto namin.

"Damn, I miss this," tumango kami. The smell, the sight, everything about this place is magical.

Smack That by Akon, ang tumutugtog sa background and it's damn hot. The heat in the air makes everything feel even more intense. Some waitress comes over, with our drinks in her hands. My eyes immediately caught her curves, hapit na hapit ang kanyang damit sa kanyang katawan and I couldn't stop myself from biting my bottom lip.

Fuck, that rack was unreal.

I'll definitely smack that shit.

"Calm your dick Austine, kakapasok palang natin," Rafael jeered at me while sipping the cocktail he just ordered.

I grin, grabbing the beer from the center table before chugging it down.

"Rude." I jested. I brush my disheveled hair and loosen my tie as I lean my back against the sofa.

I licked my lips, nilibot ko ang tingin sa paligid, napangisi ako dahil marami akong nakitang naglalampungan sa tabi-tabi.

Napunta ang tingin ko kay Rayne, when he stood up, pansin kong may tinitignan sya kaya I followed his line of vision and saw that he's staring at the girl just acrossed our table. Red dress, nice rack, bunny teeth, I smirk just his type.

"Got some business," ang tanging saad nya bago lumisan.

"Babaero," natatawa ngunit naiiling na saad ni Rafael. Napatawa ako habang nginunguya ang cha-charon na inabot ko sa mesa.

"Bakit ikaw hindi?"

He scoffed, he leaned forward parting his legs and rested both of his elbows on top of his thigh, he clasped his hand together, his mocking stare never leaving mine.

"Can you think of any scenario kong saan may hinawakan akong babae?" he grinned. The corners of his lips rose, it appears to be a smirk to challenge me, but as a person who knew him basically my whole life, there's more to that damn grin of him.

I retaliate by manly rolling my eyes, tangina wala naman akong naiisip. Ni hindi ko nga nakitang humawak yan nang kahit buhok ng babae. Saaming tatlo I can totally

tell that this guy is on a serious side of the world.

Dull and boring.

"Are you impotent or just gay?" I theorized. Napahawak ako sa baba ko habang patang-tango. Make sense actually.

Umasim ang mukha nya, dinampot nya ang wallet nya at binato sakin yun. Natatawa kong sinalo yun. Gago, feel ko hindi pera ang laman nitong wallet nya kundi bato, ang bigat! rich assholes.

"Buntisin kita dyan eh," biro nya na syang ikinahagalpak ko.

I cover my imaginary boobs, "No please," saad ko sa impit na boses. Humalakhak sya, kinuha nya ang bote ng beer at akmang ibabato saakin, "Hoy gago! masakit yan," naalarma ako dahil ibabato nya talaga sakin yun.

Tangina ha.

"What a pussy,"

Gago.

Nilaklak ko nalang ang natitira kong beer, damn it's hitting the spot.

"Hey boys,"

A seductive and slender hand crept in my shoulder, cascading down my chest. I threw my head back and saw a gorgeous lady standing behind me, my eyes immediately caught her plumpness that was about to spill in her bralette. I smirk and hold her hand.

"Hey gorgeous, wanna come?" I playfully utter edging with double meaning.

Mukhang na gets nya naman ang ibig kong sabihin as she bit her lips, "Sure why not."

I let go of her hand, umikot sya sa sofa, as she slowly walked towards me, I was just glancing at her, I bit my lips, damn hot. When she reaches me agad naman syang umupo sa kandungan ko. I snake my hands around her waist.

"Aren't you a gorgeous little thing?" I leaned in and whispered in her ear.

She chuckled and wrapped her arms around my neck, mas lalo syang lumapit saakin kaya damang-dama ko sya. Hot.

"Wanna go somewhere el---holy shit!!" napatili sya dahil bigla syang bumagsak sa sahig when someone forcefully grabbed my collar.

I was welcomed by his deadly stare, "Ikaw. Putanginamo sabi na nga bang pinaglalaruan mo lang si Jessie, hayop ka!!" he then punches me, kaya napaatras ako.

Jessie was it? ah. That girl.

Humalakhak ako, I click my tongue, I lick my lips only to taste my own blood. Napahawak ako sa panga ko, masakit?

I crane my neck, my lips tugging for a mocking smug smile.

"Who are you again?" I asked. The music stopped and people gathered to watch us. "Who are you to land your filthy fist on my face? Like what I've told you, you can have her if you want. Bagay naman kayo eh isang gago at isang easy to get."

His fist balled, feel ko dalawang beses naakong namatay dahil sa mga tingin nya. "Eh gago ka pala eh!!"

Susugorin nya na sana ako ng unahan ko sya. I punch his jaw causing him to tumble, humalakhak ako habang paulit-ulit syang sinasapak. Seeing them crumble beneath me is satisfying to watch, their cries of agony sounded like music to my ear.

"Just make sure not to kill him Aust, remember what I've told you about your age," hirit ni Rafael na nakaupo parin. Alam ko gago.

He continues to shield himself, but it was futile, natumba sya. I grabbed that chance to rode him. Sunod-sunod na suntok ang iginawad ko sa pagmumukha nya. I was enjoying myself when I felt a strong hand pulling me away from this guy.

"What the heck Austine?!" galit na singhal ni Rayne. Kumunot ang noo ko ng makita ang pagmumukha nyang nagpapanic kaylan pa dumating ang gagong to? I glance past his shoulder and saw Rafael panicking. Napatingin ako sa sahig, oh fuck.

He's unconscious. Puno ng dugo ang kanyang pagmumukha. Gago mukhang makakapatay pa ata ako. I laugh mentally. Oh well, what now?

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"What the fuck did you do this time?!" my father roared. Kinalikot ko ang tenga ko, ang ingay.

Nasa hospital kami ngayon, why else kundi para bayaran ang katangahang ginawa ko. My father did not waste any time as soon as he arrived here, he's been giving me an earful of sona for the past 1 hour, and my neck hurts by just looking at him pacing back and forth.

Ok I admit, what I did was wrong but at least he's still alive. I really hate it when other people poke their nose in my business, like get out.

I shrugged my shoulders, "Probably teaching him some manners," I utter nonchalantly. The crease on his forehead deepened even more, napahilamos sya seemingly frustrated. I chuckle mentally, bahala kayo dyan.

"Boomer, isn't it? Getting scolded over trivial matters?" Rafael's airy voice gushed through my ear. I chortled at his own pun, trivial matters? Damn.

After what happened we rushed him to the hospital. The police got involved. I almost threw myself behind bars, but it was soon stated that what I did was self-defense because he started it. His parents were furious but the hell I care.

Naka-upo kaming tatlo sa labas ng ER, while my great father stands in front of me, frustrated like he doesn't know what to do anymore. Blame yourself as for, I turn this way because of what you did.

"Hindi ko na alam kong ano ang gagawin ko sayo Austine," pagsuko nya. "I'll have

you put in that school, you two as well," turo nya sa dalawa.

Kinaltukan naman ako ni Rayne. "Gago ka talaga, tamo damay nanaman kami," natatawa nyang saad, pinapakita mo talagang wala kang paki.

"Damn, so scary."

He looked at me with pure disappointment as he shook his head continuously. I sigh, so may gana kapang madisappoint sakín huh? Petty.

"Saang school kaya yun? Pang ilang school naba tong lilipatan natin?" naiiling ngunit na ngingiting saad ni Rafael. Sinandal nya ang kanyang ulo sa pader habang malayo ang tingin.

Rayne reached for his pocket and lit some cigarettes. "Damn this asshole, pati kami nadadamay,"

"Gago, sama-sama kayo sakín eh. Bat nyo kasi ako kinaybigan?" Biro ko, nagtinginan kaming tatlo sabay tawa.

"Tanga! Sa susunod na buhay pag nakita kita lalayo agad ako," hirit ni Rafael.

Mga gago. Despite my shitty behavior they never did once turn their backs on me, nadadamay pa nga sila dahil sa kagagohan ko.

"But on a serious note, you need to be careful Aust, dahil hindi sa lahat ng bagay makakalabas ka sa gulong pinasokan mo. One day, you'll find yourself trapped in your own game."

Napatitig ako kay Rayne, he puffed another smoke. I must admit yet again na saaming tatlo, I really can't deny na si Rayne ang pinaka mature saamin.

Might be true, I might get trapped in my own games without a chance to break free, however, who can put a shackle on my neck and make me surrender on my knees. No one. I won't let anyone control the hell out of me.

"Oh my gosh!" agad akong napatayo ng makita ko ang lola. She's running towards me wearing her black dress and white cloche.

"Mèmére, slow down."

Agad nyang hinapit ang mukha ko, she scanned me from head to toe and when she made sure that I was fine. She sighs in relief. "I thought something bad happened to you apo."

"I'm fine, no need to worry," I reassured her. Actually, ako yung nakadali kaya ok talaga ako, malas lang yung nadali ko.

"Yeah mom, fret not kasi yang apo mo kamuntikan ng makapatay," problemadong saad ng magaling kong tatay. Napa-irap si Memere sakanya na syang ikinatawa ko.

"Humihinga pa ba," agad naman akong tumango.

Lumaki ang ngisi sa labi nya at nag thumbs up, "Ang importante buhay."

"MOM!!!"

Umalingawngaw ang tawa namin sa buong paligid, walanghiya. Ngayon alam na talaga kong saan ako nagmana.

"El se?ora how are you? you look stunning as ever," Rayne reached for my grandma's hand and brought it to his lips.

"My, aren't a fine young man," she cackles. She looked behind Rayne, and saw Rafael casually standing, hands in his pocket. "Rafael dear, you and Rayne grew up well."

Lumapit sakanya si Rafael at hinalikan din ang likod ng kanyang palad.

"I'm glad to see you well, Memere."

We then sat and chit-chat for a moment, hanggang sa dumating ang magulang ng lalaking binugbog ko.

Memere, went and talk to them.

I sigh in exasperation, I looked to my wrist watched and saw that it's already 3 o'clock in the morning, partida kinabukasan naka sakay na kami sa Van papunta kong saang unibersidad nanaman kami itatapon.

"Let's go home,"

I stood up and looked over my shoulder to see the door of the ER, and smirked. Now you can have her.

"Pack your things as soon as we arrive, Austine," he said. "The two of you as well, I've already talked to your parents," the other two just bobbed their heads nonchalantly.

Buti nalang kanina at tinanggal namin ang ID namin kong hindi, I'm pretty sure na madadamay nanaman ang University sa pinanggagawa ko.

As soon as we arrived at our mansion, agaran akong bumaba at umakyat sa kwarto ko. Rafael and Rayne will be staying here for a while, there luggage will be deliver

here sooner or later.

I took off my tie and Polo shirt before throwing it somewhere. I fished out my phone inside my pocket and turn it on. Agad na bumungad sakin ang sandamakmak na notifications sa iba't-iba kong social media. I open one of my notifications, naka tag ang isang to saakin.

The side of my lips tugged into a smirk as I glanced at the photo of myself at the bar.

I was casually leaning against the sofa, legs spread, with a few buttons undone, exposing the upper part of my chest.

My hair was in a disheveled manner as my tie hung loosely to the side.

I was grinning while holding a beer when the photo was taken.

Bumaba ang tingin ko sa mga likes and comments, I saw how it garners thousands of likes, comments and hundreds of shares. Damn! I look hot. Ang hirap talaga pag pogi. Nagiging model ako bigla.

Nag scroll paako pababa, napailing nalang ako dahil ayaw din magpatalo ang dalawang yun. May kanya-kanya silang candid photos, well si Rayne, nakunan lang naman nakikipaglandian. Napatawa ako, gago din tong isang to.

"Ang sarap mong ihagis sa bangin," napatingin ako sa pintoan dahil sa taong biglang nagsalita.

The two of them enter my room, agad na sumalpak si Rafael sa sofa ko habang si Rayne, patuloy na kinakamot ang kanyang tenga. Mahina akong napatawa, good thing agad akong umalis don. They looked drained, kahit sino naman ata maddrain pag sinermonan.

"Gago talaga kahit kelan, ikaw yung may kasalanan pero kami yung sinermonan. Ang itim naman nang budhi mong hayop ka." Reklamo ni Rayne. He fluffs himself down my bed, at humugot ng isang malalim na buntong hininga. "St. Augustine daw tayo."

I turn my head to his direction harshly, putangina? Did I hear it right? St. Augustine? that boarding school? That fucking boarding school?! Oh, hell nah! No way! Kahit saan lang basta wag non.

"Holy shit!" reaksiyon ni Rafael. Yeah, holy shit!

Agad akong tumayo upang sana kausapin ang magaling kong tatay when my phone vibrated, and his name appeared on the screen.

"Not another word from you young lad." It is what the message said.

Damn! I frustratingly ruffle my hair; I look at his message with disbelief. How could he? What give him the idea para itapon kami sa boarding school na yun? I can't survive in that isolated place. I hate it when my every move is being monitored. Fuck! damn this.

"Were fucked up." Nanlulumong saad ni Rafael, kahit sino naman talaga manlulumo pag nalaman mong ipapatapon ka sa isang boarding school. It's like you've been stripped off of your freedom.

Holy fuck.

Kinabukasan isang masamang tingin ang ginawad ko sa magaling kong ama but he just brushes me off. Kalbohin ko kaya to?

"Load your luggage dahil aalis na tayo."

I helplessly looked at my Memere but she just waved her hands at me, grinning from ear to ear, seemingly enjoying our misery. She signals me from her balcony and mouthed "Call me"

Napangiwi ako, gusto mo lang ng drama eh. Tumalikod naako at nanlulumong sumakay sa sasakyan. Buong byahe para kaming lantang gulay. Isa pa nga ulit, What the fuck!

Isa-isang nawawala ang mga naglalakihang establisyementong nadadaanan namin hanggang sa mapuno na ang nadadaanan namin. Who in their right mind would build their school in the middle of nowhere? oh well, maybe the one who established St. Augustine. Barumbado ata to dati eh, lakas ng kaltok sa utak.

"I presumed you'll behave from this point on," panimula ng tatay ko.

I roll my eyes in a manly manner, behave my fucking ass.

"We'll surely do, just promise that you'll get us out of there," oh Rayne, of course they won't.

Tumahimik lang ako buong byahe, part of me nagguilty dahil nadamay ang dalawa, and part of me is thrilled dahil mas mapapalayo ako sa tatay ko. I might need some time to adjust but I'm pretty sure that I'll get through this.

Ika nga ila, ipaubaya nalang sa superhero kaya bahala na si batman.

The car stopped in front of the enormous gate.

I did expect some old fashioned, the kind you'd see in a horror movie—rusted and ominous kind of school. But instead, what I saw was far more modern, sleek and even. Akala ko mag iiba na ang theme ng buhay ko eh, from a complete carefree

asshole and troublemaker to a human sacrifice for some god. O di kaya maging mafia boss. Ang corny.

"Here we are," Rafael whispered.

Humugot ako ng isang malalim na hininga bago tuluyang lumabas. Teka nga bat ba ang bilis ng transfer process? parang kanina lang kami sinabihan ha? Naningkit ang mata ko. Damn, they already planned this ahead? witty bastards.

Rinig kong bumukas ang gate but my attention was drawn by my phone. Sinuot ko ang headphone ko but did not play any song. Sumandal ako sa hood ng sasakyan as I put my left hand inside my pocket.

"Mr. Sevilliana, good to see you again," was uttered by the person who just walked out from that gate.

"Dela Cruz, it's been so long! looking as dull as ever, no?" Father replied. Without me seeing him I know that he is wearing his usual irritating smirk.

The guy he's talking chuckle, a humorless one. "Jerk as ever, is this your sons?" dalawa lang silang anak nyan. Diko tatay yan.

"Just this one," I saw from my peripheral vision na itinuro nya ako.

"Reason for sending him here?"

"May binugbog."

He laughs, "Same reason why you were thrown in this school huh?"

Naangat ako ng tingin, same reason?

"Btw, here's Knox, the school president, sya na ang bahala sa kanila."

Some spirit lifted my head, I unconsciously landed my eyes beside the man that my father was talking to.

I can feel my pupils dilated for some reason.

I saw a man wearing a school uniform, firmly standing as if some kind of Greek statue.

My eyebrows meet when I can't see nor read other expressions from his stoic face other than emptiness.

Our eyes met, and for the moment our eyes interlocked a small smile tugged my lips. I turn off my phone and put it inside my pocket. He fixed his glasses and avoided his gaze. I cross my arms around my chest and observe him.

I've never seen someone so poise and firm, na kahit bumagyo pa hindi sya matitinag. At first glance, malalaman mo talagang napakatibay at taas ng pader nya. Those kinds of people often build their own wall to avoid others for their own comfort, a shield for their vulnerable being.

And that very same reason makes me want to tear down those walls, and shatter the illusion of safety they've built and force them to step out of their fortress, messing with their perspective.

Interesting.

"Knox Cyrus Villanueva, School President of St. Augustine University."

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

After the conversation between the dean (the guy who welcomed us) and my father, we went inside the campus, and I could say that this school is that well off also.

From the infrastructure, grounds, just everything about this school feels unreal.

Akala ko talaga kasi luma yung mga building but it's quite the opposite.

"On the right side, you can see the cafeteria, 24/7 na open yan so you can access that anytime," Knox said as he toured us around the campus.

Napatango-tango ako, "May Cr ba dyan? what if I decided to visit the cafeteria at around 3 am, may mag sserve ba sakin?" I asked.

"I forgot to mention na pag masyadon nang late, mag sself service kayo dyan. We have different vendo machines there and may counter kong saan pwede kang magluto ng sarili mong pagkain."

Napatango akong muli. I levelled his pace and side-eyed him, he glanced at me for a second before returning his gaze ahead.

"I'll give you the student handbook later so that you can be aware kong paano namamalakad ang paaralang ito." He said coldly. I grin, damn this guy. I can't even tell if his bored or napipilitan lang syang itour kami.

"Nasan pala yung cr?" I asked. Huminto sya kaya huminto rin kami. He looked at me for a second before pointing somewhere the horizon.

Kumunot ang noo ko, sa field?

"Sa field?"

"Hindi, don sa ilog."

I deadpan him, humalakhak naman sina Rayne at Rafael na nasa likuran lang namin. Tangina.

I shrugged, "Really?" I smirked at him pero hindi nya ako pinansin. I clear my throat trying to swallow the embarrassment I had felt.

Inakbayan naman ako ni Rafael when I slowed down, "Mukhang mahihirapan ka ata ah," he teased. I nudge him and yank his hands off of my shoulder.

I lick my lips a mischievous smile slowly creeping in my lips, "Fuck off."

"Let him Raf. Let him make a fool out of himself," Napabaling ako kay Rayne. He's walking casually with his hands in his pockets.

"Shut up." I retorted, he just laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I think you'll get trapped sooner or later with your own games asshole," tumawa sya. I roll my eyes, this again?

"Hell nah! sila ang mattrap at hindi ako. You know me very well Rayne, you know that I hated being trapped in my own games, I have my ways, and I will always find my way." Kampanteng saad ko.

I tsked and followed Knox. I swear I'll squeeze some juices out of this ice guy. He seems interesting to play with, so I'll bear with his impudence to just ignore me. Ako

na to oh! si Austine Yohan Sevilliana ang pinakamasarap na nilalang sa balat ng lupa.

Mahiya naman sya dahil hindi nya ako pinapansin.

"Let's go to the dorm manager," he utters and makes a U-turn dahilan para mapaharap sya saakin.

I smile at him, "Anong gagawin natin don?" I asked.

"Lalangoy," sagot nya at nilampasan ako. Biglaang bumagsak ang bibig ko, gago yun ah.

The two giggle kaya mas lalong umasim ang mukha ko.

"Tapos naba tayo sa tour? anong gagawin natin sa dorm manager nyo?" I scoff when Rayne asked the same question I had just asked, tagalog nga lang.

Tamo he'll answer you just like how he answered a pure curiosity question of mine.

"Kukunin natin ang dorm key ninyo."

Ay biased.

My face crumble as I followed them, mga pangit ang ugali. Mga hindi nag grade 2. My eyes caught his figure as he calmly walks and guide us. Did I forget to tell na dala-dala parin namin ang mga maleta namin kaya hakot atensyon talaga kami.

Some students greeted him in which he only replied with a nod. I can totally say that this man is highly respected in this school, I saw different women stealing glances at him while giggling. Famous pala ang gago.

Looking at him now, he's handsome despite his stoic face, firm and poise, just what the girls wanted. A man they could melt, but I doubted that this man could be melted. I scoff mentally, let's see.

"Knox, sila naba?" A middle-aged woman wearing a luxurious pink neon dress greeted us, with a bright smile plaster on her lips.

Knox nodded his head, "Yeah, Aunt Mellis," Maikling sagot nito.

She beamed as she looked past Knox's shoulder just to see us. Umikot sya sa desk nya and pumunta sa harap. I almost closed my eyes dahil nasisilaw ako sa suot nyang damit.

"Ang popogi nyo naman. You can call me Aunt Mellis mga iho, ako yung dorm manager nyo so kong mag may mga issue kayo sa dorms nyo, lumapit lang kayo saakin." She extended her hand kaya isa-isa namin iyong tinanggap.

"Thank you, Aunt Mellis. That pink dress looked great on you," Si Rayne. I almost let out a laugh, tanginang Rayne, he's at it again. Acting like some good person to gain their trust.

She giggles and softly slapped Rayne on the shoulder, "Napaka boherong bata."

Rayne chuckled and reached for her hand and kissed the back of her hand. "Can I have my own dorm?"

I smirk, sabi na eh. I saw Rafael shaking his head while grinning. Cunning bastard.

Aunt Mellis cackles, "Aba oo naman! I can arrange for that."

Rayne steps backward as Aunt Mellis runs back to her desk and starts working on her

computer. Rayne gave us a smile of success. Binatokan ko sya kaya napa halakhak sya.

"Gago ka talaga," I whispered, natatawa parin.

"Paturo nga," gatong ni Rafael kaya nagtawanan kami.

Tumahimik lang kami ng bumalik si Aunt Mellis sa harap namin. Masaya syang ngumiti habang inaabot ang susi kay Rayne.

"Sa fifth floor ka anak, 504, wala kang kasama don." She handed the key to Rayne which the asshole received happily.

"Thanks Auntie."

Napailing nalang kami dahil sa mga pinanggagawa nya. My eyes landed on Knox, my lips immediately tugged for a smirk when I saw him looking at me. He yet again avoided his gaze.

Aunt Mellis go back to her desk and typed something, "Nga pala si..." she paused, she grabbed her glasses that was dangling in her chest and wears it, tumingin muna sya kay Rayne, "Anong palangan mo iho?" she asked.

"Rayne."

She nodded her head, "Rayne, ah so si Rafael at Austine ay sa second floor, Room 208." She said, handing the key to Rafael.

"Does Mr. President have a roommate?" I asked. Knox looked at me with the same expression, I just shrugged and grinned.

"Ah si Knox, oo si Preston, gusto mo ba syang maging roommate?" aniya kaya napatango ako.

"You see Aunt Mellis, I'm a very shy person so I need someone who I can ask about something about this school, someone like Mr. President over here," I said. I put my hands over my chest and acted pitiful.

Her forehead creased as she pouted her lips, merely sympathizing, "Kawawa ka naman..." I nodded and pretended to wipe my imaginary tears, "...pero hindi pwede eh, kaylangan mong kausapin yung kabilang parte kong papayag ba syang lumipat."

Ay, sayang akala ko lusot na.

I clear my throat, "So, kaylangan ko lang na mapapayag syang lumipat?" Tumango naman sya.

"Let's not do that, we should learn how to be respectful towards others," napabaling ako kay Knox ng magsalita sya.

"Kaya nga I'll ask him to move, no?" I sarcastically utter.

He looked at me coldly, "Don't bother other people."

I scoff, "It won't take long," I insisted. He just boredly looked at me and I returned it with a smug smile.

Naputol ang titigan namin when a loud thud echoes in every corner of this lounge, napatingin kami sa pinanggalingan ng tunog. I saw a petit boy picking some oranges on the floor, sa gilid nito ay ang nagkalat na bottle ng C2 na red.

"Aba'y Preston, anak! ano bayang bata ka," dali-daling lumapit sakanya si Aunt

Mellis at tinulongan sya.

Preston? I side-eyed Knox, napangisi akong muli, kong siniswerte ka nga naman.

Agad din akong lumapit kay Preston, I bend over and picked some oranges before handing it him. Napatingala sya saakin kaya agad ko syang nginitian, hindi ko masyadong makita ang mukha nya dahil sa bangs na nakaharang sa mukha nya, but I'm pretty sure na when he saw me biglang nanlaki ang mata nya.

Bakit ba? assuming ako eh.

"S-salamat," he stammers. Tumango ako at yumuko.

"Say Preston, roommate mo ba si Kn---I mean ang school president?" I asked kindly. He stares at me for a couple of seconds before nodding.

"A-ah oo."

Tumango ako, "Can we change room? I need his guidance kasi bago palang ako dito," kinuha ko ang plastic bag na sana lapag at isa-isang nilagay don ang mga orange na nahulog.

He hesitated for a moment, "M-mahirap lumipat ng room," he utters quietly.

I sigh, "I'll help you move your things, what do you say?" I prompted happily. I need to make him agree to this. Tumama ang mata namin and I saw how he flinches. Nagkasalubong naman ang kilay ko, gago nakakatakot baako?

"P-pero---"

"Enough Austine, tinatakot mo ang tao," I heard Rafael's voice in the background,

laughing. Gagong to.

I clicked my tongue and harshly crane my neck to his direction, "Ulol mo, wala nga akong ginagawa," inis kong singhal sakanya na sya namang tinawanan lang nila.

Mga ungas.

Bumalik ang tingin ko kay Preston, "Anyways, as I was saying let's----" naputol ang syang sasabihin ko when I saw his expression, eyes widen in pure shock. Bumaba ang tingin ko sa kamay nya, he's trembling, I squinted my eyes and turn my hill to follow his line of vision.

And there, I saw what he was looking at. Rafael. He's looking at his phine, grinning while biting his lips. Mukhang may madali ata ang isang to ha.

Mukhang napansin ni Rafael ang titig namin kaya napatingin sya saamin, he looked at me and raised me an eyebrow, tinaasan ko rin sya ng kilay, bakit nakatingin sakanya si Preston?

He shrugged his shoulders and was about to look down on his phone when his eyes caught something---or someone. Umusog ako and I saw that he is also looking at Preston with the same expression.

I squinted my eyes, could it be?

"Get your keys, I'll accompany you to your dorms," a strong, heavy hand landed on my shoulder. Napatangla ako at nakita si Knox, na seryosong nakatingin saakin.

I chuckle softly, "Shut it." I yanked his hands off and stands up. I extended my hand in front of Preston kaya nabaling ang tingin sya saakin.

"Let's exchange room," I said. Agaran nya namang iniling ang kanyang ulo. Damn.

"A-ayaw ko," his voice quivers.

I tsked, fuck!

"He said it." Napa-irap ako sa lalaking to, kong hindi kalang school president binigwasan na kita.

"Can I have someone who's familiar in this school accompany me?... in my room?"

Rafael's voice rang through my ear when he approached me and wrapped his arm around my shoulder. Ano to?

"Someone like... that school secretary," he's eyes landed on Preston. "I think it would be better na may kasama kaming pamilyar na sa paaralang ito, remember this is our first time being admitted to a boarding school kaya mahihirapan talaga kaming mag adjust."

Knox eyes pierced through him like he's evaluating his whole life, I side-eyed Rafael and he just smirked at me. Binabalak nito?

"Ganon ba?" Aunt Mellis who is still picking oranges stands up. Pinagpagan nya ang nakakasilaw nyang dress at ngumiti. "Arrange ko nalang, pag bigyan mo na Knox, ganyan din naman kayo dati." She smiled and headed to her desk, napakilay nalang ako sabay ngiting tagumay.

"Hey Bambino," Umalis sa tabi ko si Rafael at pumunta sa tapat ni Preston. "Let's get along, hmm?"

He then extended his hand, nang hindi tinanggap ni Preston ang kamay nya he

retrieved it and put it inside his pockets.

"Rude," he sneakers, halatang aliw na aliw.

"Boys! get your keys here, Preston ibigay mo nalang dyan sa pogi ang spare key mo ha?" tawag ni Aunt Mellis.

I turned my head to where Knox was standing, he looked at me, more like he was glaring at me behind his cold stare. I tilted my head and beam at him. Wala kang kawala sakin. Let see what will happen, I'll juice you out, Mr. Cold blooded President.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Must wear complete uniform, must adhere to blablabla whatever," I closed the handbook and threw it in my bed.

I faced the mirror and brushed my hair up, nakauniform naako but then I read what's in that handbook. I grinned, I took off my blazer and polo and changed into a simple white sando and a black leather jacket.

"Pogi ko talaga," I praised myself.

If god does exist it would be me. I licked my lips; I grabbed my favorite wristwatch. It was a Rolex oyster Perpetual gifted by my grandfather. I put on some cologne and checked myself one last time in the mirror, I grabbed my bag at isinukbit iyon sa balikat ko before going out.

It's 6 in the morning, maaga talaga akong nagising because I can't wait to pester our dear school president. Speaking of, nadatnan ko syang nagluluto sa mini kitchen nitong dorm. A small smirk tugged the corner of my lips as I leaned against the kitchen wall.

Neat as always, clean hairstyle, clean clothes, and presentable aura...unlike me. Naglakad ako sa likod nya, this guy is also tall and well-built but I'm way taller and broader. Nang medjo nakalapit ako sakanya, my nostril flickers because I picked up some of his scent.

Anong klaseng amoy yun? I cock my head; that's not the issue here.

"Mornin" I greeted but he just nodded and continued what he was doing. "Watcha

doin'?"

I laugh mentally, tanga malamang nagluluto sya.

"Naglalaba,"

Napahalakhak ako dahil sa naging sagot nya. "Anong flavor ng sabon mo?"

"I don't know, tikman mo nalang, nandon sa cr." Muli akong napahalakhak dahil sa sagot nya, tangina, hindi naman ako na inform na joker pala ang isang to.

Hinayaan ko syang magluto, pinagtuonan ko ng pansin ang mga condements na ginagamit nya. Tumabi ako sakanya, akmang kukunin nya na sana ang lagayan ng asin nang kunin ko iyon at nilayo sakanya.

He boredly looked at me kaya tinaasan ko sya ng kilay habang nakangisi. Bumaba ang tingin sya sa suot ko.

"I'm pretty sure I did give you the student handbook," aniya at inabot ang asin.

Napangisi ako, nice napansin nya Mistress ka nga sakin.

Nagkibit balik at ako, "Require palang basahin yun? akala ko kasi display lang."

"It's common knowledge that you must wear your school uniform, unless you even lack that common knowledge."

Napatahimik ako, barado ah. I clear my throat, "Then Pardon my impudence as I'm a role breaker and I don't know about that," I retaliate, trying to sound smug and all.

"Make sense."

Napanguso ako, mukhang ako pa ata ang mapipikon dito ah. Para man lang makabawi hinablot ko ang spatula na hawak nya at nilagay sa loob ng cupboard. I know it sounded petty and childish but who cares?

Naupo nalang ako sa lamesa at pinagmasdan syang magluto, he moved swiftly na para bang sanay na sanay na sya sakanyang ginagawa. Pumasok ang amoy ng bacon sa ilong ko kaya napalunok ako.

Nang matapos na syang magluto agad akong tumayo at pumunta sa harap nya, "Yung akin?" I shamelessly asked.

He looked at me straight kaya nginitian ko sya.

"You are not my obligation, magluto ka ng sayo," aniya at nilagpasan ako.

Nabura naman ang ngiti sa labi ko at napalitan nang simangot, pambihira.

I stormed off at hinayaan nalang sya don. Sabi ko sya ang pipikonin ko hindi yung ako yung mapipikon, kay gandang umaga.

"Kaya pala pangit ang langit dahil pangit din tong nasa tabi ko," Si Rayne.

"Fuck off," singhal ko but the bastard just laughs, it irks me even more.

Why these bastards always appear whenever I'm in a bad mood. Siguro pinanganak ang mga hayop nato para mas lalong pasamain ang loob ko. Sarap tadyakan.

"What's the deal? bat dika naka-uniform?" Rafael asked.

"It's suffocating," I plainly answered.

We are on our way to the cafeteria, maglalaba kami don pagkatapos lalangoy kami sa gitna. Tsked, that's all the answered I got from him. Kong hindi lalangoy, maglalaba.

"Nakakainis ang Villanueva na yun," I ranted. Dapat sya ang naiinis ngayon eh.

"Let me guess pinagalitan ka dahil hindi ka naka suot ng uniform?" Rayne theorized. He brings his fingers on his chin and nodded. "Make sense, sermon ba naman ang umagahan mo."

I clicked my tongue, "I don't know what's his deal but where did he get all that courage to just ignore me," I scoff. "Me as in Austine? What the fuck."

"Kong ako yun, di rin kita papansinin bakit sino kaba? si mommy?" I feel like Rayne, just chastised my whole existence.

Napapalatak ako, "The acidity??!!!!" singhal ko sa pagmumukha nya.

"Diba 'The Audacity' yun?"

Napabaling ako kay Rafael, I raised my eyebrows. "Bakit ba? may originality ako eh, dati kabang correction tape? bakit mo ako kinokorek?"

His face crumbled. "Nakakabobo kang kausap alam mo ba yon?"

"Hindi, pero ngayon alam ko na. Salamat," I sarcastically utter at nauna nang maglakad.

Mainit na nga ang dugo ko dumagdag patong mga kumag nato. Pag-untogin ko sila eh, total dyan lang naman sila magaling.

Nang makarating sa canteen agad kaming naghanap ng mauupoan. I roamed my eyes

around the cafeteria, unti palang ang tao dahil maaga pa naman, classes start at 8 am.

At may kanya-kanyang kusina ang bawat dorm kaya hindi ko gets kong ano pa ang purpose nitong cafeteria, maybe they built this for those students who are so lazy to even lift a single spatula.

Rayne ordered our food, nang dumating agad na kaming kumain. I still want that bacon though.

"I wanna go out," buntong hininga ni Rayne kaya mapalingon kami sakanya. "I miss riding my baby to school."

Rafael shrugged his shoulders, "I don't know about you but I'm enjoying here," he grinned.

"Nasstress ako dito, pag ako talaga nag kawinkle kasalanan ni Villanueva," I scoop a handful of rice, parang walang lasa pati yung tocino, I badly wanted that Bacon.

"Diba wrinkle yun?"

"Confirmed dati kang correction tape,"

"Gago."

Napailing nalang ako habang nangingiti.

When we finished eating, dumeretso na muna ako sa garden dahil masyado pang maaga. The cool breeze embraces me as soon as I arrive, napangiti ako and secretly fished out the cigarettes that I've been hiding this whole time.

I lit it up, puffed a smoke and threw my head back, this is mentally torturing me to be

honest, I mean we came from different ways of life and then in a blink of an eye we were locked in this boarding school.

I know it's my fault but who could have guessed that my father would take such measure to oppress me.

"Boring," I whisper under my breath. The wind had carried it far away from here.

I saw a tree and decided to climb it to chill. I still have an hour left before my first class so why not take a nap. I position myself and close my eyes.

The bird sang as the wind caressed me to sleep. It was peaceful...quit and c---

"R-reese,"

I opened my eyes when I heard a trembling voice coming from below. I tsked inwardly and decided to look down to see what was happening. I squinted my eyes when I saw two people standing under the shade of this tree.

He stands with his head hanging low, holding a bundle of roses. My eyes twitched ang aga ha.

"Yohan, ano to?"

Napangiwi ako ng marinig ang pangalan ng lalaki, tangina kapangalan ko pa talaga ha. I mean ka second name ko pa talaga.

With a trembling hand he held out the rose in front of her, "Para sayo," he said shyly. He scratches the back of his nape, his lips stretching.

The girl sighs, shaking her head frustratingly. "May boyfriend na ako," she answered.

Upon hearing her answer the boy's shoulder loosen. He met her eyes with displeasure.

I gasped, what a pity.

Bumalik ang tingin ko sa lalaki. He shook his head violently, refusing to believe what he just heard. "You're just making excuses to reject me, Reese." He pressed, he then grabbed her hand and tried to pull her closer to him.

"Ano ba! Yohan bitaw!!" she shouted as she tried to wriggle her way out from his grip.

"Reese please, pwede bang ako nalang? I promise to treat you better than any man can, just please choose me," he begged with his trembling voice. His voice sounded desperate and hurt.

She pulled herself away from him, "Tigilan mo naako ano ba! may boyfriend na ako wag kang masyadong desperado," with a knitted brow, she shouted angrily as she massage her wrist.

He lowers his head, his chest heaving heavily. "Reese, you can't do this to me, you have to choose me," he utters insanelly. My brows met; I wriggle to make myself comfortable, the tree branch is making my back ache.

"I can! stop this act Yohan, you look dumb," malamig nitong saad, it was laced with such disgust na pati ako ay napangiwi.

Rude, I like it.

She was about to leave when Yohan forcefully grabbed her wrist and started hovering her. He forces himself on her, making the girl scream in panic. Disgusting.

"Fuck! Yohan, let go, are you out of your mind?! Help!!" She struggles.

"If I can't have you then no one should Reese, kasalanan mo to why are you so nice to me? I know that you like me pakipot kalang."

He then grabbed her blazer and was about to take it off when I jumped out of the tree and landed beside them.

Once I landed I steady myself, I lazily brought my eyes to look at him. He seemed surprised at first but then he became aggressive.

I chortle and raise both of my arms, "Easy there tiger." A grin tugged the corner of my lips.

"Put a sino ka?!" he roared.

My lips turned upside down, I shrugged my shoulders, "Her boyfriend." I answered, it was bad enough that he got rejected tas dumagdag paako. I sneer, fancy.

The word boyfriend made him even more furious, he let go of the girl and was fuming as he approached me. I eyed the girl and signal her to run away, she seemed hesitant at first but eventually left.

"You!" duro nya saakin.

"Me?" I mocked. His fist balled, he gritted his teeth and eyed me with such jealousy and contempt.

"Ikaw! kasalanan mo ang lahat ng to, she should have been mine, but you snatch her! Die you bastard," he threw his fist in my direction in which I only dodge.

I let out a loud and mocking laugh as I dodge each one of his attacks. How come there's still people who become irrational when feeling jealous and rejected by those people they like.

I think I angry him even more, pulang-pula ang pagmumukha nya habang nagsisilitawan ang kanyang ugat sa leeg.

"Why? Are you mad at me?" I teased, hands in my pocket. The same mocking grin is still dancing on my lips.

"Putangina ka, bat di ka nalang kaya mamatay?" he's voice is loud and rough, edging with so much hatred.

I chuckle mentally, damn kakapasok ko lang dito may kaaway na agad ako.

"Rotten people like you should go first. Forcing someone who's clearly not into you is pathetic, you look dumb and desperate to be honest. "I provoke him, his eyes became bloodshot... not because he was about to cry but because he wanted to unalive me.

I kept on backing up, still dodging his attacks.

"That's all you got? throwing punches like a little boy?" I added fuel to his fire, making him burst into flames and debris.

He's beyond mad.

"I'll kill you, you bastard," madiin nyang saad and pounce on me. It caught me off guard and his fist landed on my jaw.

I stumbled, kamuntikan naakong matumba kaya humalakhak ako, I held my jaw, lick

my lips only to taste the metallic taste of blood. I spit it out, he grew cocky just because he hit me once.

"See that? I could easily kill you, you motherfucker," mayabang nyang saad. Disgusting.

Without saying a word, my heavy fist landed directly on his jaw, and he met the garden floor with a loud thud.

"And so do I," I utter, looking down at him.

"Put a ka!"

This compliment again?

He got up, akala ko aambahan nya muli ako ng suntok but no, he grabbed a stone right beside him and threw it at me, I was a bit slow to react dahil ang lapit nya causing it to hit my forehead.

My eyes twitched, I thought my ear rang for a moment, gago yun ah. My pulse beats profoundly as an electric of pain seers through my system. Kinapa ko ang noo ko, may nakapa akong malagkit at mainit na bagay kaya I curse under my breath. Dumugo ang noo ko.

Seeing me bleeds he laughs, "Yan, yan ang bagay sayong putanginamo----"

I look at him coldly, arrogant bastard. Before he could even recover from his laughter I attack him. I punch him continuously, nahihirapan syang sanggain ang lahat nang suntok na iginagawad ko sakanya kaya tumatama ito sa iba't-ibang parte ng kanyang katawan.

"Oh my gosh!!!!!"

As his body hit the floor again, a loud scream erupted in the air. I cock my head only to see a girl standing by the entrance, eyes widening in terror as she covers her mouth. I guess may pumupunta din dito tuwing umaga. Her scream attracted passersby.

I sigh in exasperation, naglakad ako papuntang ilalim ng puno, isinalpak ko ang sarili ko sa ugat nito and rested my back. I'm getting bored. Dealing with obsessive crazy guys is exhausted. I closed my eyes, wala na sira na ang araw ko.

I heard him move but I did not dare open my eyes to check what he was doing, I just let the breeze embrace me.

"Hoy!! ibaba mo yan!!!"

"Putangina! call Knox, bilis!!!!"

"Open your eyes!!!"

A panic scream reached my ears; I slightly opened my eyes only to see him holding a rock...practically a boulder. Instead of panicking, I looked at him smugly, I bent my knees and rested my elbows on top of it as I leaned my back to give him a boyish and mocking grin.

"Is that how you fight Mr. Lover boy?" my voice was laced with clear mockery.

"Papatayin kita," he strongly declares.

Pang-ilang beses ko na nga ba to narinig? nakakainis na ha.

"Just because a girl rejected you nagkakaganyan kana? even forcing yourself to her? threatening and harassing her? if you truly love her then let her go, hindi yung nagpupumilit ka. Mukhang tanga ka talaga kanina alam mo ba yon?" ani ko.

I think I provoked him again, he raised the rock and was about to throw it at me, when an authoritative, cold and airy voice rang through our ears.

"What do you think you're doing?"

I looked past his waist and saw Knox, standing. A wry smile escapes my lips, my prince charming is saving his princess who is in distress. I chuckle, what a joke.

"P-pres," he nervously utter, he dropped the stone he was holding at pinagpagan ang uniform nyang nalukot. "I-It's not what you think," kinakabahan nyang saad.

Nakita ko ring nakasunod ang iba pang officer's kay Knox, kaya mas lalong dumami ang estudyante dito sa garden.

Knox did not utter another word and pierce his gaze to see me. Our eyes locked and I just shrugged my shoulders, nonchalant of what was happening. He started walking towards me, nilagpasan nya ang nagpapanic na Yohan.

When he reached my spot, he crouched down.

"You're bleeding," he said.

"I'm aware," I answered.

He sighs, he fishes out his handkerchief in his pocket and directs it to my bleeding forehead.

"Second day and already causing trouble, aren't we?"

I purse my lips at tinuro ang sugat ko sa noo, "Injure yung tao oh, maya mo na ako sermonan," angal ko but he just looked at me coldly.

Tumayo na sya at tinalikuran ako, "Bring him to the disciplinary office, we'll have to investigate what happened here." He commands his subordinate.

Hearing what Knox had said Yohan's hand trembled and he turned pale. I guess the disciplinary office or whatever is a big deal here.

Nagsimula na syang maglakad papalayo kaya nagkasalubong ang kilay ko.

"Ah hello! injured po ang tao oh! paki-alalayan naman po sana," pangunguha ko sa attention nya.

He stopped in his tracks and looked back at me kaya malapad ko syang nginitian.

"Kaya mo na ang sarili mo."

Bastos!!

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

Boring. I went to the infirmary after the incident and decided to just skip class dahil bigla akong tinamad. Inunan ko ang braso ko, glancing at the ceiling trying to figure out what I should do next. I move to my side and sigh, buryong buryo naako. I wonder what Knox was doing right now.

I sat and took off my jacket at isunukbit iyon sa balikat ko. I decided to leave, the smell of disinfectant makes me want to vomit. Akala ko sa hospital lang ang amoy na ganito. Hinawi ko ang kurtina and was about to walk out when I noticed a couple who just entered the infirmary while kissing.

"Hmm...baka may makakita saatin dito," the girl uttered drunkenly.

"Chill, no one is here."

I smirk, "Yea chill." I utter, making them stop midway. When they saw me agad silang nagkandaugaga.

"Putangina mo walang tao dito!" The girl slapped the guy's shoulder and hid behind him.

Napakamot ang lalaki, seemingly embarrassed himself, "Kamalaman ko ba," he whispered

I sneer, "Before you do the deed, check your surroundings first." I can't help but laugh because of their expressions. They're like little kids who just got discovered by their mother stealing candies.

My eyes find their way to one of their nameplates. A smirk creep in my lips as I notice na freshmen palang sila. Gosh, kids these days.

I reached for my pocket, "Make sure to use protection kiddos, mahirap mag-alaga nang bata," I handed him the condom. He grinned and accepted it while the girl behind him flush because of embarrassment.

"Got it," he saluted with a mischievous smile playing on his lips. I ruffled his hair before making my way out.

Naiiling ako habang nangingiti, oh to be young and carefree, doing whatever you want without restriction. Napatigil ako, why am I sounding like a damn old person? I sigh and continue walking.

I check my phone.

It's past 10 o'clock, with nothing to do I scroll through my contact list searching for something.

Nang di ko makita ang nais kong makita I opened my gallery, I swear na kinunan ko nang picture ang map nitong paaralan.

When I finally saw it, I memorized it and found my way to Knox's office.

"I hope he won't kick me out," I mumble under my breath followed by a subtle chuckle.

When I got to his office, I knocked twice before opening the door. And there he was sitting with his glasses dangling up on his nose while reading some paper works. I leaned against the door frame.

"Sup," I voiced out to grab his attention. He slowly lifted his head, and his gaze found mine. He looked at me coldly napangisi ako sabay sipol.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in his usual tone. Nagkibit balik at ako and close the door behind me.

I walked up to him, "I'm bored." I lifted my eyebrows and sat at the chair in front of his desk. "What are you doing?" I asked habang minamata ang mga papeles na hawak nya.

"School report," he answered. I purse my lips, I feel like talking for him is such a chore kaya maikli pa sa maikli kong sumagot.

Umikot ako at pumunta sa likod nya, I admire how neat and organized his table, "Wala kabang klase?" I grabbed one of his pencils and put it in his ear.

"Wala."

Napatango ako, "Anong oras ka uuwi?" tanong kong muli.

He stopped for a moment and craned his neck to see me, he looked at me blankly kaya malapad ko syang nginitian.

"Get out." He commanded kaya napanguso ako.

"Wag ka namang ganyan, accompany me dahil bored ako," I rested my hand on the table and tilted my head to see him clearly. His thick and sharp eyes stare past my soul kaya halos manginig ako.

"Don't you have anything else to do?" he utters at bumalik na sa kanyang ginagawa paying me no mind.

"Wala kaya nga nandito ako diba?" natatawa kong saad pero hindi nya ako pinansin.

"Nga pala anong nangyarin don kay Yohan? Pinarusahan mo ba? Aba! Dapat lang tignan mo yung ginawa nya saakin!" I pointed on my forehead na may sugat pero hindi nya man lang ako nilingon. "Masakit kaya," I added pero hindi nya parin ako pinansin.

I poke his cheeks, "Pansinin mo ako hoy, pumunta ako dito para sayo tas di mo manlang ako papansinin?" pagdadabog ko but he remained indifferent. Ako nalang lagi ang naiinis! Nakakainis na!

"Once again Mr. Sevilliana, get out." I bobbed my head at his remark.

"Anyway, I have something VERY inappropriate to say," I trailed off, a grin dancing on my lips as I lean closer, "Can I have your number?" I whispered.

"No." Agarang sagot nya kaya nabura ang ngiti sa labi ko.

Napapalatak ako, "Why not?!" I questioned him with such disbelief.

"A no is a no, get out. You're not a child anymore." He reprimanded. Bumalik ako sa upuang nasa harap nya at matigas syang tinignan.

"Then I'll be staying here hangga't hindi mo binibigay ang number mo," I stubbornly declare. I grabbed the paper he was reading at winagayway yun sa harap nya. He looked at me boredly kaya tinaasan ko sya nang kilay.

"Get a life dude," aniya bago hinablot pabalik ang papel na hawak ko.

"I'll do it, but first give me your number," I prompted, which made him sigh in exhaustion. A smile of triumph weighed on my lips when he reached for his pockets

and opened his phone.

"Your phone. Give me your phone," he held out his hand, maligalig ko namang binigay ang cellphone ko sakanya.

"12345 ang password," I utter, tumaas muli ang tingin nya saakin.

"Are you a kid?"

"Oo, baby mo." I giggle but then I abruptly stop laughing when I realized my own words, I shiver and my face contorted with disgust. Puta ka cringe.

"You're weird."

I clear my throat at hindi nalang sya pinansin. I still can't believe that I just said that in front of him. Fuck! I did make a fool out of myself, and the worst part is that this guy witnessed it first hand.

Inabot nya saakin ang cellphone ko kaya agad ko iyong kinuha, I held my chin trying to find the best name that will suit him. A ding of idea hit my hit kaya agad akong napangiti, I typed his contact name and saved it.

I called his number, "Save that number." I winked at him and decided to head out. "I'll get going then," I bid my goodbye, he just shook his head at hindi na ako pinagtuonan nang pansin.

I giddily made my way to the cafeteria dahil nagugutom nanaman ako. On my way, a lot of girls greeted me, I wink at them dahil maayos ang mood ko ngayon. Even the breeze smells sweet to the point that I can almost taste it.

I unlocked my phone and typed a message.

Sabay tayo uwi mamaya :)

I sent it. Seconds later my phone buzzes.

I'm busy.

Then I'll wait for you, no worries.

No need.

I insist hmm. Just cook for me.

What's this? Am I your mother?

Napatawa ako sa reply nya, I typed a message and sent it before turning my phone off.

No, but I would like to taste your cooking.

When I reached the cafeteria I happened to bump into Rafael kaya sabay na kaming pumasok. When he saw the bandage on my forehead, his forehead creased.

"What happened to you?" He asked, trying to hold back his laughter.

I shrugged my shoulder, "Some crazy dude throws a fucking rock at me." I answered and that gave him enough idea of what I did and ended up bursting into laughter.

"Gago masakit?" natatawa nyang saad. I deadpan him bago kinutosan.

"Hayop ka pala eh! What if butasan ko yang noo mo tas tanongin kita kong masakit? Hayop na to." Naiinis kong ani. He looked at me in disbelief and started shaking his

head while still laughing. Sige lang maihi ka sana sa pants mo.

"Ang bobo mo kahit kelan, it's so good seeing you like that to be honest," inakbayan nya ako habang pinupunasan ang luhang tumakas sa mata nya.

"Nasaktan na nga yung tao tas natutuwa ka pa, dati kabang adik?" I yanked his arms off of my shoulder at nauna nang maglakad.

He followed me, "Pano mo nalaman?"

"Sa mukha mo palang alam ko na naadik ka," bara ko sakanya na sya namang tinawanan nya.

"Gago."

"Where's Rayne?" I asked. Rafael's eyes landed on his screen when it vibrated.

"On his way here."

Tumango nalang ako, naghanap nalang kami nang mauupoan at inantay si Rayne bago kami mag order. When he arrived the first thing that he noticed was my forehead, when I told him what really happened, he laughed at me.

Who in their right mind laughs at their friend who just got injured? Probably them because they're not in their right mind either. Mga gago.

"Uuwi ako bukas kayo?" Rayne informed us. Napatango ako, I forgot that you are allowed to go home every weekend.

"Yeah," I answered.

"I don't know, I kinda liked it in here,"

Our eyes landed on Rafael when his mischeivous tone came into surface. I eyebrows met; I squinted my eyes trying to figure out what was playing inside his big brain.

"You're up to something," I'm pretty sure this guy is up to something.

His hand found its way on his lips, he snickers. "You know me so well."

I scoff, they kept saying that I'm a wolf in sheep's clothing, but Rafael is far worse than me. He's so hard to figure out kaya minsan hindi namin alam kong ano ang nangyayari sa buhay nya.

We couldn't possibly know unless he said it himself.

"Try not to do anything stupid that might put you in danger," sermon sakanya ni Rayne.

"Chill, I'm not doing something illegal. Gusto ko lang pumarito muna, masama ba?" He grins; he swirled the pasta on his fork before putting it in his mouth.

Napailing nalang ako at hinayaan nalang sya. Whatever he does, does not concern me anymore. Malaki na sya, kaya nya na ang sarili nya.

When I finished eating agad akong tumayo, "I'll get going may klase pa ako,"

Nauna na akong umalis, I still have a class this afternoon and I still have a plate to finish.

I spend my afternoon sitting in class, not listening but in daze.

Iisa lang ang klase ko ngayong hapon kaya nang matapos, I spend the rest of my time in the library working on my plates and some of my assignments.

Putangina, gusto ko na talagang makagraduate.

The sun had rested on the horizon casting golden hue everywhere, I massaged my temple and fished out my phone. I typed a message.

You done?

I sent it and waited for a couple of minutes before getting a response from him.

Almost.

I smiled, short as always.

I'll wait outside your classroom then...

Hindi ko na sya hinintay na magreply, I tidy my things at lumabas na sa library. Tinahak ko ang daan papuntang department nila, he is the pride and joy of his department, his face is all over the school kaya alam ko kong saan sya pwedeng matagpuan.

I smirk, I mean, how should I not know?

When I arrived marami na ang estudyanteng nasa labas nang kwarto, dismissal na.

I scan the whole place to find Knox, I spotted him at a distance kaya napangisi ako.

Amidst the crowds he stands out more than anyone.

With his well-built figure, his underlying presence makes him the center of attention of any occasion.

He spotted me kaya kinawayan ko sya.

"Hey!" I greeted him.

"I told you not to come," bungad nya saakin na syang tinawanan ko lang.

"Pardon? you never told me anything," I retaliated, he looked at me for a second before walking past me.

I followed him, "Ano ulam natin?" I asked not minding the eyes that had been following us ever since.

"I don't know."

I purse my lips, "May dish palang 'I don't know' bago yun ah, masarap ba yan?" I teasingly utter.

Mukhang havey ata dahil hindi nya ako pinansin.

"Should we order a takeout?" I suggested.

"Delivery can't get in here."

"Oh edi magluluto ka? pano tayo kakain nyan?"

"You're so noisy," he said that left me speechless.

This is the first time that someone said that in front of my face. Ayaw ko na nga

maging friendly, nagiging masama ako eh.

I pouted, ayaw ko na talaga.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Austine bro!" I crane my neck to see the owner of the voice who just called me. Kinawayan nya ako nang makita nya ako, I just ignored him and continued walking.

"Gago saglit!!" rinig kong sigaw nya pero nagbingi-bingihan lang ako. When he finally leveled my pace hinawakan nya ang balikat ko.

I yanked his hand off of my shoulder, "Kaylangan mo?" masungit kong anang. Tinapik nya ang balikat ko sabay batok sakin kaya napa palatak ako, gago yun ah.

"Putangina! gusto mo atang maputolan nang kamay ano?" singhal ko dito pero ang gago tinawanan lang ako.

"Chill dude, ireremind lang sana kita na may quiz tayo mamaya sa isa nating major," he informed me. Nagsimula na akong maglakad tungo sa classroom namin.

"Do I look like I care hmn? Joshein?" walang ganang sagot ko. I saw in my peripheral vision that he scratched his nape.

"Look, I just wanted to inform you dahil nakatulog ka habang nag-aannounce ang prof natin," bugrot nito na syang hindi ko naman pinansin.

"Well then, thanks." I simply reply. Wala ako sa mood ngayon.

I initially plan to cook our breakfast today pero ang puta itlog na nga lang ang piniprito ko nasunog pa kaya ayun nagmumukha nanaman akong tanga. Kay galing.

I exhale sharply bat kasi wala akong talent sa pagluluto.

"I'll give you a head if you don't know," habol nya.

"Disgusting bro!" komento ko na syang ikinatawa nya.

I just shook my head and continued walking.

I met Joshein just a week after we transfeered here, sya lang ata ang naglakas nang loob na lumapit sa akin.

Rayne, Rafael and I screwed ourselves yet again last last saturday, we ran into a bunch of tugs and Rayne being a dick headed as he is, pinatulan.

Kaya ayon, headline sa campus.

Pag dating sa classroom agad akong umupo sa dulo at dumukdok, I still think about the egg that I failed to perfect. Sayang.

"Uhhh...excuse me,"

A soft girly voice rang through my ear pero di ko pinansin. Should I let him teach me? Yeah, I should. It would be an honor na matuturoan nya ang isang tulad ko.

"Austine..."

Who in their right mind would decline a kindhearted and genuine request of mine.

"Is he asleep?"

"I think not, kakadating nya lang eh."

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko, can these two get away? nakakainis na kita mong nag-

iisip yung tao eh.

"I've already reported to the dean the things that needed immediate attention."

My head jolted to look for the owner the voice I just heard making the two girl's shoulders jump in surprise.

"Austine?"

I walked past them; I saw Knox walking just outside our room kaya agad akong lumabas.

"Pres!" bati ko. Agad naman syang napahinto, dumako ang tingin nya sa akin. He adjusted his glasses.

"Mr. Sevilliana what do you want?" ay ang taray naman.

I smirk. I leaned against the wall and raised him an eyebrow, "You busy?" I asked.

"Yeah." He answered in his usual tone.

I nodded, "Then I'll call you later, sabay tayong kumain." I wink at him at hindi na hinintay ang kanyang sasabihin, pumasok na ako sa loob nang classroom.

The two girls were still standing in front of my desk kaya tinaasan ko sila ng kilay.

"What do I owe you a pleasure ladies?" I sat on top of my desk and faced them. I tilted my head, flashed a grin and crossed my arms around my chest.

I looked at them from head to toe, my grin grew even wider. Ladies from this university sure got some good racks, just look at Knox, well-built, firm, a person who

exudes such aura.

The girl with a pink hair clip finally spoke, "A-ahh, I just wanted to lend you my notebook. May quiz tayo mamaya sa Architectural Comm. 4," she then handed me her notebook. Bumaba don ang tingin ko, it's pink and girly with bunnies and flowers.

"Hmm..." Kinuha ko ang notebook sa kamay nya. She beamed before turning to her friend. "What's your name?" I asked.

Her eyes widen as she stares at me, her cheeks slowly turning rosy. My eyes went blank, I do hope girls won't let themselves sway by any handsome men, some of them are jerks...like me.

"Jessie," as soon as I heard that name I choked on my saliva. Tangina?

I burst into laughter kaya nagtataka nila akong tinignan, shit! I just can't. The girl looked offended kaya tumigil ako, I wiped the tears that escaped my eyes.

"Look, sorry, I'm not laughing at you, ok?" I tried to clear things up. Because of your name is what I wanted to say but choose not to.

What's wrong with my existence at malapitin ako sa mga babaeng Jessie ang pangalan.

"Amm... may I ask why did you laugh?"

"No, you may not," I playfully utter. Her lips pursed kaya lumawak muli ang ngisi sa labi ko. Oh dear...

"So mean," she mumbles under her breath, almost sounding like she is sulking.

Binalik ko ang notebook sakanya, "Thanks baby girl, but I can handle this." I wink at her, wala sa sarili nyang tinanggap ang notebook.

I feel so tired already, gusto ko nang umuwi kaso first subject pa lang to. Hindi ko kaklase si Joshein sa iba kong subject dahil iba ang section nya which is good because that guy is a certified chatterbox and I hated it.

My first subject begins which is Art Appreciation, I yawn and fished my phone out of my pocket.

I typed a message and sent it to him.

I'm bored. Kunin mo nga ako dito :((

No response, I typed another message and sent it.

Di pala ako naka uniform.

Still no response. I sigh and turn off my phone.

I unbutton my shirt, loosen my tie revealing a white sando beneath it na hapit na hapit sa katawan ko. I relaxed my back and boredly turn my attention up ahead.

"Even during primitive times, man does not just craft tools to live and survive but also to express his or her feelings and thoughts. It was recorded in history—MR. SEVILLIANA!!"

A roar erupted in every corner of this room, passerby was shocked because of his sudden outburst and decided to see what was happening.

"Yes Mr. Kyphlosi?" I asked, feigning innocence.

His forehead creased deeply as he scans me. His thick, arrogant face mocks me in different languages.

"What do you think you're doing?" he throws a fucking marker at my direction which I easily dodge. Woah! easy there tiger.

I pick it up and swirl it on my thumb, "Sitting? why? what's wrong?" I asked innocently.

His fiery eyes burned as he looked at me. If humans can produce a smoke through their ears whenever they are angry, it would be visible in the naked eye right now.

"How impudent, hindi mo ba nabasa yung handbook?!!" Galit nyang sigaw sakin.

I shrugged my shoulder, "Is it necessary?" I blankly stare at him. He's around 30+ years old and had no wife in his life kaya ganon burgotin amputa. "Does it matter whether I'm wearing a uniform or not?"

He scowled, "Wag mong ipakita na wala kang pinag-aralan Mr. Sevilliana," his tone laced with pure mockery. We all know about his irrational outburst sometimes, just a slight mess and he'll mock and yelled at you.

I shrugged my shoulders, "If that's the case then you might consider questioning yourself Mr." I utter without a care.

"What?!" hindi makapaniwalang singhal nya sa akin. The frown on his forehead deepens even more.

"Just sayin'"

"You dare you to mock me?!" he walked towards me and grabbed me by my collar.

Napatayo ako ng wala sa oras making the other student gasp in surprise.

A smirk slowly creeping in my lips as I stare at him blankly. "What? did I say it wrong? look prof, pag mainit ang ulo mo wag ka sanang mandamay ano? just keep it to yourself. I heard na pinatawag ka ng dean kahapon? I wonder what happened?" I tilted my head and grin at him.

His eyes dilated after hearing what I just said.

We exchanged a few heated stares, the way he looked at me could easily kill me but I did not back down. I licked my lips and bobbed my head smugly. Sinong tinatakot mo? mama mo? ha! pathetic.

He harshly let go of my collar, "Walang kwenta!"

I raised my eyebrows, puta problema non? kong may problema man sya sa buhay nya wag syang mandamay, nakakabwesit naman tong taong to.

Kalbohin ko yun eh.

Inayos ko ang damit ko, tsk madumi na. Instead of continuing his lesson agaran syang lumaba pero bago yun he throws dagger looks at me before storming out at his convenience.

The class fell silent after that, no one dare to speak—all eyes are on me.

"I'll melt if you continue staring at me like that," I said while fixing the sleeve of my polo.

No one utter a single word till our next subject arrived...means Joshein is here also.

"Why so tahimik mga madlang people?!!!" he shouted as soon as he enter the classroom.

"Ingay mo, istaple ko yang bibig mo eh," reklamo ng isa kong kaklase.

I rested my back and folded my arms, antok ako.

"What if tagain kita? manahimik ka nga!"

I closed my eyes and pay them no mind, I want this day to end already. Ang daming ganap.

"Austine! mah bro! kamusta ang buhay natin!" A strong hand slapped my shoulder, napadilat ako only to see Joshein grinning in front of me like a fucking idiot.

If he only knew how much I want to punch is very gut would he still have the energy to pester me with his loud mouth?

"I'll cut your tongue off pag nagsalita kapa," banta ko sakanya. Umasim ang mukha nya, he purse his lips and acted like he was zipping it.

Nag thumbs up sya saakin kaya wala sa oras na napaikot ang mata ko.

Umupo sya sa tabi ko, "May nakita ako kanina--- puta sabi ko nga mananahimik."

He immediately stopped blabbering as soon as my cold and sharp gaze landed on me.

Our second subject of the day started, and of course may quiz nanaman.

"I hope nakaprepare kayo para sa quiz nato, you must remember na 30% of your grade galing sa mga quizzes nyo. Anong silbi kong mataas ang score nyo sa exam tas

puro kayo bokya sa quiz—"

Joshein interrupted him, "Ready na kami prof, baka pwede nang simulan ano?" he smiled at him. Natawa ang ibang kaklase namin sakanya, dyan ata sya nagmana eh parehas madaldal.

"Oh amm! of course Mr. Terrence, just make sure na makaperfect ka ha. Right minus wrong tayo dito," he started to hand out the test paper.

"Damn, paktay agad," Joshein sigh, napailing nalang ako at tinanggap ang test paper.

"Sure kang magiging ok ka----"

"No talking Mr. Terrence, minus 10 ka saakin tamo,"

"Tahi-tahimik ko dito prof oh! sabi ko nga tatahimik na, ang daldal kasi."

Hindi nalang namin sila pinansin, those two really get along well. Parehas may saltik.

"You have 50 minutes to answer. Begin."

Joshein shot me a concern look pero di ko nalang sya pinansin and started answering my paper.

"Wala na, goodbye future na talaga ako nito, wala naman dito yung nireview ko eh," Joshein mumble under his breath. I side-eyed him and saw that he was struggling with the questions.

Nilibot ko ang paningin ko, I saw that a lot of students are struggling to answer all the questions, tangina enumeration ba naman ok lang sana kong multiple choice eh.

Sa sobrang hirap yung iba kinakausap na yung kisame tas yung iba mas pinili nalang na iappreciate ang nature. I chuckled inwardly what the hell.

The time had past and it is time to pass our paper, kalbaryo talaga pag narinig ko ang tunog nang bell eh.

"Feel ko zero ako," halos maiyak na saad ni Joshein.

I scoff, " And to think you'll help me," natatawang saad ko.

He rolled his eyes, "What if ako nalang yung tinulongan mo?"

"Edi parehas tayong zero nyan," saad ko na syang ikinatango nya.

"Wala nang mga papel?" napabaling ang attention namin sa prof namin. "Ok so, well check your paper dahil may time pa tayo."

Anunsyo nya na kaya napaangal ang mga kaklase ko lalo na si Joshein.

"Sir kay Joshein nalang po yung checkan nyo," agad na napantig ang tenga ng katabi ko dahil sa narinig nya.

"Gaga umayos ka! sir kay Keira nalang bida-bida kasi!" aniya.

Our prof looks like he had enough, he slam his hand on the podium kaya napatigil sila.

"Well check your paper got it?" madiing saad nito, tumango ang lahat.

Habang nag checheck nang test paper hindi ako mapakali at panay ang silip sa cellphone ko.

As soon as I check the last number agad kong pinasa ang papel sa unahan at kinuha ang cellphone ko.

I bit my lips when I saw that he responded.

I won't eat, I'm busy.

Agad akong napanguso, neknek.

Daldalhan nalang kita, dyan nalang din ako kakain.

I sent it and turn my phone off. Timing naman na nag aannounced na si prof nang mga score.

"Terrence, 20/100"

"Holy fuck! what an actual son of a biscuit crackers!" He dramatically utter. " Pero ok lang everything happens for What reason?!!!!!" ang reaksiyon nya oo.

"And oh...Mr. Sevilliana," he looked up to me then sa test paper ko. "That was unexpected."

"Bat sir? nakazero ba?"

"No, he got a perfect score." He looked at my test paper, feeling satisfied.

" Impressive, the first person who got a perfect score in my subject." He smiled at me and I just shrugged my shoulders.

Gulat akong nilingon ni Joshein.

"Luh gago? naperfect mo? pano?!!"

Napatingin silang lahat saakin, I raised my eyebrows, lick my lips, a smirk plastering on my face.

"What? like it's hard?" I utter.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

After the class ended agad akong dumeritso sa canteen para bumili, alangan namang lalangoy ako don.

I ordered some Adobo and rice for him and Garlic shrimp and rice for me. After kong makapagbayad agad akong humayo sa office nya. Along the way nakasalubong ko si Rayne, my eyebrows raised when I saw that he was not looking straight. Lalagpasan nya na sana ako nang hawakan ko ang balikat nya.

"Putangino?"

"Gago, anong nangyari sayo?" I asked. He relaxed when he saw that it was me. He heaved a deep sigh and brushed his hair up, halatadong frustrated.

"Have you ever had this feeling where you wanted to punch someone but couldn't?" agad na lumukot ang mukha ko. Pinagsasabi nito? his tone was laced with disappointment and frustration.

"Oo, sa tuwing nakikita kita atat na atat akong bangasan ka," I manly roll my eyes. He glares at me, and I just scoff at him. Problema nito?

"Fuck! I'm so frustrated!" ginulo nya ang kanyang buhok. Napatango ako as if taking pity on him.

I patted his shoulder, "Alam mo kong gulong-gulo kana talaga, edi gumulong k----putangino!" Wala sa sariling napadako ang kamay kong may bitbit na supot dahil bigla nya nalang akong hinampas sa balikat.

"Di ka nakakatulong alam mo ba yun?" masungit na ani nito. My eyes twitch dahil ang hapdi nang pagkakahampas nya sa akin.

"Advice lang naman, para kang tanga!" reklamo ko habang hinihimas ang balikat.

"Sarilihin mo yang opinion mo. I don't need your unsolicited opinion," he coldly utter bago tumalikod. I look at him unbelievably, ikaw na nga ang tinutulongan eh?

Ungrateful brat.

Bago pa man makalayo huminto sya, kaya tumaas ang kilay ko. "Nga pala, let me borrow your watch I forgot mine,"

"No," agad kong tanggi. His forehead creased.

"Dude, ibabalik ko naman," naiinis nyang sabi.

I snorted, "Yeah suit yourself, kay Rafael ka manghiram." Agad akong tumalikod at naglakad papalayo sakanya. I heard how he throws multiple profanities at me but I pay him no mind.

Nang makarating sa office nila, akmang kakatok sana ako when the door swung open before I even touched it. I saw a petit boy, agad naman syang napahinto when he saw me. I scan him from head to toe, bago to ah?

"Zyran, don't forget your report," I pierce my eyes through him and saw Knox, sitting at his table.

"I won't, thanks," the boy smiled, showing his bunny teeth and dimples. Tumaas ang kilay ko when I saw how Knox's eyes softened for a moment but turned cold when he saw me. Napalunok ako, namamalikmata ata ako.

Gumilid ako at hinayaang makadaan si Zyran daw kuno, he looked at my way and smiled at me before walking out completely. May dala-dala syang box na puno ng papeles.

I just shrugged my shoulders and pushed myself in. May iilang tao ang nandito pero bahala sila dyan.

"As far as I can remember no outsider is allowed here," dumako ang tingin ko sa babaeng nakaupo malapit sa mesa ni Knox.

She had this famous pixie cut, glasses and such aura na nababagay kay Knox.

I grin, "Really? thanks for the information," I said nonchalantly. She scowled but I just ignored her and made my way to Knox's table.

Ngumiti ako sakanya bago nilapag ang pagkain sa harap nya. "What's this?" he asked.

"Maybe a phone and a charger," balibag kong sagot sakanya. He glared at me kaya natawa ako.

"Lunch, sabi ko sabay tayong kumain," Umupo ako sa upuang nasa harap ng table nya. I grabbed the plastic at isa-isang inilabas ang pagkain.

"I'll get going Knox, good luck with this gal," The girl sighs and walks out kaya napatawa ako.

"Goodluck daw Knox," I teased him, but he just ignored me.

I pushed the Adobo and rice in his direction, "Kain na," pang-aaya ko. Instead of paying any attention to the food, he turned his head to his computer and ignored me completely.

My forehead creases, "Pst! sabi ko kain na," pangungulit ko sakanya pero ang gaga dedma lang.

Pansin kong wala ng tubig ang tumbler nya, I stand up and went to the water dispenser to refill his tumbler.

"Alam mo bawal kaya magpagutom, you can function properly pag may laman ang tyan mo," sermon ko habang pinupuno ang tumbler nya.

"What are you, my mom?" his indifferent and cold voice echoed.

I chuckle softly, "Just saying, masama ba?"

Bumalik naako sa harap nya, nilapag ko ang tumbler sa gilid, he glance at me for a second before sighing.

"Ibalik mo nalang, di ako kakain," matigas na aniya. He massage his temple kaya napabuntong hininga ako.

"Kain na kahit kunti lang," binuksan ko ang lunch box na styro. The office was filled by the tangy aroma of Vinegar, soy sauce and garlic wafting through the air. Napalunok ako, mukhang masarap.

"Kain na o kakainin ko to?" pang-aalaska ko, mas lalong lumapad ang ngisi sa labi ko when I saw how he swallow.

"What? Do you want me to kneel and beg you? like oh! my dear majesty, may you hear the plea of this beggar, please eat your lunch as it hurts me deeply seeing you like this." I uttered dramatically, holding my chest as if hurt. I chuckled inwardly, enjoying his unamused expression.

He deadpanned me. I just tilted my head and flashed him a grin.

"Get out."

I purse my lips and open my lunch box instead, the smell of garlic buttered shrimp filling my nose making me swallow.

"Kong ayaw mong kumain edi ako nalang ang kakain, mabilis naman akong kausap eh," bulong ko. I peeled the shrimp ensuring not to make any mess, dahil baka masapak ako nito.

Akmang kakain na sana ako ng mapansin ang malagkit nyang tingin sa hipong hawak ko, binaba ko yun and grin at him.

"Gusto mo?" I teased him with the shrimp, aliw na aliw ako sa kanyang reaction. He tried so hard to fight back his desire to devour this poor shrimp but failed.

Natatawa kong binigay sakanya ang akin, he likes seafood kaya pala ayaw sa adobo. Tinabi ko na muna ang mga papel na nagkalat malapit sakanya. I fished out the wipes in my bag and gave it to him.

"Kainin mo nayan, akin nalang yung adobo," natatawa kong saad. He did not respond to me but happily eat the shrimp I had peeled. May natitira pang hindi nabalatan kaya binalatan ko nalang at binigay sakanya.

"Do you often skip meals?" I asked.

"Yeah," he simply answered.

"Anyway, who's that boy from earlier?" My eyes fixed on his every move when I brought that topic, his stoic face slightly faltered.

He clears his throat, "Zyran, a freshman transferee."

Napatango ako but my eyes completely went blank, his eyes...his eyes had this spark, a soft spot. I tilted my head, a mischievous grin slowly creeping in my lips. So, that's why.

I just replied with a hum and continued eating. We ate in silence, tinatamad akong magsalita bigla. When I finished eating agad kong niligpit ang pinagkainan ko at tinapon iyon sa basurahan. Walang pakundangan akong lumabas sa office nya.

It's stuffy in there kaya umalis ako. I checked my phone, magsisimula na maya-maya ang klase ko kaya humayo nalang ako papuntang classroom.

"Hey," a girl...my classmate or whatever approached me, walang kabuhay-buhay ko syang tinignan. She smiled at me and clung her arms around mine. "I'm Janice, but you can call me baby," she winks at me.

I scoffed and yanked her hands off of my arm na ikinagulat nya, "And I'm not in the mood, get lost." I smiled at her, nagtataka nya akong tinignan and I just raised my eyebrows.

"What's wrong with people nowadays," yeah, what's wrong with people nowadays.

After the class ended imbes na dumeretso sa dorm, dumaan muna ako sa harden, I just stood there, glancing out in nowhere exactly. The afternoon breeze embraces me, the sun is now setting in the horizon casting golden hue everywhere. I fished out the cigarettes in my pocket and lit one of them.

I puffed a smoke, threw my head back and let the breeze ruin my hair, swaying in four directions.

I watched as the sun drew its last glow of dusk, veiling the sky with black blanket.

Stars started shining, twinkling as if a tiny light bulb.

A wind grew chiller, and I just stayed there witnessing it all.

When I check my phone it's already quarter to seven o'clock in the evening kaya napagdisesyonan kong bumalik na sa dorm.

"Gutom na ako shutek nayan," reklamo ko nang kumalam ang sikmura ko.

Bumuntong hininga nalang ako and made my way to our dorm, when I reached it agad akong pumasok. The door creaked and I saw Knox at our mini kitchen, cooking.

Napangiti ako, "Nasama ba ako sa budget dyan?" napalingon naman sya when he heard my voice.

He looked at for me a second before nodding his head, "Bat ka umalis agad kanina?" he asked. Pumunta naman ako sa tabi nya, just to see what he was doing.

"Baka malate ako," sagot ko na syang ikinatango nya. "What were you cooking? what's that? I don't eat vegetable," I added.

"Sit the fuck down Mr. Sevilliana."

Napakagat ako sa labi ko at agad na umupo sa hapag, sungit may dalaw ata to. Kala mo di nag grade 2.

"Anyway, thank you for the food, I enjoyed it," he clears his throat, agad naman akong napangiti.

"Mahilig ka sa seafood?" Pansin ko lang kasi.

Tumango sya kaya mas lalong lumapad ang ngisi sa labi ko, "Punta tayong San Pedro Port sa Saturday, are you free? Maraming seafood don, we can hang out and eat lots of it," I happily prompted.

"No can do, I need to babysit my brothers," he said. My eyes widen, may kapatid sya?

"May kapatid ka?" gulat kong bulalas, agad naman akong napatakip sa bunganga ko when he slightly glared at me. "Sorry, akala ko kasi only child ka lang,"

He sighs, "Idiot."

Grabe tong isang to, napaka sama ng ugali.

Ngumuso ako, "Sama ka?" I asked yet again.

"Nah."

Napakamot nalang ako sa ulo ko, "Edi sa susunod?" I added again pero umiling lamang sya at di na nagsalita ulit.

Dickhead. Edi wag.

He finished cooking and we ate yet again in silence, as soon as I tasted his cooking agad akong napatigil.

"Woah," I murmur under my breath and continue eating. Mukhang mapapadami ata ang kain ko nito ah.

Magaling magluto ang isang to pwede nang mag-asawa but I doubt na mag-aasawa ang isang to. After we eat, I was the one who clean up and wash the dishes because I don't want to be unfair.

Matapos, I grabbed my phone and typed a message and sent it to our gc.

Austine Yohan Sevelliana:

Bar on Saturday?

Rafael Gale Lopez:

Bet just don't caused trouble

Rayne Ferrer Dela Costa:

Yeah Aust, don't cause trouble.

Rafael Gale Lope:

Shut up you're one to talk

Napatawa ako dahil sa reply ni Rafael.

Austine Yohan Sevelliana:

What if hanapan ka namin ng chicks Raf? you're always cranky, kulang ka ba sa lambing?

Rafael Gale Lopez:

What if butasan ko yang tagiliran mo?

Napatawa nalang ako habang naiiling, I turned my phone off at pumasok na sa kwarto ko. I took off my polo and sando I was planning to take a bath pero nauna pala akong kumain kaya napagpasyahan kong magpahinga muna.

I was just laying on my bed scrolling through my social media accounts when my door swung open agad kaya agad akong napaupo. Tinaasan ko ng kilay si Knox and he just shot a cold stare in my direction. He was standing right outside my door.

"What? may kaylangan ka?" I asked and walk towards him. I leaned against the door frame and looked at him smugly.

"We just saw each other a while ago and now you missed me already? Chill bro, we live in a same dorm makikita mo naman ako araw-araw," I crossed my arms around my topless chest. I tilted my head to see him even more.

I was hoping I could get a few emotions out of him but yet again, nothing was shown in his icy yet devastatingly handsome face.

"The last time I checked hindi lagayan ng pinggan at baso ang ref."

Ha?

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Fuck!"

He grunted when I kicked him in the stomach, his thick face contorted with pain. Namilipit sya sa sobrang sakit, akimang sisipain ko sya ulit when a hand grabbed my shoulder.

I looked past my shoulder and saw Rafael grinning at me like a wild man while puffing his cigarettes. Tinaasan ko sya ng kilay.

"Problema mo?" Buryong saad ko pero tinatawanan lang ako ng gago.

"Kakalabas lang natin tas bugbogan agad ang hanap mo?" natatawa nyang saad.

I yanked his hand off of my shoulder, I fixed my jacket at hinarap sya.

"Gago, balak ba namang busohan yung babae kanina," I said. Naglalakad kami pa balik sa bar since dito agad kami dumiretso pag kalabas palang namin sa University. It's saturday, and what's good about saturday? bars of course. You need to have fun while you can.

Rafael accompanied me to the parking lot dahil nalaglag ko ang wallet ko, luckily nakita ko naman and that's how I need up here.

"You should call the cops," napaikot ang mata ko sa sinabi nya.

"What do you want me to do? stand still?" Naiirita kong saboses. Tinawanan nya lang ako at lumapit sa babaeng nanginginig pa rin sa takot.

He talked to her, and I just turned and went inside the bar, hinayaan ko nalang sya don. Wala ako sa mood mang-alo ngayon.

Bumalik ako sa pwesto namin kanina and saw that Rayne is making out there, my face contorted with disgust and decided to go to the bathroom.

May nadaanan akong naglalampungan kaya mas lalong umasim ang pagmumukha ko, bwesit nayan nasstress ako. Instead of going to the bathroom lumiko ako ng daan pabalik sa pwesto namin.

"Susi mo akin na," I held out my hand. My voice reached him and he looked up, his face flushed and practically drunk.

"Why?" he asked, continuing what he was doing. He held the waist of the girl in his lap tightly and kissed her in her neck. Gross.

"I'll borrow, Elise called me, she wants me home." Pagpapalusot ko, upon hearing the name of my sister he halted.

"Elise?"

Tumango ako.

Binitawan nya ang babaeng hawak nya at tumayo, he patted my shoulder, he fished out his car keys from his pockets and hand it to me.

"Tell her I said hello," Tumango nalang ako at tumalikod na.

I wanted to rest badly, nadrain ako bigla. While walking towards the parking lot my phone buzzed, I stopped. I swear my heart almost leaped out of my chest.

Dali-dali kong kinuha ang cellphone sa bulsa ko, I was really excited to see who messaged me. When I unlocked my phone, I was hoping to see his name but then bumagsak bigla ang balikat ko when I read the message.

Always stay connected. Manage your subscriptions and check out the Smart App for Bigger napalunok ako at wala sa sariling napahawak sa labi ko. "...I'll eat from your lips."

Silence....another silence...and another. I blink my eyes twice while looking at his blank face. Tuluyan na akong napahalakhak when he looked at me up and down, tinachansa ata kong baliw naba ako or ano.

"You're so hilarious," natatawa ko pa ring saad. Oh my gosh! Napahawak ako sa tyan ko dahil ayaw pa talagang tumigil ng tawa ko. His face! Gosh! I can't.

I wiped the tears that had escaped my eyes, magsasalita pa sana ako when he uttered something that made me freeze in my spot.

With a rough and low voice, he said, "Shut up or I'll kiss you for real."

## Page 10

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I clear my throat, "Getting bolder, aren't we?" natatawa kong saad, trying to make it playful as much as possible.

His eyebrows lifted, "I meant it, Sevilliana." He drawled as he looked at me up and down.

Napalunok ako at wala sa sariling binasa ang labi. Gago ba sya?

"Shut the fuck up Knox," I uttered dismissively.

With his free hand he harshly grabbed my collar pulling me close to him. I meet his sharp yet unreadable eye. The corner of his lips rose.

"Cat got your tongue?" He scoffs, hindi man lang sya nag effort na itago ang pagkasarkastic sa boses sya.

Damn this guy.

Tinaas ko ang kamay ko habang nakangisi, despite the fact na nagulantang ako sa inasal nya. Agad na bumagsak ang mata ko sa mga labi nyang nanunuya.

I turned my eyes to his gaze, "Come on Villanueva, we both know na hindi mo kayang gawin yun," I challenged him. "Go on, do it if you have the guts," I added mockingly and licked my lips.

I thought he would back down, but I fret not. This one is tough, masyadong sakit sa ulo.

We both share an intense staring contest, his eyes cold while mine laced with malice and mockery. For a second I forgot that this person in front of me is a guy, all I can ever think of is to ravish this fucker alive and well.

"Cat may not have my tongue, but maybe your tongue can have it instead," I let out a rough, low chuckle, the sound rumbling like distant thunder, edged with a hint of amusement.

His eyes twitch and my grin grew even more wider. He pushed me harshly to the point na halos matumba na ako, but instead of getting mad humalakhak ako.

"You're disgusting, You're not even my type."

"And you're exactly my type, Mr. President." Pigil tawa kong saad. He just looked at me lazily.

"Disgusting."

I placed my right hand on my lips to try to cover my smirk. I tilted my head, "You're asking for it," kibit balikat kong saad.

He deadpanned me and turned his back to his sister.

"Tara na," aya nya sa kanyang kapatid. Her sister looked up to him, confused.

"Bakit? akala ko ihahatid tayo ng boyfriend mo?" she innocently asked. Nanlaki ang mata ko sa narinig.

"Why would you say that?" His brother asked.

She shrugged her shoulders, "Kanina pa kayo nag-uusap ang lapit nyo kasi sa isa't-isa

kaya akala ko mag k Kiss na kayo."

And then it hit me, nanonood pala ang kapatid nya sa amin. Thinking about it makes me laughed inwardly, damn, ganon ba talaga kami sa mga mata nya? A couple whos talking about romantic things kahit na sa totoo halos patayin na ako ng kuya nya.

"Aren't you my Kuya's boyfriend?" baling ng bata sakin, her doe and innocent eyes landed on mine.

I crouched down and patted her head, "I don't swing that way baby girl, I was just teasing your brother," I explained. I prefer bigger tits and not bigger dick.

I looked up at him, his face was illuminated by the sun. I squinted my eyes, dahil nasisilaw ako. My mind started to drift when his eyes never left mine. Puta what's his deal?

Napalunok ako at binalik ang atensyon sa kapatid nyang busy kakakain ng Ice cream.

"Sa tabing dagat, nandon ang bahay namin." Knox voice rang kaya napatingala ulit ako. Nagtataka ko syang tinignan. Sensing my confusion, he cleared his throat. "Thatid mo kami," he demanded?

Is he asking or demanding me? I grin, either way I don't care.

I flashed him a smile at tumayo para tapikin ang balikat nya, "Let's go?" aya ko at nauna na sa sasakyan.

Kinuha ko ang supot na dala-dala nya at aksidenting nagtama muli ang mga mga namin.

"Akin na," I whispered. Hinayaan nya lang akong kuhanin ang supot sa kamay nya.

After that I smiled at him, and I opened the door to the passenger seat for him and grabbed a wipes at binigay sa kapatid nya.

Nakabuka lang ang kamay nya habang nakanguso, I smile and went to her direction.

Yumuko ako at kinuha ang kamay nya, "Masarap ba?" tukoy ko sa Ice cream.

She nodded, her eyes fixed on her hand, "Opo, salamat, kelan mo po ako ulit ililibre?"

"Kaycee."

With just his brother's reprimanding voice she bit her lips and drew a peace sign in front of me. "Joke lang," she awkwardly chuckled.

I ruffle her hair, "It's fine, just asked me and I'll buy it for you. I do have a sister also just around your age and mahilig din sya sa ice cream kaya siguradong magkakasundo kayo non." I said.

Her eyes widen, "Talaga po?!" gulat at namamangha nyang sigaw. "May kapatid kayo? ano pong pangalan?"

"Elise. Elisiana Clementine Sevilliana, that's her name," A soft smile escaped my lips, I was the one who named her after all.

"Woah, that's a pretty name, feel ko napakaganda nya rin," she squeal.

I agree, "Yeah, she's pretty, very." Maganda yung kapatid ko pogi ako eh.

I patted her head again and opened the door to the back seat, I gently put her inside and fastened her seat belt. In my peripheral vision I caught Knox, attempting to sit in

the back seat. I closed the door at umikot ako.

I grabbed his wrist, "What do you think you're doing?" kunot noong tanong ko.

He yanked my hand off of his wrist, "Uupo dito, hindi ba halata?"

Bigla akong napahawak sa beywang ko, I licked my lips and threw my head back. I brushed my hair up at problemado syang tinignan.

"Sa front seat ka," I insisted.

"Drive, Sevilliana." He commanded kaya mas lalong nagkasalubong ang kilay ko. Yayo ba ako nito?

"I-fine," I said defeatedly, I licked my lips and looked at him, full of hopelessness and sigh.

Bahala na nga. Sinarado ko muna ang pinto sa front sit bago pumasok at nagmaneho. Malapit lang ang bahay nila sa bahay namin, maybe about 20 minutes na walking distance, Sa subic beach.

When I spotted our house, I slowed down, "Bahay namin, so if you wanna visit me feel free," I caught his eye in the rear-view mirror kaya kinindatan ko sya.

"Nandyan po ba si Elise?" Excited na sabi ni Kaycee. Dumamba sya sa kapatid nya para mas makita ang bahay namin, dahil na sa left side ito at timing naman na don nakaupo si Knox. "Ang laki, may kabayo ba kayo dyan?"

I chuckle, "We have a few of them, nasa ranch nga lang," I answered at bahagyang minamata si Knox, for his reaction. I sigh when he didn't even looked at my way, bahala sya dyan. Ako ang naiinis sa kanya eh.

My goal is to pester him till I get on his nerves, pero bakit palang ako pa ang naiinis sa kanya?

Kaycee and I are the only one who's talking dahil ang magaling nyang kuya ayun, nakapikit ang mata. Bwesit na to. From the market to their house, it only took us 30 minutes reached our destination.

Nauna na akong lumabas para kunin ang dala nila sa likod, I roamed my eyes and saw a house, a decent distance from the ocean, It wasn't that big nor small, It was made of concrete and woods. It screams coziness.

Imagine living near the ocean where you can listen to the relentless songs that the waves are playing sounds nice. The morning sun hit the ocean, and I smiled as it glimmered like it held a thousand of gold underneath it.

"It's kinda nice in he----" My words got cut off when my phone rang.

Agad ko itong kinuha at sinagot ang tawag ng tatay ko.

"Where are you?" bungad nya.

I clear my throat, "At the beach."

"What are you doing there?" he said, laced with irritation and seriousness. "Get your ass here, right now." Utos nito at binabaan ako ng tawag.

Napalunok ako, I swallow the words I wanted to say and let it be. Nagsisimba ka tas ang sama ng ugali mo, anong purpose nang pagsisimba mo? You'll asked for forgiveness and commit another mistake and repeat the same process? aba ayos.

I faced them, "I'll get going," paalam ko.

"Hindi ka po papasok sa bahay?" I shake my head at Kaycee's question. Sayang gusto ko pa naman sanang pumasok sadyang panira lang yung tatay ko. I glanced at Knox na kinukuha sa lapag ang mga supot na pinamili nila.

"I'll get going," I informed pero hindi nya ako pinansin at nagpatuloy lang sa ginagawa nya. When are you going to look at me?

I just sigh at pumasok ng muli sa sasakyan ko. I glance at him once again before I leave.

I went to the Church, and the mass is already starting agad ko namang nakita sila Elise. I sat for almost an hour; my mind is drifting farther and farther away. I kept fiddling with my phone, his silence made me anxious. Did I do something wrong?

I mean he's often quiet, but he was never that quiet, and it just bothered me for some reason. The mass has come to an end...at last.

Agad kaming dumeretso sa park, as much as I wanted to sit next to Elise, I just couldn't when those two were near, so I just sat far from them.

I'm lying when I say na hindi ako nangungulila sa nanay ko. Our bond...our laughter...her. I miss her. I remember back when I was a child, my mom was practically my human diary, she knew everything that had happened to me, from dawn to dusk.

I chuckled, looking back I was a complete chatterbox. I rested both of my arms behind me and looked up. I cover my eyes with my hand when the sun directly hits my face.

"I want to talk to you," I murmur under my breath. Napagpasyahan kong bisitahin si Mom sa pahingahan nya.

Hindi na ako nag-abala pang magpaalam sa kanila at lumalis nalang. I brought some flowers, lilies her favorite and some chocolate bars that she liked.

I drove to the cemetery, pumaparito ako every sunday just to visit and talked to her.

"Hey mom," I softly uttered. I caress her gravestone; a bitter smile escaped my lips. "I brought you your favorites," Nilapag ko ang dala ko sa harap ng lapida nya.

"I met a guy mom, and he's peculiar to be honest," I chuckled when Knox's firm and stoned face crossed my mind. "I really wanted to get on his nerves, you know just to shatter his demeanor pero ang potek ako ang naiinis sa kanya. He's so aloof, reserved, a man with few words and..." I trailed off.

"Handsome," I admit. "I mean, mas gwapo pa rin naman ako, mas macho, mas gwapo ulit. Mas matalino nga lang yun," bawi ko.

Napakagat ako sa labi ko at umupo sa sahig, "Pero at least feel ko lamang ako ng ilang ligo sa kanya."

I talked and talked until my throat became dry. I stayed there for almost 3 hours. I turned off my phone para hindi ako macontact ng magaling kong ama dahil ayaw kong makausap sya. This place has been my comfort zone, I am not afraid to go here, in fact I'm more at peace when I'm here.

Feel ko dati akong kaluluwa. Na reincarnate lang ganon.

I decided to go home when the sun started to set in the horizon, babalik pa ako sa school mamayang gabi dahil may pasok kami bukas. I smirk, I'll see you Knox.

Evening came and I'm ready to go back to the university. I fished out my phone and typed a message.

Sup, Knox. Gusto mong sumabay sa akin? I'm about to return, how about you?

I sent it and waited a few minutes for his reply.

Shut up.

Napanguso ako, tamo pati sa text ang sungit.

Make me Knox, make me shut my mouth ;)

I chuckled after I sent that message. Teasing him isn't that half bad, nag eenjoy ako kahit na minsan dedma lang ako sa kanya. Ang kapal naman ng mukha pag ganon.

He did not reply back kaya binulsa ko na ang cellphone ko.

"I'll get going," paalam ko at hinalikan sa pisngi si Elise. "Be a good girl ok?" I kissed her forehead.

"Take care of yourself po kuya ha? always eat vegetables and drink your milk," paalala nya. Natatawa kong ginulo ang buhok nya.

"Yes boss," I saluted na syang ikinatawa nya.

I looked up and saw them kaya bahagyang nabura ang ngiti sa labi ko.

"Una na ako," walang gana kong saad.

"Is that how you talk to us young man?" Pagalit ang boses ng tatay ko kaya napataas ang kilay ko.

"Want me to talk sweetly to you?" I sarcastically said. His forehead creases and was

about to lash out when Kianna stopped him.

"Hayaan mo na," she whispered.

"Bastos eh!"

Napailing nalang ako, "You're in front of the child, are you really sure na ganyang ugali ang ipapakita mo sakanya?" nanunuya kong saad. "Anyway, I'll get going."

I turned my back at pumasok na sa sasakyan ko. I honked my car signaling them na aalis na ako. When the gate opened agad kong pinaharurot ang sasakyan ko.

Hindi pa man ako nakakalayo when my phone lit up, I was about to ignore it when his name appeared on my screen. I slowed down and opened his message, when I read its content agad kong niliko ang sasakyan ko.

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Hey," I greeted when I saw him standing on the sidewalk. I pulled over In Front of him and opened my door: I stepped out of the car. Nakapamulsa akong nakatayo sa harapan nya. I raised my eyebrows and put my hands inside the pockets of my trouser.

I leaned against my car, "What's with the change of heart?" biro ko pero tamad nya lang akong tinignan kaya napangiwi ako. Confirm bato ang isang to.

He sighs and carry his bag, umikot sya sa passenger seat kaya nagkibit balik at nalang ako at pumasok ng muli sa loob ng kotse ko, sapakin ko kaya to?

"Nasaan na yung kapatid mong madaldal?" I started a conversation dahil baka mapanis tong laway ko.

"At home," sagot nito. Tumango ako. I side-eyed him and saw that he is fastening his seat belt. Napadpad ang mata ko sa jawline nya, I smirk inwardly. This one is as handsome as me.

With his cold and unreadable face, yet his eyes contradicting it.

His deep Burgundy brown eyes, and when the sunlight caught them, it somehow turned into something more mesmerizing.

The soft, warm glow of the sun turned them into a mesmerizing golden hue.

I just noticed it when he looked down at me, and how the sunlight danced across his face.

Ethereal.

Mata lang hindi ugali.

Bumuntong hininga nalang, I started the engine of my car and drove dahil walang balak ang isang tong makipag-usap sa akin. Binaybay namin ang daan patungo sa Unibersidad, siguro mga dalawang oras at kalahati ang byahe kaya medjo matagal-tagal talaga.

I haven't visited my grandma, kong mag-isa lang sya sa mansyon nya I might feel worried for her but since kasama nya ang asawa nya eh ok na. My biological grandpa died when I was 12 and that's the painful and sorrowful day for all of us.

My grandma remarried because she couldn't handle the loneliness. She was 64 when my grandpa died. And God knows how shocked I was when I received the news na ikakasal sya ulit. I mean think about it.

"Hmm," I hum para lang may ingay akong marinig dahil para akong nabibingi dito. Nyeta. "Would you mind?" I asked habang tinuturo ang radio. Tinignan nya ako bago ang radio at umiling kaya agad kong pinaandar ang radio.

Agad na bumungad ang kantang Happy w u by Arthur Nery. I knew this song dahil paulit-ulit tong pinapatugtog ng kapatid ko dati.

"You have me already, this ain't ordinary~" I softly sang.

I've been attached with the feeling of love reciprocating

And waking up with you by my side

Stuck in the same page for ages, but, baby, you're ageless

And fate is in our hands somehow

Napangiti ako habang naiiling, sinasabayan ko kasi ang kanta. I remember how my sister sung her heart out when this part came in.

"Lipat ko ba? Corny kasi," natatawa kong baling sakanya. Nakayuko sya and seems like sleeping. He crossed his arms around his chest and meet my gaze.

"Don't." He uttered, his voice ragged and low.

I lick my lips and nodded, "I didn't know na mahilig ka sa ganyang beat."

He side-eyed me, "And I didn't know na marunong ka palang kumanta." Segunda nito. He chuckles and my eyes widen as I stare at his face. What?

My chest tightens and I swallow the lump in my throat, his voice still lingering in my consciousness. "Tsk, basic." I boasted at binalik ang tingin sa kalsada.

"Nga pala are you hungry?" I asked dahil ako kanina pa gutom. I scrunch my nose, I want burger.

"Bakit pag sinabi ko bang oo, ililibre mo ako?" Panunuya nito.

I smirked, "Say less."

I drove to a nearby Mcdo mag d-drive thru nalang kami. "What do you want?" Baling ko sa kanya.

"Anything," aniya habang nasa cellphone ang atensyon. I nodded and ordered the same thing for him. I was about to pay when I remembered something.

"Excuse me ate, pakidagdag po yung Coke float, thank you." I said. Tumango sya at nilista ang pinadagdag ko.

"Pakihintay nalang po ng order nyo don sa dulo, salamat po," aniya kaya tumango ako.

"So...wala kang gagawin mamaya?" tanong ko. Usually, kasi ganitong oras ang dami nyang ginagawa, given by the fact that he is the school President also, this fucker is taking up Computer Science. "May sira pala ang laptop ko pwede mong tignan?" I added.

"What happened?" he finally asked. He turns off his phone and focuses his attention on me. Napangiti ako.

"Ayaw nang ma open nag bblack nalang ang screen," I said.

Sa totoo my laptop is working perfectly.

"Virus maybe."

I shrugged my shoulders, "Maybe."

"Tanga ka kasi."

Anak ng?

Tinapunan ko sya ng masamang tingin. Napaka kupal ng isang to ang sarap talagang bangasan. Hinigpitan ko ang pagkakahawak ko sa manibela, I exhale and reminded myself that violence won't do good for me.

"Kupal," I murmur under my breath. Looks like he heard it, he immediately shot an

arrow with his eyes hitting me with an immense force. "Kupalag ka? papalag ka raw ba sabi nong radio," I laugh awkwardly.

Hayop.

Kinuha ko nalang ang order ko at binigay sa kanya ang isang supot. I handed him the Coke float kaya nagtataka nya akong tinignan.

"Ano yan?"

"Paa ng baboy at manok malamang coke float," sarkastikong saad ko. Tinaas ko ang coke float na hawak ko sa mukha nya. "You like it right?"

He looked at me jadedly kaya napalabi ako, "Kunin mo nalang!" naiinis kong singhal. I grabbed his hand a sapilitang binigay sa kanya ang hawak ko.

"How did you know?" napairap ako dahil sa tanong nya.

"When I went to your office to get your number I noticed na merong cup don na may coke float sa basurahan, and figure that you liked it," kikit balikat kong saad. I glance at my watch and saw that malalim na ang gabi.

"I'm not the only one at the office you know," he coldly uttered and opened the cup.

"Nah. I knew that it's yours," I lazily turned the wheel and continued our path.

"How can you be so sure?"

I grin, "Oh, I knew for sure." I tilted my head to see him, I reached for his lips with my other hand and the other maneuvering the car. "No one wears a tinted lip balm other than you Knox," I slide my thumb over his lips and chuckle.

"You like to wear lip balm to moisturize your lips, but I bet you didn't know na tinted ang ginagamit mo. So, your lips are often pinkish in color, a pale pink to be precise." I shrugged at binalik ang tingin sa daan.

He harshly yanked my hands off, "Hands off Sevilliana. You're creepy," nangingilabot nyang saad.

Humalakhak ako, "Yeah? whatever Mr. President."

I kept on yapping all the way, tas sya puro tango or hindi kaya hindi ako pinapansin but that's alright as long as he's not complaining by my constant yapping it's all good.

Narating namin ang paaralan bandang alas-diyes ng gabi and saw that maybe student are arriving also. I somehow hated his school to be honest. But now I kinda like it here. I grin, well what can I say, people do change somehow.

"Club? meron din pala yan dito?" I asked as I took a sip in my coffee. Nasa cafeteria kaming tatlo right now and Rafael brought up about the club thingy.

"Yeah, I think marami ng poster na nagkalat dito. Tignan nyo nalang sa announcement board," Rafael informed us. Napatango ako, club huh?

"Taking Archery?" My eyes landed on Rayne when he spoke. I clicked my tongue.

"I'm not so sure, let's see about it and besides tinatamad akong sumali," I boredly said. Napadpad ang tingin ko sa labas ng Cafeteria and saw someone doing his usual routine.

What's up?

I sent him a message. I observed him for a few minutes to see if he'd reply but to my

dismay ni hindi nya man lang binuksan ang cellphone nya. Workaholic jerk. Won't even spare a single glance at me. How despicable.

I purse my lips at binulsa na lang ang cellphone. I rested my knuckles on my temples, unti-unting gumuhit ang ngiti sa labi ko. Actually, his not that cold hearted as I thought he would be. He's a human and has emotions.

Perfect.

"You're not actually thinking about something aren't you?" Rafael asked suspiciously. I sneered and patted his shoulder.

"I'm not as jerk as you are so no, I'm not plotting something," he chuckled and brushed my hand off of his shoulder.

"Oh no, you're making me look like a bad guy here I'm so sad," he faked an ugly cry na syang kinatawa ko. "I'm so hurt," he added with his hand on his chest.

Lumipad ang kamay ko sa likod ng ulo nya, "Gago, ang pangit mo talaga." Kutya ko dito habang tumatawa.

"Bobo mas pangit ka sa sobrang pangit mo pati anit ko nahiya na sayo," balik nito sa akin dala kaltok.

"Bakit nahiiya? makakalbo kana ba?" humalakhak kami sa sarili naming biro.

"Putangina si Rayne parang problemado," puna nito nang hindi nakikisabay si Rayne saamin. Rayne lifted his head from his phone, winagayway nya ito and smirked. Napangisi din kami dahil alam na namin kong ano ang ibig sabihin non.

"Babaero," natatawa kong saad. Kinaasan nya lang ako ng kilay habang naglalaro pa

rin ang ngisi sa labi nya.

"Bakit ikaw hindi?"

I sneer, "Mas malala ka gago." He shook his head at binalik ang kanyang mata sa screen ng kanyang cellphone.

I drank the last drop of my coffee before standing up. "I'll get going." Paalam ko.

"Where to?" Rafael asked, his eyes glued to his phone.

"Somewhere, kong saan hindi ko maamoy yang bulok mong hininga," tumalikod na ako at nagsimulang maglakad papalayo sa kanila. I heard how Rafael cuss at me na syang tinawanan ko lang.

Binulsa ko ang kamay ko habang binabaybay ang daan patungo sa office nya. Ganitong oras kasi nandon sya doing his usual boring work. Taking care of the school like he owned it. Mas busy pa sya sa mga senior namin eh.

"Hey Knox," I stopped in my tracks when a cute petite girl stopped in front of me. I looked at her jadedly.

"Yes?"

She licked her lips and shyly looked down, "I heard na roommate mo si Knox," simula nya. My eyebrows knitted.

"And then?"

She handed me a letter and a box of cookies; with a soft and awkward voice she uttered. "Pakibigay po sa kanya, don't tell him na galing sa akin."

My eyes went blank, I caressed the letter and retreated my hand, "He's allergic to cookies." I said, umangat ang mukha nya sa gulat.

"Really?"

I nodded, "Masasayang lang yang effort mo pag binigay ko sa kanya yan." I reason out, she sadly lowered her head.

"I didn't know," mahina at puno ng hinanakit na saad nya.

I patted her head, "Better luck next time little girl."

Nagsimula na akong maglakad papalayo sa kanya when she tugged the hem of my shirt, I crane my neck to see her.

"What now?"

She hesitated, "Kahit itong letter na lang." She pleaded. Hinarap ko syang muli, I looked at her letter blankly.

"You know what he likes bold women yung kaya syang iapproach ng harap-harapan. If you do that baka magkaroon ka ng chance sa kanya," I shrugged my shoulder, "Just a piece of advice," I continued.

"Do you think he will like me?"

I smirked, "Maybe yes, maybe no. It really depends on how you will play your card. Well then, excuse me." And with that tuluyan ko na siyang iniwan don.

Actually, I didn't even know if he likes cookies or not.

Pagdating ko sa office nya I was about to knock when I heard some soft and airy voice coming through the gapping door.

I leaned my back against the wall and crossed my arms around my chest. This isn't eavesdropping, this is investigating.

"Yeah, you can start next month," he uttered with such calmness and gentleness. Something that is just so foreign to me.

"Thank you, hindi ko alam kong paano namamalakad ang student council pero dahil sayo naging mas madali na," A sweet, cottony voice echoed through my ear. I peck a little and saw the same boy from last time.

Zyran.

"You're always welcome Zyran, talk to me when you need something ok?"

I closed my eyes tightly, his sweet and calm voice echoing in my head. Something I could never hear when I was the one talking to him.

"Nako, kaya ko na to. Salamat nalang talaga."

He laughed. I lowered my head, a grin dancing on my lips. Fucking hell, Villanueva.

That goddamn tone of his.

I brushed my hair up and bit my lips feeling helpless and frustrated. Ah...Knox, you really know how to pissed me off so badly.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I stifle a smile, my eyes landed on my palm staring at its nothingness. What's happening to me? I somehow don't understand myself anymore. For once, I don't like what I'm feeling right now. I chuckled inwardly and started walking away.

I massage my temple, still wearing this mocking grin as if nasa harapan ko sya. Napahilamos ako sa aking mukha. I halted and threw my head back. Fuck you Villanueva! You're messing with my brain. What the hell.

"Damn this guy, really knows how to get under each nerve of mine." I gritted my teeth, feeling the frustration growing inside of me.

I'm trying to be kind here, and there he was just brushing it off like some sort of dirt. You should be thankful dahil mabait ako, napaka sama ng ugali akala mo kong sino.

Whatever, in the end they will judge me anyway, so I will do whatever I want. Cuz who cares?

I grin and make a turn back to his office. Let's see Villanueva. You're not that hard to read actually, You're easy as a book, and as clear as the sky.

"Lolokohin ko nalang muna ang sarili ko," I chuckle at my own joke. Tanga.

There's something in this world that I really hated...the uncertainty.

And Him.

Looking back, I never excreted this much effort just to annoy someone because just

breathing is enough for them to get annoyed at my existence. However, him? I don't know what his deal is, to be honest. Pretending to be cold and all only for it to melt when he's talking to him.

"You're a good and smart kid, Zy, you can do it," I heard his annoying voice yet again. Mukha di pa sila tapos ah? landi naman.

Zyran chuckle," Bolero." He uttered. Naningkit ang mata ko at muling bumalik sa pwesto ko kanina, leaning my back against the wall and listening through the gapped of the door.

"I'm just saying what's real to be honest, so take on this position and help me, will you?"

"I don't know Knox, I'm inexperienced and baka makagulo lang ako," He hesitated.

I peak through the door and saw him reaching for his hand. He held Zyran's hand tightly and stared at him like he's some sort of god.

"I'm here, I can help you with that..." he paused. Bumaba ang tingin ko sa kamay nyang nakahawak sa kamay ni Zyran. I manly rolled my eyes. Clingy. "...just stay with me ok?"

I harshly pushed open the door with my foot kaya agad na napunta ang tingin nila sakin. Nabitawan nya ang kamay ni Zyran at dinapoan ako ng masama at malamig na tingin. Really?

"Sorry, akala ko kasi Cr to, hindi pala." I titled my head and met the blazing yet icy gaze of this damn President. Pero hindi ko nalang pinansin at tinuon ang aking tingin kay Zyran.

Nakapamulsa akong lumapit sakanya, I scan him from head to toe, a grin danced on my lips. So ganto ang mga tipo nya? Soft, and pretty, even for a boy.

"Hi!" I beamed at him. I extended my hand, "I'm Austine, you?" pagpapakilala ko.

He smiled, revealing his dimples on both sides of his cheeks. "Hello po, I'm Zyran. First year palang po." Pakilala nito sa sarili at kinuha ang kamay ko.

I smile and ruffle his hair with my free hand, "Zyran? ang haba naman pwedeng Zyzy nalang?"

He blinked twiced, "Bat parang tunog bubuyog?"

Napahalakhak ako dahil sa sagot nya. "Is that a yes or a no?" I happily uttered.

He snickers, "Pwede naman."

Mas lalong lumaki ang ngisi sa labi ko. Atta boy. I looked past his shoulder and saw Knox, scowling at his desk. He caught my eyes and I just smirked. How do you like that?

"Are you a bit impolite?" he's authoritative voice echoes. I let out a subtle laugh.

"Pardon then," I shrugged my shoulders. "I just happened to hear something interesting kaya pumasok ako." I said honestly.

His eyebrows are slightly furrowed. "Are you eavesdropping?" matigas at may halong pagbabantang saad ito.

I waved my hand dismissively, "Nah! Don't get me wrong, I have no vested interest with the matter, just trying to ensure na buhay ka pa. You seem like choking up so I

thought you might need my help." Walang kwentang saad ko na syang nagpalalim pa mismo sa kunot ng noo nya.

Choking with your own sweetness that is.

"You're not just barking at the wrong tree, but you're not even in the right forest, Mr. Sevilliana." His airy voice was frigid, and I almost shivered from it.

Mahina akong napatawa not minding his intense stare. I brushed my hair up while my other hand was on my hip. "I'm pretty sure I'm in the right forest, Villanueva." I looked down at him, hinting at something.

His eyes narrowed, "Get out."

Napanguso ako, yan nanaman sya sa famous line nyang "Get out"

"No." I firmly stated, ma frustrate ka rin.

"Amm..." nabaling ang atensyon ko kay Zyran, I raised my eyebrows and smiled at him. "Maybe I should get going? marami pa akong gagawin," aniya kaya tumango ako.

I waved my hand, "Ingat."

Tumango sya and looked at Knox, he nodded at him. I side-eyed Knox, just to see what expression he would make this time. But to my dismay he remained indifferent. Oho! interesting, ayaw mo talagang makita ko kong gaano ka ka down bad huh?

Damn. I snicker mentally, this is fun.

"Take care."

Umalis na si Zyran kaya kaming dalawa nalang ang naiwan dito sa office nila since wala din dito ang ibang officers. May mga klase ata.

I sat at the chair in front of his desk. I rested my knuckles on my temple and eyed him. "Parang nag evolve ka don," panimula ko, smiling.

"What's your deal Sevilliana?" Madiing saad nito habang nasa akin ang tingin.

I met his eyes for a second, what's my deal? I scoff and recline my body. "Nothing?" I said playfully, still meeting his eyes.

He shook his head and lowered his head to his work. I bit the inside of my cheek at pinagmasdan sya. As I kept on watching him, I realized that this man escaped unfortunate events by being silent.

I narrowed my eyes, "You like him," I accused mindlessly. He halted for a second, I almost smirk pero umurong dahil bumalik sya sa kanyang ginagawa.

"Silence means yes," I pressed further. His forehead slightly creased, he slowly lifted his gaze and met mine.

"Shut the fuck up Sevilliana." He said sharply and dangerously. His eyes were telling me to not press any further dahil may kalalagyan ako.

I should stop right? but nah! that would be boring.

"You're gay?" I taunted with a mocking smile playing on my lips. "The holy President Villanueva is gay?!" Napatawa ako.

I brought my palm on my lips and tilted my head, hiding my grin at all costs. His jaw clenched and with a gritted teeth he stood up, umikot sya and harshly grabbed my

collar.

Napahalakhak ako, both hands floating in the air.

He took a sharp breath and tightened his grip on my collar. "I'm warning you Sevilliana, shut that fucking mouth of yours."

It's pretty exciting to see someone who would barely react, stumbling upon my words.

"Chill,"

I want him to lose control and come undone. To see him in this state is such a blessing.

"Ganon pala mga type mo? so fucking gay of you Villanueva. What will you do if I come after him?" I looked at him straight in the eyes. "Would you care or not?"

His usual calm demeanor shattered in an instant. Halos mamula na ang buong mukha nya sa sobrang galit. I chuckled.

"Don't you dare or I'll fucking kill you."

I grabbed his hand that was holding my collar and pulled him closer to me. We stood an inch apart from each other. I met his eyes, seryoso sang minata. My left hand snake around his waist.

I lean in and whisper in his ear. "If you swing that way how about you try it with me? I wouldn't mind if it's you."

He stiffen and I smirk. "How about I fuck you first before you could fuck him."

Pinigilan kong matawa dahil sa sinabi ko. When he did not respond I pulled him even closer to me. Ang tanging namamagitan saamin ay ang kamay nyang nakahawak pa rin sa kwelyo ko. Our nose almost touched, I lowered my eyes to his lips and bit mine.

His smell fills my nose, a subtle smell of sakura. So gay.

Nagtama ang mata namin. "Should I kiss you?"

His eyes slightly widen at agad akong tinulak papalayo sakanya. Humalakhak ako dahil sa inasal nya.

"Fuck off Sevilliana, hindi ka nakakatuwa." Madiin nyang saad. Pinunasan ko ang luhang tumakas sa mata ko dahil sa sobrang kakatawa.

"What are you afraid of? Ayaw mo? malaki-laki din to. Hindi ko alam kong kakasya pero gawan natin ng paaran," natatawa kong saad.

His eyes darkened, "Manahimik ka. I'm not a person you can take easily, nakakadiri ka."

Nawala ang ngisi sa labi ko dahil sa narinig, my eyes went blank. I tilted my head and walk slowly towards him.

"Nakakadiri?" I repeated. "Pero pag sya nagsabi sayo nakaka turn on? pag ako nakakadiri? May favoritism ka ata," I said humorless.

He shut his eyes tightly, "Get out before I punch you Sevillianna."

"Pano pag ayaw ko? anong gagawin mo?" ngumisi ako ngunit blanko ang aking mukha.

He took a sharp breath and turned his back, "I'll regard your actions as violations base at the student code conduct, that might alter your life Sevilliana," he threaten. My lips turn upside down. Dapat na ba akong matakot? oho so scary.

Sa sobrang takot ko para na akong naiiyak. Mom help, kunin mo na rin ako. Dapat ba ganon? ganon nga siguro.

Iskery.

I puff my chest, "Whatever Villanueva," I rolled my eyes.

The joke I made earlier, I'm being serious about it, but he did not need to know about that. Baka masapak talaga ako non. Mukhang masakit pa naman.

Oa naman, magkapitbahay naman kami eh. Walang connect? alam ko.

"For a guy so tough hindi ko aakalaing bakla ka pala," I scoff, I insulated him and so?

Tumalikod na ako at nagsimulang humakbang papuntang pintoan para umalis. Naalibadbaran ako dito, Puta.

Bago ko pa man mahawakan ang door knob, a rough and heavy hand landed on my shoulder and forcefully grabbed my collar, before I could even react a heavy blow landed on my jaw that almost knocked me off the ground.

"What the fuck?!!" hindi makapaniwalang singhal ko habang dapo-dapo ang labi kong dumudugo.

"I told you, hindi ako mag aatubling basagin yang pagmumukha mo Sevilliana."

My eyebrows met, "Puta." Dinura ko ang dugong halos malunok ko na galing sa labi

ko.

I clicked my jaw, "Ok pa naman sya." I said nonchalantly. "Yun lang ba? ang hina mo namang sumuntok Pres, halatang pambading."

I licked my lips kaya nalasahan ko ang mala metal na lasa ng dugo. "Magagalit pa sana ako kong hinalikan mo ako eh, kaso sinuntok mo lang ako," I grin trying to piss him off again.

"Get out!" he roared and before he could leap at me again agad akong kumaripas ng takbo sa pintoan habang tumatawa.

"Sa susunod, halik ha wag sun—ay puta!" agad kong sinara ang pinto ng makitang dinampot nya ang upuang malapit sakanya.

No way in hell na tatanggapin ko yun, masakit kaya.

I winced in pain when I touch my lips, "Pag ako talaga makabawi hindi lang labi nya ang dudugo. President pero bayolente, kanino ba pwedeng magsumbong? tss."

I fished out my handkerchief out of my pocket. Pinunasan ko ang dugo sa labi ko, I onced again winced in pain.

Nagsimula na akong maglakad papuntang canteen, mag ccutting nalang ako wala ako sa mood pumasok sa minor subjects ko. Feeling major kasi.

Habang binabaybay ang daan patungo sa canteen nakasalubong ko si Preston. My eyebrows met, kay init-init bat naka turtle neck itong isang to?

"Preston," I called out his name kaya napatigil sya sa harap ko. "Si Rafael asan?" I asked.

"Mukha ba akong tanongan ng mga nawawalang aso?" luh.

"So cranky nagtatanong lang naman," I purse my lips. Lumanding ang mata ko sa leeg nya. "Kinagat ka ng lamok?" tanong ko muli ng mapansin ang pulang marka malapit sa panga nya.

He panicked and immediately covered his neck with his palm kahit na nakacover na?

"Ang chismoso mo alam mo ba yun? pag tuonan mo ng pansin yang dumudugo mong labi!" singhal nito at dali-daling tumakbo papalayo sa akin.

Bat parang kasalanan ko pa?

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

Napailing nalang ako at nag simulang maglakad ulit. Hindi ko ma gets ang mga tao ngayon.

Inabot ko ang labi ko. I smirk and licked my lips. Akala ko na no to violence tong paaralang to? pero bat parang ako pa ata ang kauna-unahang nakaranas ng pagmamalupit nito?

"It hurts," I murmured under my breath.

"Yung alin?"

"Anak ng puta!!!" Napatalon ang balikat ko dahil sa walang hiyang taong biglang sumulpot sa likod ko.

I harshly crane my neck to see the person who sneaks in behind my back. Napairap ako when I saw who it was.

"Rayne, puta ka!" Binatoka ko sya.

He winced and grabbed the back of his head. "Wow! hello Austine! napakaganda mong bumati. Bwesit ka," angal nito.

"Gago. Kong hindi mo lang sana ako ginulat edi hindi ka sana makakatanggap ng batok," saad ko at nagsimulang maglakad ulit.

He clung his arms around my neck, "Have you seen Raf? halos buong araw kong di nakita ang lalaking yun," he said.

Kumunot ang noo ko at bahagyang nagkibit balik, "Malay ko, baka patay na ata."

He snickers from my remarks, "Pag narinig ka non yari ka," pananakot nya. Aba as if naman na matatakot ako?

Bakit sino ba sya? si Knox? hell nah. I can totally take him.

But don't get me wrong hindi rin ako takot kay Knox, bakit ano sya lord?

"Sure, I'm so scared," I said, trying to act scared na sya namang tinawanan nya lang.

"Nga pala, naka decide kana? sasali kaba?" aniya.

My eyebrows met, "Saan?" I asked.

"Kong sino ang unang mamamatay," tumawa sya. I deadpan him and yanked his arm off of my shoulder.

"haha so funny," I manly roll my eyes.

I quickened my pace with the intention of leaving him behind. However, to my dismay, sinabayan nya pa rin ako.

"I was just kidding. Look, it's been awhile you should pick up the bow that you throw away," pangungulit nya.

I pay him no mind. Ano ba ako basurero? no. I will never pick up the trash that I long ago threw away.

"Are you really sure?"

"Shut the fuck up Rayne, you're not helping," Naiinis kong singhal.

He chuckled, "Fine, suit yourself." He surrender.

I just tsked, I should have known better. My mom and I used to play archer together. She's the one who taught me how bow and arrow work together- that's why when she passed away I buried that hobby together with her.

It always pained me whenever I saw something that reminded me of her. Hindi ko tanggap, hindi pa at hindi ko alam kong matatanggap ko kahit kelan.

It's hard to forget someone na naging bahagi na ng buhay mo. Wheather from your family or someone who opened your heart completely.

It will never be that easy.

Ever.

"San ka galing?!" agad na bungad ni Rayne kay Rafael ng makita syang papalapit sa pwesto namin. I took a sip from my coffee and eyed him from head to toe.

Nasa cafeteria kami and this fucker decided to show up.

"Somewhere." Makahulogan nyang saad. He kept on grinning from ear to ear while occasionally touching his lips.

I squinted my eyes when I noticed something, "Your lips... it's swollen. What happened?" Puna ko sa namamaga nyang labi.

My brows knitted, curious I asked another question. "Did someone ravage you?"

He bit the inside of his cheeks and smirked, "Napasubo lang." He chuckled and sat in front of me.

"Nang ano?"

Napatawa ako dahil sa sarili kong tanong. He raised his eyebrows still wearing that annoying smirk of his.

He shrugged his shoulders, "Away. May umaway sakin." He said sheepishly. Naningkit ang mata ko, Hirap talaga pagkatiwalaan ang mga taong ganito.

I scoff at hindi nalang sya pinansin. There's something off about this guy. He's really really off.

"Malapit na ang school festival, mandatory daw ang pagsali sa mga club," Rayne uttered. Napatigil naman ako sa pag-inom ng kape ko.

"The fuck?!" hindi makapaniwalang naiusal ko. Mandatory? ay wow ano to military? Ayaw kong sumali.

Rafael nodded his head at inagaw ang burger ko, "Yeah, plus points daw sa grades."

I waved my hands dismissively, "No thanks. That's probably a trap para lang makasali ang lahat. They might say na plus points sa grades, however I know better than that."

"I'm in it for the fun," Rafael smirked.

"And I'm too lazy for that," I replied with an indifferent tone. " And besid- holy shit!!!"

I quickly jumped on my feet when a hot liquid made contact with my shoulder.

"Fuck!" I groaned in pain and immediately took off my jacket.

"Ok kalang?!" aligagang sigaw ni Rayne.

"Tanga! ikaw kaya mabuhosan nang mainit na kape?!!" Singhal ko. Rafael sprinted to get something and when he returned he was holding a bottle of water.

He opened it and poured it on my shoulder. I tightly closed my eyes as the stinging hit my nerves. Puta masakit. I looked over my shoulder and saw that it had become reddened.

"S-sorry, hindi ko po sinasadya," Agad kong tinaponan ng masamang tingin ang taong nakabuhos sakin.

She lowered her head and played with her finger. Nanginginig din sya dahil sa sobrang takot.

"What are you doing?" I asked in a low and rough voice na syang nagpanginig pa sa kanya.

She sniffles, mukhang naiiyak na. "M-m-may tumisod po sakin." She explained. I clenched my jaw and brushed my hair up.

I was about to yell at her when I heard a snickering sound behind her. I looked past her shoulder and saw a bunch of guys and girls. A guy with a fade cut high five a girl wearing a red bow.

I nodded, I see. Another case of bullying. I exhale trying to compose myself again. Sisigawan ko na sana ang bata.

"Their name..." I trailed off, she looked up but quickly averted her gaze when she met my eyes. "Do you know them?" I added.

She pursed her lips, "Oo." Mahina at puno ng takot nyang saad.

I walked to her and patted her shoulder. Vulnerable people always get bullied for no reason.

Bata, Matanda o kahit sino ka pa man. You have no rights to bully someone and regards yourself as a superior one. Those kinds of people often irks the hell out of me.

Gago ako, but I never once used that as an excuse to invalidate someone's existence and bullied them.

"Nagsumbong kana ba?" I asked. Knowing Knox, he won't let this kind of incident slide.

She frantically shook her head and I sigh.

I jadedly eyed her back and when they saw that I was looking at them nagsiiwas agad sila ng tingin. Mga freshman nga naman.

I walked behind her and wrapped my arm around her shoulder.

"Let's go. Make sure to write down each of their names. This should stop," I whispered at inaya syang maglakad palabas.

I nodded at Rayne and Rafael at tumalikod na.

Babalik nanaman ako don sa office nya, I hope we won't lash out at me and say his very famous line. Get out. I chuckled mentally, that's just so him.

On our way, the girl kept on insisting na wag nalang daw magsumbong dahil baka mas lumaki pa. I hesitated at first but knows better that if we won't take action now this might continue at baka mas lalo nya pang ikapahamak yun.

"What's the deal bat ka nila binubully?" I asked dahil chismoso ako.

Kidding, I just wanted to know the reason behind their actions malay mo baka may kasalanan pala sya kaya ganon.

I'm not chismoso, I'm a concerned citizen.

She hesitated first before opening her mouth, "Amm...The girl with the hair bow I..." she lowered her head.

I observed her for a second and ruffled her hair, "It's ok, was it too heavy? You don't have to tell me if that's the case."

I don't want to insist kong ikakasakit nya lang din naman ang pag oopen-up.

She shook her head, "Hindi naman heavy, sadyang wala lang talagang kwenta ang rason kong bakit nila ako binubully." This time her voice was rough, at puno ng hinanakit.

"The girl with the hair bow, her name was Yassi and she likes me. We were friends but when she confessed to me I turned her down cuz I only saw her as a friend...a sister. And when I did, she started bullying me and her reason was because I rejected her."

After hearing the reason behind the bullying, my lips form a straight smile. Anak ka nga naman ng tokwa oh. Mga bata nga naman.

Hindi ko alam kong matatawa ba ako or maaawa.

"Pardon..." I clear my throat trying to swallow my laughter. "Is that it?" I asked. Hindi pa rin makapaniwala sa rason kong bakit.

She nodded and mukhang nahihiya.

"People like her tend to do that pag di nila tanggap na nareject sila, It's like if I can't have you then no one can so they will start to do bad things so that people will distance themselves from you afraid that they might get entangled also..." She trailed off.

"... Probably."

I clinked my tongue. Nakaakbay pa rin ako sakanya kaya kinuha ko ang braso ko.

Narating namin ang office ni Knox, I was about to knock when she pulled the hem of my sando.

"Sorry," she uttered in a low voice. She eyed my shoulder, napatingin din ako don.

I smiled, "Aren't you a lucky one dahil ako ang nabuhosan mo?" I chuckled. Nagtataka nya akong tinignan kaya napatawa ako.

With her round eyes and long lashes she reminded me of my sister. Elise. Mahilig din syang magsuot ng mga hairpin eh.

"Nevermind." I dismissed and knocked on the door.

"Come in."

Napalunok ako when I heard Knox's dominant voice from the inside. I took a sharp breath before opening the door.

His eyes immediately landed on mine. I saw how his jaw clenched.

Before he could say something inunahan ko na sya. "Chill, I'm not here to cause trouble." I put both of my hands in the air.

Pansin ko rin na nandito ang iba pang mga member ng council.

"Why are you here?" He asked roughly.

Ouch ha masakit ang tono nito.

I gently pulled the wrist of the girl that was hiding behind me. When he saw the girl his forehead knotted.

"Binubully," agad kong saad, nag-iwas ako ng tingin at pinagtuonan ng pansin ang bata sa tabi ko.

"Tell him, don't be afraid," I encourage her. She looked at me and obediently nodded.

"Back-upan mo ako ha baka resbakan ako nila," napatawa ako dahil sa iniusal nya. I bend a little and ruffles her hair.

"Sure, just hit me up." I winked at her at binalik ang tingin sa taong kanina pa ako pinapatay gamit ang kanyang mata.

"Listen to her carefully, list down everything she said." Usal ko.

Bumuntong hininga muna ako bago tumalikod. At least don't look at me like that

Knox. You're being too harsh on me.

"What happened to your shoulder?" Napatigil ako when Preston's voice rang through my ear.

I looked over my shoulder, pulang-pula na. I faced him and smiled.

"Wala to, kunting paso lang naman." I softly uttered. I slapped my shoulder and immediately regretted it but I played it cool. "See. Don't worry," I give him a half smile dahil nanunuot na ang hapdi sa balat ko.

Gago talaga kahit kelan.

Who in their right mind would do something like that? Siguro ako?

"Sure ka? mukhang malala yan."

I nodded, "Sure ako, hindi naman masakit."

"Sorry kasalanan ko," nabaling ulit ang tingin ko sa bata. "Nabuhosan ko sya ng kape, kumukulo pa yung tubig non." Suminghot sya.

"Damn masakit?!" My eyes landed on a guy who's sitting beside Knox's table.

"Medjo. Try mo rin tas tatanongin kita kong masakit," napangiwi sya sa sagot ko at hindi na nagsalita ulit.

"I think you should visit the infirmary mukhang malala yan. I'll call Rafael to accompany you," Preston offered at nagsimulang kalikotin ang cellphone nya.

"Close ata ang Infirmary on leave si Doctora eh, nauna nang magbakasyon." Ani ng

isa sakanila na hindi ko kilalala.

I smiled weakly dahil humahapdi na talaga. "It's ok, gagaling din to."

"You should have it checked, Sevilliana. I'll ask for the infirmary's key, and I'll also contact Dr. Janice. So stay put and have it checked."

My lips turned upside down at his words. I tilted my head, a grin slowly tugging the corners of my lips.

"Ok lang ako sabi, " I insisted. "Concerned kana ba sakín nyan?" I teased.

Say yes Knox...say yes.

He looked at me coldly, those damn eyes that always scrutinized me. I wanted to poked them out so that hindi nya na ako matitignan gamit ang mga tingin na yun.

"I don't care about you, Sevilliana. It's just my duty to care."

Unti-unting nawala ang ngisi sa labi ko. My chest tightened and my stomach churned. I bit my lips and smiled at him weakly.

Damn that kinda hits. I chuckled and lowered my head.

"Alright," I nodded my head. " Forget about it then." Mahina kong saad pero sakto lang para marinig nya.

Tumalikod na ako ang nagsimulang maglakad papalapit sa pintoan. Before I twisted the door knob I waved my hand.

"Gate pass. Bigay mo sakín mamaya."

And I got out. I couldn't stay there for a second. I feel like malalagutan ako ng hininga. Nakaka suffocate.

I heave a sigh and decided na pumunta nalang sa dorm namin. Nakakawala ng mood.

So he doesn't care whether I injured myself badly but still acts like he cares cause it's his responsibility. Maybe he cares, hindi nga lang sakin.

I scoff, what a way to make me feel pathetic. You're hella one of a kind Knox. You and your sharp tongue.

## Page 14

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

The pain... it's excruciating. I don't know where it originated to be honest. I should say on my shoulder but somehow I felt something more than the pain on my shoulder. Something I can't quite put into words nor actions.

But it's fine.

I'm used to it. This too shall pass.

Teka nga? kaninong famous line to?

I chuckled and took off my sando as soon as I twisted open the door to our room. Basta ko nalang hinagis ang sando ang jacket ko sa sahig. I flopped myself onto the sofa. Hindi ko nalang pinagtuonan ng pansin ang paso sa balikat ko.

I rested both of my arms on the headrest of the sofa. I spread my legs and threw my head back.

"Fuck!" I cursed under my breath dahil sa biglaang kirot na naramdaman ko sa balikat ko. Wala sa oras akong napaayos ng upo at hinipan ang braso kong namumula at namamaga na.

Joke pala yung sinabi ko, mas mahapdi ang balikat ko.

I got up and decided to take a shower. Iisa lang ang shower sa dorm kaya share kami dito. He often showered early in the morning kaya hindi ko na kaylangan pang maghintay para makaligo ako.

Discipline. Middle name nya yan, every one of his actions is calculated. The way he plans what he should eat, drink and do after that. A month of living together pero di kami close.

Di kami close pero sinuntok ako. Putok na nga ang labi ko may paso pa ako sa balikat. Aba ayos, salamat sa sakit sa katawan. Never did Rafael and Rayne questioned me sa tuwing makikita nilang putok ang labi ko. Alam kasi nila na may kagagohan nanaman akong ginawa which is hindi na bago.

"Mga walang kwentang kaybigan." I murmur.

After I finished taking a shower I wrapped a towel around my waist at lumabas na. Sakto namang pag labas ko ang syang pagbukas ng pinto sa dorm namin.

"Whatcha doin' here?" I asked when his gaze met mine.

He scoff. Tinapon nya ang supot na dala nya sa sofa, "As far as I can remember dorm ko rin to."

I tsked and walked towards the mini kitchen. I open the fridge at kinuha ang pitcher.

"Then why are you here at this hour? kamusta yung bata?" pangungusisa ko habang nilalagyan ng tubig ang baso.

I faced him as I drank the water. My blank eyes staring at him as his eyes fixated on me.

"You..." he began. I hum a reply and put the cup down. "How's your shoulder?" he asked.

I shallow the last drop of water in my mouth. I pinch my lower lip as I eyed him.

I grin, "Why? are you asking cause it's your responsibility kasi school Pres ka?" I bitterly uttered. "Why bother asking kong wala ka rin namang paki," I added and turned my hills away.

"Turn around Sevilliana, I'm talking to you. " Matigas nyang utos. My jaw clenched at hindi sya sinunod.

"Shut the fuck up Knox. " I said, my voice was dark and rough—emphasizing each word.

You don't get to order me like that.

Nagsimula na akong maglakad papuntang kwarto ko at akmang lalagpasan na sya when his heavy hand landed on my burnt shoulder. With a swift and heavy move he was able to make me turn to him and face him.

"What the fu---" I lost my balance due to how much strength he used to forcefully move me.

I grabbed his arm to stabilize my balance pero nadala din sya sa paghila ko kaya napasalpak kami sa sofa.

I unconsciously grabbed his waist and held it tight dahil nakapatong sya saakin at baka malaglag sya. I groan when pain shoot through my shoulder. Bat ba kasi nakaharang ang sofa na to?!

"Shit!" I cussed. My breath is getting heavier dahil sa sakit.

I gritted my teeth and tightly closed my eyes. "Careful next time Knox," Garalgal kong saad.

I opened my eyes only to see him staring at me. Ibubuka ko na sana ang bibig ko para mag reklamo but an unknown reason forced me to shut up and stare at his eyes.

Tahimik akong nakikipagtitigan sakanya. I tighten my hold to his waist. My breath slightly hitched. I lick my lips and force myself to look away.

"M-mabigat ka," Reklamo ko.

"Clumsy," saboses nya. I roll my eyes.

He got up habang nanatili akong nakahiga. I groaned and cover my eyes with my arm.

Katahimikan....walang nagsasalita sa aming dalawa, tanging tunog lang ng paghinga nya ang naririnig ko.

It was heavy but someone soothing.

"Get up,"

"Don't wanna."

"Get up Sevilliana or else hihilain ko yang towel mo." Pananakot nya kaya napatawa ako.

"Sure, go on and take a look," I teased. Tinanggal ko ang braso ko sa mata ko and crane my neck to see him.

Bumaba ang tingin nya sa towel ko kaya tumingin din ako. A faint smirk form on my lips when his eyes flickered.

"What was it Mr. School President? Are you fantasizing about my body?" I said sheepishly. Umupo ako at tinignan sya.

His eyes darkened, "Stop with the nonsense you jerk." He harshly uttered.

I was stunned. He called me a what? Did he just call me a jerk?

"What did you just say?" Tanong ko trying to hear it again from him.

But he just eyed me and said nothing more.

"Oi! anong sabi mo?" pangungulit ko. I tugged the hem of his uniform, he sighed and yanked my hand off.

I purse my lips, sama ng ugali.

Umupo sya sa tabi ko kaya umurong ako ng unti.

"Shoulder."

Agad kong binigay ang balikat kong may paso. He looked at me for a second kaya nginitian ko sya.

I just assumed na gusto nya lang makita ang paso ko. Sakaling maawa sa lagay ko. I mean kawawa naman talaga ako. I'm such a vulnerable person. I'm so nakakaawa.

"Masakit. Parusahan mo nga yung mga batang umaway sakin. They used my kahinaan and bullied me," sumbong ko na parang bata habang nakanguso. "Kiss mo nga baka mawala an---aray puta nag jjoke lang eh!!"

Agad kong binawi ang braso ko nang sampalin nya yun. Masama ko syang tinignan

pero inikutan nya lang ako ng mata.

Oh tamo! pati ata si satanas uurong dahil mas masama ang ugali ng isang to.

"Be gentle, injured yung tao." Reklamo ko at hinipan ang balikat. Nakakadalawa na akong ihip dito.

"I heard that you insisted na isumbong ang nangyari," panimula nya. Inabot nya ang supot na tinapon nya kanina sa sofa. My eyebrows arched when I saw what was inside that plastic.

It was a Neosporin a burn relief first Aid Antibiotic Ointment. I bite the inside of my cheeks. Akala ko ba walang paki to?

He held out his hand kaya agad kong binigay ang kanang balikat ko.

I stared at him as he started applying the ointment on my shoulder.

I flinced a little when his warm hand made contact on my shoulder.

Just his touch and I felt electrified.

His fingers moved in a gentle way.

It was soft.

.

.

His hands were soft and warm.

Wala sa sarili akong napalunok habang pinagmamasdan syang ginagamot ang balikat ko. Habang tumatagal mas marami akong napapansin sakanya.

From his meals, to his hobbies and how he wears that tinted lip balm unknowingly. My eyes landed on his lips, tama nga ako namumula ang labi nya dahil sa lip balm na suot nya.

I licked my lips and cleared my throat kaya napaangat ang tingin nya sa akin.

"Enough," nahihirapan kong saad at binawi ang braso ko sakanya.

"Stay still hindi pa ako tapos," hinablot nya pabalik ang braso ko.

"I'll do it, thank you." Agad akong tumayo. Hinablot ko ang ointment sa kamay nya tas ang supot sa tabi nya at dumiretso sa kwarto ko.

I closed the door behind me and brushed my hair up. Inihagis ko ang ointment at supot sa kama ko. I clicked my tongue at nagsimulang magbilis may klase pa ako mamayang 1pm.

I wore something light yung hindi masakit sa balat sa tuwing dadampi ang tela sa balikat ko.

Pinagmasdan ko muna ang ointment sa itaas ng kama ko. Inilagay ko ang Id ko sa bulsa ng trouser ko at hinayaang nakalabas ang Id lace mula sa bulsa ko at lumabas. I was hoping to see him when I got out pero wala na sya don. Bumalik na ata.

Sometimes that man is confusing as fuck.

I checked my phone and saw a few messages from my friends. I decided to reply and turn my phone off when I finished sending my "I'm ok." Message for them.

"Weh? umalis si Heather? bakit daw?"

"Na injured ata ang balikat. Sayang naman malapit na ang School fest eh. Pano nayan?"

"Walang archery ngayong taon?! no way."

Dumapo sa tenga ko ang usapan ng dalawang babaeng napadaan. Archery huh?

Nakapamulsa akong naglalakad papuntang classroom ko. 12:30 na, 30 minutes nalang at magsisimula na ang klase ko.

"Putalaga!"

I slow down nang may nadaanan akong kwarto. I heard another yell. A frustrated one. Napag-isipan kong silipin ang kwarto dahil bukas ang pinto nito.

Archery room. Quite spacious and full of equipment. But amidst the spacious room that can accompany tens of people I can only see one person.

Inside I saw a girl holding a bow and arrow. Her dark and wavy hair sways to her motion. She tried to aim for the red dot but failed.

Agad syang napapalatak.

"Tangina." She cussed again when she missed the bullseye. I lean against the door frame and observe her.

"Kasalanan talaga to ng babaeng yun. Bwesit bwesitttt!!!!!"

She pulled the string and aim. I titled my head.

"Lower." I interrupted which catches her attention.

She craned her neck and looked past her shoulder to see me. Naningkit ang mata nya.

"Sino ka?" she asked still holding the bow and arrow in place.

"Doesn't matter. Lower your aim, masyadong mataas." I ordered her.

She clicks her tongue pero ginawa nya pa rin ang sinabi ko.

"Pag ito sumablay ikaw ang gagawin kong target."

I smirk, "Go on and try."

I watched how she adjusted her aim and still struggled. I slightly tilted my head again. "Move to the left a little. 8 points lang ang makukuha mo dyan."

Minata nya ako ulit kaya tinaasan ko sya ng kilay. She rolled her eyes at ginawa ang sinabi ko. Tong isang to, magkaugali sila ni Knox.

"Dito ba?"

"Wala ka bang sense of direction? Left hindi right." Naiinis kong saad when she moved the arrow to the right.

Napapalatak sya at naiinis akong hinarap. Binaba nya ang palasong hawak nya at pinamewangan ako.

"Tanginamo!" she showed me her middle finger. Instead of being offended napatawa ako dahil sa inasal nya.

Akala ko naman kong ano ang sasabihin nya.

"Yeah right thank you," lumapit ako sakanya at inabot ang bow and arrow na nasa lapag. "In Archery always considers the direction of the wind. The wind can affect the arrow's flight, causing it to drift off course. At some point baka ma miss mo ang target."

Hinarap ko sya bago sya pangaralan. She looks confused kaya napabuntong hininga ako at tinuro ang malaking bintana na kanina pa bukas. The harsh wind gushed inside the room.

"See."

I traced the bow with my finger and handed it to her. "To the left."

Hindi na sya nagsalita at kinuha sa kamay ko ang palaso. Sinunod nya ang sinabi ko. She pulled the string, heave a sigh and let go.

The arrow travelled distance and hit the red mark.

Bullseye.

As soon as the arrow hit the red mark at the center. Binalingan nya ako ng tingin habang nanlalaki ang mata.

I just shrugged my shoulder.

"Holy shi!!!!" Tumakbo sya sa pwesto ko at inalog ang balikat ko. "Gago! kauna-unahang bullseye ko yun!! sinasabihan na nga akong duling dahil hindi ko matamaan pero! pero!!! what the heck!!! tumama!"

Napangiwi ako dahil natatamaan nya ang paso sa balikat ko. Nahihilo na rin ako dahil sa kakaalog nya sakin.

I grabbed her wrist and signaled her to stop, "Chill! nakakahilo." Reklamo ko kaya tumigil sya.

"Sorry na excite lang," her fingers formed a peace sign. "Sali ka archery! pleaseee!! pleaseeeeeee!" she begged kaya mas lalo akong napangiwi.

"No." I refused immediately. I waved my hand dismissively at tumalikod na. May klase pa ako nyeta.

"Why? why not?!!" she shouted kaya wala sa oras akong napatakip sa tenga ko. Geez!

"No reason. Just remember what I've said."

Nagsimula na akong naglakad palabas sa room. I smiled in satisfaction, maybe I should consider being an instructor.

"Deputa nga laki ni ho! intra don bala! Lord have mercy!!!" Napakagat ako sa labi ko when she ran to me and stopped in front of me.

She kneeled and hugged my thigh. Agad na nanlaki ang mata ko.

"Hoy! Anak ka nga naman ng isang dosenang kalabaw! tumayo ka!" I grabbed her collar and urged her to stand up but she shook her head and tightened her grip.

"No, not until you say yes." She insisted, napahilamos nalang ako sa mukha ko.

Sumasakit ang ulo ko.

"Sabing ayaw ko!" matigas kong tanggi at sapilitang kinukuha ang paa ko. Mallate na ako.

Napapatingin na ang ibang estudyante sa amin kaya mas lalo kong inigihan ang pagkuha sa paa ko.

"Ay indi ah! intra ka anay!"

"Hindi kita maintindihan!! Puta sabing bitaw."

Pwersahan kong hinila ang paa ko para makawala. Timing naman na binitawan nya ako kaya nawalan ako ng balanse. My eyes widen for the ninth time. Putangina.

Nanlaki din ang mata nya ng mapagtanto ang ginawa nya. Dali-dali syang kumilos papalapit sakin.

"Deputa hoy!!!"

In the heat of time she grabbed my wrist and pulled me, at dahil sobrang lapit nya sa akin instead of stabilizing my balance mas lalo pang nawalan nang balanse ang paa ko ng mabunggo ko sya.

This girl!

Nabunggo ang ulo nya sa dibdib ko kaya napasinghap ako. Puta! mawawalan pa ata ako ng hininga.

We hit the floor with a loud thud, we both groaned in pain dahil sa nangyari. Nakadamba ako sakanya kaya agad akong umalis sa taas nya at umupo sa tabi nya.

"Kasalanan mo to. Puta ansakit!" I massage my wrist dahil naitukod ko ito kanina.

Nanatili syang nakahiga kaya mahina kong sinipa ang paa nya.

"Buhay ka pa?" I asked. I'm worried baka napirat ko sya, magiging kriminal pa ako sa lagay na to.

"B-buhay pa ako!!!" she exaggerated. She got up at kinapkap ang sarili nya. "Akala ko tuloyan na akong magiging dried human being."

Pinagmasdan ko syang kapkapin ang sarili nya. Napangiwi ako pero unti-unti iyon napalitan ng ngiti when I saw her face.

Para syang bulate na inasinan dahil sa sobrang likot. She looked up and clasped her hands together.

"Thank you lord. Alam mo talaga na hindi ko pa time." She yelled and kneeled in front of nothing.

Napatawa ako dahil sa inasal nya.

"What the heck are you doing?" I chuckled.

"Nagpapasalamat. Akala ko patay na ako ng dambahan mo ako. Nawalan ako ng hininga kaya nag panic ako," she stated kaya mas lalo akong napatawa.

"So kasalanan ko?"

She rolled her eyes. "Kong pumayag ka lang sana edi hindi tayo hahantong sa ganito." Paninisi nya.

"So kasalanan ko nga?" I grinned at her. She shook her head and put both of her hands in the air.

"Hindi ah. Ang sabi ko lang naman na kong pumayag ka edi sana hindi tayo hahantong sa ganito."

I tsked, "Ganon din yun. Sinasala mo ako sa katangahan mo."

"Wow makatanga ha! Close tayo? close tayooo?!!!" Sigaw nya ulit.

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko. "Pwede naman tayong mag-usap na hindi sumisigaw ano?"

Sisigaw sana sya ulit when I put my hands on her lips muffling her shouts.

"Ang ingay mo." Reklamo mo. Sapilitan nyang kinuha ang kamay nya sa bibig ko kaya binitawan ko nalang.

"Hindi kaya!"

I closed my eyes tightly dahil napapatingin na ang iba sa amin. Para kaming mga tanga dito sa gitna.

"Sure whatever." I surrender, tumayo na ako at pinagpagan ang suot ko. I check my wrist watch. 13 minutes bago ang klase ko.

"Pag ako na late sisisihin kita, " pinaningkitan ko sya ng mata. Inirapan nya ako at tumayo na rin.

"Hindi ako titigil hangga't hindi kita mapapa-oo," pinal at matigas nyang saad.

I grin and put my hands on my pockets. I bend a little to level her face.

"I'd like to see you try," I playfully uttered. She smirked and pushed my head away

from her face.

"We'll see about that Mr."

Napailing nalang ako at tumalikod na. I waved my hand, may sinabi syang hindi ko nanaman naintindihan kaya hinayaan ko nalang.

That girl, masyado syang masakit sa ulo. I wish our paths won't cross again dahil kahit isang minuto hindi ko kakayanin. What kind of language is she using anyway.

Napailing ulit ako habang nangingiti ngunit agad naglaho ang ngiti sa labi at napatigil ako when I saw him in a distance. His eyes never leaving mine. His face was blank but his eyes screamed danger.

"Knox..." I whispered his name.

## Page 15

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

Seeing someone I've been dying to avoid is probably one of the worst happening in my life. I've been wishing na sana hindi ko na sya makita, but, guess what? I found out na classmate ko pala sya?!! Like what the hell?

What are the odds.

Napahilamos ako sa mukha ko, kanina pa ako iritang-irita sa babaeng nag-iiskandalo sa harapan ko ngayon.

"Can you please stop?!" Naiirita kong singhal. "Para kang manok na hindi mapakali!"

Pinameywangan nya ako at inirapan. Aba! "Sali kana kasi! wala namang mawawala sayo ah!" pamimilit nya.

"Sabing ayaw ko. Saang parte pa ng 'ayaw ko' ang hindi mo naintindihan?" napabuntong hininga nalang ako dahil sa sobrang stress.

Isang linggo nya na akong kinukuyog at isang linggo na rin akong hindi nakakalapit kay Knox, kahit na nasa iisang kwarto lang kami.

I don't know what his deal is, he's been giving me a cold shoulder since then. Mas gusto ko pa atang masapak nya ako kong may nagawa akong mali rather than giving me a cold treatment.

Hindi naman ako ice cream ah.

Napailing ako when she stuck her tongue out and looked sideways to avoid my gaze.

"Sabi mo? wala akong narinig. Ang ganda pala ng nature ano? soafer green, soafer madamo, soafer luscious." She chuckled still looking outside the classroom.

"Natikman mo yung damo? luscious eh. Sabagay mukha ka naman kasing kambing," I smirked. I recline my body in the deck chair, looking at her mockingly.

Agarang bumagsak ang masama nyang tingin sakin. "Huhh?!!! Sa ganda kong to? Kambing?!!! walang hiya kang bwesit ka!"

My eyes widened when she attacked me, I quickly got up on my seat and ran around the classroom. Sasakalin ako nong babaeng yun, hindi gantong sakal ang gusto ko.

"Tama naman ako ah! You looked like a goat with your sideways bangs!" Pang-aasar ko pa lalo.

Her face redden and had become more furious. "Ikaw naman mukhang taong pang second lead! Yung mukha mo parang talampakan!" Balik nya sakin habang hinahabol pa rin ako.

My eyebrows knitted. Gwapo kaya ako, sabi ni mom dati.

"Mukha kang sunog na daing! hindi na pwedeng pakinabangan!"

Tumigil ako sa podium tas umikot-ikot para lang hindi nya maabot. Mas mabigat pa sa lalaki ang kamay nitong babaeng to.

"Ang kapal ng pagmumukha mong maligno ka!" She tried to reach me but I ran again.

"Oi si Abigail at Austine!! Ausbi! Ship!"

Kutya ng isa sa classmate namin kaya napatigil sya. She glared at him sabay turo saakin.

"Isa pang ship! sa ship mo talaga makikita yang walang buhay mong katawan. Bwesit na to nakakadiri ka!" her face contorted with disgust as she yelled those curse words of her.

I scoff, "Ikaw pa talaga ang may ganang mandiri ano?" napangiw ako.

This is the main reason why I don't want to be near her, hindi kami nagkakasundo. Una, she'll pester me to join her club, the second I opened my mouth naghahabol na kami dahil balak nya ata akong patayin.

"Bakit sino ka ba? Mukha ka kasing tae kaya nandidiri ako sayo. Yudeputa nga klase ka laki dya!" She yelled again. Her voice echoed in every corner of the room kaya pati ang mga napapadaan sa hall napapatingin samín.

Yan nanaman tayo sa alien wordings nya.

"Shut the fuck up abi, nakakarindi yang boses mo." I said at nagsimula nang bumalik sa upuan ko.

"Sali ka muna!" She pestered yet again. Her voice was as sharp as the knife in our kitchen. Kababaeng tao ang ingay.

Dinambahan nya ako kaya agad akong napahawak sa kamay nyang nakapulupot sa leeg ko. We nearly fell so I took a step forward. Damn this girl.

"What the heck Abi?! Get off of me you witch!" I tried to yank her hands off but she tightened her grip kaya halos masakal na ako. "Are you trying to kill the shit out of me?!"

She placed her hands on my eyes, blocking my sight. "Sa tingin mo?" she whispered cruelly.

Napalunok ako. Tangina. Pag ako namatay kawawa yung mag-ina ko don.

I reached behind her and pinched her side kaya napaigtad sya, releasing me fully from her grip. Napahawak sya sa tagiliran nya habang masama ang tingin sakin.

I didn't notice her back then, and if ever I foreseen what was about to happen to me once I met her I'd probably switch my course. Ganon ko sya kaaway.

I mean, ikaw kayang kumausap sakanya. I sometimes don't have any idea what was coming out of her mouth. Tagalog at English lang ho ang alam ko.

"Get away Abi, baka matosta talaga kita." I squinted my eyes to warn her, but she just rolled her eyes yet again.

"If flush kita sa inidoro eh," mataray na aniya sabay irap, I scoff, lick my lips and roll my eyes at her.

Rerebat pa sana sya when her friends pulled her away. Pinanlakihan nya ako ng mata dahil nakatakip ang bunganga nya. Her friend put her hands on her mouth knowing how loud she could get.

Nice one. Lagutan mo na rin ng hininga.

Minutes later and our next subject teacher arrived. I couldn't focus for some reason, my mind wandered back to Knox. I know he's been cold since day one however, his coldness towards me felt different.

Like he's trying to put invisible walls between us.

I rested my temple on my knuckles. I groaned. This is frustrating.

I don't know what's happening anymore. I just wanted him to look at me the way he looked at Zyran. His gentle and soft eyes, his soothing and calm voice I want it all for myself.

But why would I want that?

Why would I want him to look at me gently? and talk to me with such calmness?

I chuckled inwardly, I don't know.

I just don't know.

Kong ano-ano nalang ang pumapasok sa isip ko dahil sa bwesit na yun. Sarap ayain ng sapakan eh. I want to crush his fucking face, I want to trample his ego so much to the point that he'll curse the hell out of me. I want to wreck him for making me like this.

However, I couldn't even begin to fathom the things that I would do if ever I landed a blow on his face. Not to him, but to myself.

Knox, lunch? my treat:>>>

I sent that message as soon as our class ended. Wag mo akong iseen, kukuyogin kita sa office mo.

No.

My eyebrows meet after reading his reply. Ayos ah, ako na nga tong nanlilibre eh.

Why? u busy? dadaan nalang ako dyan. Ihahatid ko tanghalian mo. Kahit kiss nalang ang bayad mo :)

After I sent my reply I waited for half a minute before turning off my phone.

Ok na to.

Dumaan ako sa canteen at nag take-out nang tanghalian namin. I grin, of course sasabay ako sakanya. Ilang araw na rin kaming hindi sabay kong kumain.

Aside sa hindi nya ako pinapansin minsan, he's been busy dealing with all of the preparation for the upcoming school festival, one week from now on. And I just know na hindi sya nakakakain ng mabuti kaya as a good Samaritan magdodonate ako ng pagkain sakanya.

Sarili ko yung idonate ko malay mo makain nya.

"350 lahat," ani ng tindera dito sa cafeteria at inabot sakin ang supot. I gave her 500 and waited for my sukli bago umalis.

Napakagat ako sa labi ko, glance at the plastic bag. I know that he likes seafood, pero ngayon puro gulay at manok lang ang tinda kaya yun lang ang binili ko.

Sakanya yung gulay saakin yung manok. Ako bumili eh. Healthy foods muna sya kasi ang unhealthy nya.

Basta ok na to.

I fished out my phone to call him pero hindi sya sumagot. Busy ang linya. My forehead creases and I decided to open the door to their office as soon as I arrived.

"Oh nandito yung roommate ni Knox," Announced by someone.

I roamed my eyes around but I didn't even see the shadow of Knox. Mas lalong lumalim ang kunot sa noo ko. Where is he.

"Where's Knox?" I asked one of his subordinates.

A girl with the glasses faced me and rolled her eyes. Eh?

"Nasa infirmary. I suggest that do----anak ng napaka bastos!!"

Hindi ko na sya hinayaang makatapos when I quickly turned my heels and ran towards the infirmary. What happened to him?

Shit!!

Nagkandahagushos kong binabaybay ang daan tungo sa infirmary. My heart is leaping out of my chest, nanlalamig din ang kamay ko dahil sa sobrang takot. Did something bad happen to him? Fuck!

Please... be alright.

When I arrived at the infirmary, I just stood there for a couple of minutes, hands hovering over the door knob. Why am I rushing?

Nevertheless agad kong binuksan ang pinto. Nagulat ang nurse pati na rin ang ibang estudyante dahil pabagsak kong binuksan ang pinto.

"W-where's Knox?" My lips quivered when I asked the nurse.

She looked at me first before checking her records. I kept on fiddling my fingers,

hawak ko pa rin ang supot na may laman na para sana sa tanghalian namin. I felt anxious, please hurry the fuck up...

"What are you doing here?" A voice came behind me and as soon as I recognized that voice I quickly turned around and saw him, standing looking as cold as ever.

I closed the distance between us and embraced him, nanginginig pa rin ang kamay ko. I buried my face in a crook of his neck.

"Fuck you Knox. Fuck you. You make me worried for goodness sake. Next time, call me if something happens...please." Nanghihina kong saad, my heart is still beating rapidly.

May bandage sa ulo nya kaya mas lalo akong kinabahan.

I tightened my hug, I thought something bad really happened to him. Alam kong pinagtitinginan na kami ngayon but the hell I care.

"What happened?" Mahina kong tanong nakabaon pa rin ang mukha sa leeg nya.

"None of your business." He pushed me harshly kaya napabitaw ako sakanya. I nearly lost my balance buti nalang at hindi ako natumba.

I looked at him, confused. "I was just asking Knox. Nag-aalala yung tao sayo eh," I tried to grab his arm but he took a steps backward, avoiding my hand.

He looked at me coldly kaya napalunok ako. "Did I ask you to come here? Did I ask you to worry for me? hindi diba? kaya get the hell out of here Sevilliana, I don't need you."

I blink twiced, tilted my head waited for him to say that it was just a joked. But his

cold demeanor told be that he fucking mean it.

I don't need you...

His words echoed in my mind and every time it did, my chest... i felt like someone was squeezing it tightly, harshly.

I chuckled after hearing what he said. "Harsh mo naman, given na talaga na mag-aalala ako sayo. Roommate kita eh," I tilted my head and smiled, but my lips quiver kaya napayuko nalang ako.

"I don't need it, just save it."

My chest tightens, my stomach churned and my breath is getting heavier. I balled my fist what's wrong with him? I was just worried.

"Sure, sorry for bothering you," I muttered in defeat. My jaw clenched, what's happening to him?

Wala naman akong ginawang masama so why is he treating me like someone who's deeply insignificant?

He turned around and started walking towards the exit. Binalingan ko ang nurse at humingi ng pasensya.

"Sorry sa nangyari, may dalaw ata yun." I joked kaya napangiti sya.

"Wala yun, mukhang stress sya kaya ganon. Don't let it get you," she sweetly uttered just to cheer me up. I nodded and sumunod na kay Knox.

Naabotan ko sya sa labas. I heave a sigh and decided to brush off everything that he

just said. Baka stress nga kaya ganon.

Ibubuka ko na sana ang bibig ko para yayain syang kumain when I noticed that he's on the phone. But what really caught my attention is his eyes.

Kanina when he was talking to me, his eyes were cold and distant. Now he was talking to someone with such gentleness and tenderness in his eyes, like the person from the other line is his most treasured gem.

"Yeah, I'll call you when I need something....right, I'll let you know Zy... I'm fine just take care.",

Para akong batang nakatunganga lang, my eyes blur kaya tumingala ako. Napuwing ata ako.

I get it, he's not stressed. Iba lang talaga ang inaasahan nyang dumating at yumakap sakanya. And clearly that someone is not me. He'd rather call someone than call me.

"Alright see you Zyran."

Zyran?

When the call ended, his smile abruptly vanished when he saw me. I swallow the lump in my throat sabay taas sa supot na dala ko.

I force myself to smile and appear as playful just like before.

"Lunch? Ibibigay ko nalang sayo ang manok. Masarap to, natikman ko na to dati and I also wanted you to taste this so I bought it for you," I said. For once I wanted to praise myself for not stammering.

He met my gaze, "Have it yourself." He roughly muttered at nagsimulang humakbang.

Unti-unting nawala ang ngiti sa labi ko. I looked down and bit my lips. Just why?

Lalagpasan nya na sana ako when I caught his wrist, stopping him. I lowered my head.

"What have I done for you to treat me like this?" I whispered, enough for him to hear it. "Pag may mali akong nagawa, just please tell me or better yet punch me. H-hindi yung ganto."

"You've done nothing wrong," He said kaya hinarap ko sya but that was probably one of my biggest mistakes. His eyes were enough to cut me deeply.

"I just hated you. More than you could ever imagine, Sevilliana." Mabigat ang bawat pagsambit nya sa mga salitang binitawan nya.

I stood there, the world around me slowing to a crawl, the weight of his words crashing over me.

His words cut deeper than a knife could. Napakagat ako sa labi ko. Kong wala akong ginawa then why did you hate me? What's wrong?

"Why?" mahina ngunit mapait kong tanong. I just wanted to know why para may rason din ako para kamuhian sya. Kahit isang rason lang, kasi talo ako pag ganito.

There's always a reason why you hated or loved someone or something, but in some cases there are none. You just woke up one day and feel like you hated this or that or the other way around. I fucking knew that, but this time I wanted to hear just at least one reason why he hated me, I'll take it even if it's shallow para lang may pang

hawakan ako, because I don't understand.

I fucking don't understand the reason behind his hatred.

"Nothing, maybe the fact that you're alive. That's the reason why I hated you Sevilliana, go and blame yourself." There's a controlled anger in his voice. An anger that I don't know where it originates unless he says it to me.

I chuckled, licked my lips and lowered my head. "I see, then I'm sorry."

Mahigpit kong hinawakan ang supot na dala ko, para sana to sakanya eh. I was worried. But yeah I guess he doesn't want it. Pilit kong sinasalubong ang mata nyang kanina pa ako sinasaksak. I forced myself to ignore all of his hurtful words at pilyo syang tinignan.

I just smiled but I don't know what to say. Nangangapa ako ng mga salitang pwede kong masabi sakanya and tell him that I'm unaffected by his harsh and cruel words, but I couldn't find any right words. It had me speechless, like all the words and phrases that I knew vanished into thin air and left me illiterate.

Just then I saw Abigail approaching us together with her friends. Kakagaling lang ata sa gym.

She raised me an eyebrow when she spotted me. "Ginagawa mo dito? mamamatay kana ba? Kelan?"

"Hindi nagluluto ako ng daing na kasing tostado mo."

She scoff loudly, "Racist!!"

I chuckled, "Wala ka namang race kaya hindi mo ako matatawag na racist." I eyed

her from head to toe and she does the same to me.

"Meron kaya! Half maganda, half dyosa," she confidently uttered kaya napangiwi ako.

"Half tanga, half aso kako," rebat ko.

Don't get me wrong I wasn't insulting her or anything, she's pretty regardless of her color. Parang naging inside joke nalang namin, we weren't that close but we're comfortable, to be point na kaya na naming insultohin ang isa't-isa.

"Sana ma reject ka!!" Sigaw nya sa pagmumukha ko.

I rolled my eyes. Lumapit ako kay Knox, I wrapped my arms around his waist and placed my palm on top of his belly.

"Sinamahan ko lang magpa ultrasound ang misis ko. Sorry ha, pamilyado na akong tao."

Before he could react agad kong tinanggal ang kamay ko at inakbayan si Abigail. "Tara na, san ba bahay nyo? gala tayo sa Sat. libre kita. "

I turned away, each step felt heavier than the last. His words clung to my skin like a cold rain, creeping in deeply into my nerves and soaking through my bones.

I acted like I don't care but deep down, his words lingered in the back of my mind, cutting...no lacerating me each time.

This is the best thing that I can do... Pretending.

## Page 16

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

Kinagabihan I kept myself howled up in my room. Never leaving it kahit na ihing-ihina ako, I'm afraid na baka pag nakita ko sya I might start blurting out things that might triggered him. Don't want that, so I'll stay put.

Pero...

Nagugutom na ako.

I forgot to bring any food with me inuna ko pa kasing mag emote eh, yung binili kong pagkain kinuha ni Abigail, napaka sama ng ugali

Bahala na yang emote na yan gutom ako. They say na gutom ang pinaka mahirap na kalaban, pwede kasing mamatay. Sayang future ko pag nagkataon.

"Should I go out? I mean dorm ko rin naman to ah. Paki ko kong makita nya ako? And besides I've done nothing wrong, sya nga tong kong ano ano ang pinagsasabi eh. He should apologize to me, right?" I murmured to myself. I laughed awkwardly at myself in the mirror.

I've been conversing with myself for the past 2 hours, trying to gaslight myself na wala naman akong ginawang kasalanan. That I don't deserve the hatred that he'd been throwing at me. I'm trying to figure out what's in his head, but we really can't know what they're thinking unless they voice it out themselves. We have no superpower. I'm not a magician either.

I jump on my bed and groan. Fuck I'm hungry. I check my wristwatch and its already midnight. Damn, I might have been glancing at my ceiling for at least 5 hours, kong

hindi nakatunganga, kinakausap ang sarili sa salamin.

Putangin siya ang mukha ko.

My stomach grumble kaya napahawak ako sa tyan ko. Napakagat ako sa labi ko bago bumangon. This is between my hunger and my ego, and this time my hunger won. I mean gutom ako? Anong gagawin ko? hihintaying manigas ako sa sobrang gutom? No way in hell.

"Bahala na si Batman."

I mentally crossed my fingers and slowly got up. Naglakad ako papuntang pintoan ko, but before I open the door, I put my ears to the door trying to make sure na walang ingay na nag iindicate na andyan sya. When I heard nothing, I bobbed my head and slowly twisted the doorknob.

I peeked my head through the gapping door and roamed my eyes around. The lights were off, tahimik din kaya napanatag ang loob ko. Mukhang tulog na ata. I glanced to his room at bumuntong hininga, matulog ka muna.

"Ako muna magmumulto sa kusina."

Tuloyan na akong lumabas at nagtungo sa kusina. I switched on the lights at pinagtuonan ng pansin ang ref.

"I kinda want some chicken,"

Hinalungkat ko ang ref but found nothing. My eyebrows knitted as my forehead creases. Walang laman ang ref kundi tubig at iilang condiments lang. Tangina wala bang tao dito?

"Gutom na nga tas wala pang pagkain bwesit na yan!" padabog kong sinara ang ref.

Bumagsak ng malakas ang pinto kaya napaigtad ako. Dali dali kong binuksan ulit ang ref, checking kong nasira ko ba. I once again breathe a sigh of relief nang makitang ok pa naman, naka intact pa.

I traced the edge of its door, "Sorry ha. Baka nasaktan kita, just say it." I blow on it at dahan-dahang sinara ang ref.

I'm hungry!!! I dialed Rayne's number pero ang gago tulog na ata. I tried calling Rafael and he actually picked up.

"Goodness! Raf, tara over the bakod. Punta tayong seven evelyn. I'm gonna die from hunger!!" Yaya ko sakanya. I could hear his heavy breaths and the sound of his bed moving.

"Fuck Austine, what time is it?! and it's 7/11." He growled. Nailayo ko ang phone sa tenga ko at looked at it as if his in front of me. What the hell?

"Lampaki. Anyway, what are you doing?" I asked suspiciously, naningkit ang mata ko when I heard two heavy breaths. The other one was subtle, but I can at least tell na may kasama sya. "Are you fucking someone right now?" I added, snickering with malice.

I mean it's Rafael y'all. I can't even imagine him touching another person other than himself. Nah, it's impossible but I just wanted to tease him a little. I waited for him to laugh it off but I heard nothing. Agad na nangunot ang noo ko.

"Bro, you know that I was just joking! There's no way in hell na may hahawakan kang iba. You're basically allergic to other people." I added hastily, trying to just laugh kahit na halos mapangiwi na ako kaya it sounded like an awkward laugh.

He sighs. "I am, so shut the fuck up and leave us alone."

And with that he hung up the phone. Huh? My eyes widen in shock. Binalingan kong muli ng tingin ang cellphone ko, nalaglag ang panga ko at hindi makapaniwala sa narinig. What the fuck? Anong sabi nya? He was with who? I looked at my phone, completely baffled.

I tried calling him again, but he turned off his phone. Hayop? Gusto ko lang namang pumunta sa seven evelyn.

"Sinong sasama sakin papuntang seven evelyn haha."

Napakamot nalang ako sa batok ko. I think I just heard the most disgusting thing that came out from Rafael's holy what the fuck mouth. I think I'll just sleep through this hunger, may tubig naman eh.

"Bwesit na buhay to. Oh, edi sila na ang masaya. Pag kayo umiyak tatawanan ko kayo," I frustratedly whispered under my breath.

What if mag pa deliver nalang ako? Makakapasok kaya? I shook my head, of course not. Sarado yung gate tas hating gabi na. Bat kasi inuna ko pang mag emote? Yan tuloy.

Papasok na sana ako sa kwarto ko when I remembered na may mga vendo machine pala sa cafeteria. I snapped my fingers, a grin tugging my lips. Dali-dali akong pumasok sa kwarto ko at kinuha ang wallet. I'll buy lots of food and won't share it with Knox. He away me so why would I.

I scoff before heading out, but before I could I noticed that the door was unlocked. I glanced at his room, has he not come back yet? Ganitong oras kasi nandito na sya. Hesitating, I retreated my hand from the doorknob and walked to his room.

"Knox you in there?" I knocked on his door but there was no answer. "Gonna grab some food at the cafeteria, want to come? I'll treat you."

No response. With knitted brows I twisted open his door, it was unlocked. Gago ah, what if pumasok sa utak kong nakawan sya? Edi waley sya. Tsk. Tsk. Careless. Nevertheless, I peeked through his room.

My mouth gaped for a moment after seeing the state of his room. "Woah, even his room has his personality." I snickered.

It was all grey and white, tidy, neat and no dust in sight. His books were carefully arranged and organized. By means organized, by heights ang pag arranged. His bed was clean like it had been a few days since he last lay down on it.

"Knox, you here?" I tried calling again but no response. Malalim na ang gabi ah bat di pa sya umuuwi?

Seeing that he's not here I decided to stop in his office first before heading to the cafeteria. Once I reached it, I saw lights coming through the gap of the door below. I raised an eyebrow. Abuse na to ah. I bet he hasn't eaten anything yet kaya dali-dali akong pumunta sa cafeteria.

I bought several healthy snacks.

By healthy I mean noodles.

Napatampal ako sa noo ko, kailan pa naging healthy ang noodles? I just bought a few snacks at bumalik don sa office nya. Nag-aalala ako na baka pinapabayaan nya na ang sarili nya.

"I wish I could order some take out for him." I murmured and looked at the plastic

full of snacks. I made sure to buy him biscuits, water and energy drinks.

I heave a deep sigh before knocking on his office door nang makarating. I fixed my hair and looked at my reflection on my phone. I nodded when I somehow looked decent in my pajamas.

"Did you forget something Amber?" His tired and crooked voice resurfaced.

I bite my lips and sigh once again. "Knox, can I come in?" My voice was careful and almost pleading.

There's a moment of silence on his side kaya halos hindi ako mapakali. I clear my throat and spoke again.

"I noticed na hindi ka pa bumabalik sa dorm kaya dinalhan kita dito ng mga snacks. You must be hungry," I added.

I heard a noise from the creaking sound of the chair and a heavy footstep coming my way. I straighten my back and compose myself. Once the door opened, I saw his tired and disheveled face. His glasses hanging loose on the bridge of his nose, a dark circle is visible under his eyes.

He leaned against the door frame. "What are you doing here Sevilliana?" he asked, meeting my eyes.

A faint smile tugged the corner of my mouth, itinaas ko ang supot na dala ko and tilted my head. "Snacks. Sabay tayong kumain? Puro noodles kasi ang nandon kaya biscuits nalang ang binili ko." I explained.

Winagayway ko ang supot sa harap nya at nginitian sya ng malawak. "I know you're hungry. This time don't reject my kindness. "

He furrowed his brows kaya wala sa sarili kong binaba ang supot na hawak ko.

"Did I ask you to do that?"

Yan nanaman tayo.

Tuloyan nang nawala ang ngiti sa labi ko. Napahawak ako sa batok ko as I lowered my head.

"Sorry concerned lang ako sayo, Knox. You've been working so much lately at napapabayaan mo na ang sarili mo. I just wanted to help you sa abot nang makakaya ko kahit ganto lang," Saad ko, the disappointment in my voice is evident.

I know how hard it is to be a School President.

Lalo na pag may mga big event.

They often sacrificed their sleep and overall health just to plan everything.

Alam ko rin na he's been harsh to himself kaya I just wanted to at least lessen or ease the burden on his shoulder by delivering him some food and making sure he eats on time.

"I've said such hateful things about you and you're still here acting like I didn't do anything wrong? You should be hating me right now, Sevilliana." This time his voice was sharp and heavy na para bang galit na galit sya saakin.

My eyebrows knitted. Sinalubong ko ang mga mata nya, nagtataka. "What do you mean, Knox? Hindi kita maintindihan. What are you trying to imply? Mag bibigay lang naman ako ng biscuit sayo eh pero bakit ka ganyan?" My confused voice rang through the hallway.

His jaw clench, "Hindi mo ba talaga maintindihan?" he said, almost shouting.

Umiling ako, nalilito pa rin syang tinititigan. "Hindi. Use that fucking sharp mouth of yours to explain everything, hindi yung ganto ka. How can I apologize kong hindi ko alam kong anong ugat nyang galit mo saakin." I paused dahil ramdam kong kumukulo ang dugo ko. I exhale to compose myself.

"Magbibigay lang naman ako ng biscuit sayo ah. Tell me Knox, tell me." I slowly closed the gap between us and stood tall in front of him. I looked at him with such seriousness in my eyes. "Tell me," I whispered.

He scoffed and crossed his arms around his chest. "Putangina. Martyr ka rin pala?" Pang-uuyam nya na ikinatahimik ko. "Na kahit anong sabihin kong masasakit sayo hindi mo pa rin ako kamumuhian? Despite everything I've done once I called out your name, you'll come running to me like a fucking loyal dog."

Hindi ko kinaya ang pangungutya nya kaya napayuko nalang ako.

"Ano ba talaga ang problema mo?" mahina ngunit puno ng pait na tanong ko.

"Ikaw." He harshly poked his finger on my chest. Masakit pero hindi ako gumalaw. "Fucking hate me Sevilliana. Hate me." He enunciated each word with a hissed.

Pagak akong napatawa. "Mukhang magkakaproblema ata tayo dyan Pres. Yan din ang problema ko eh. You can hurt me all you want; you can beat the shit out of me but none of those will make me hate you." I look up and meet his blazing gaze.

My fist balled and my jaw clenching.

I held his chin tightly.

"You have no idea how hard I tried to hate you...but I just couldn't. I still care about you, and I don't know why. And I hated that. I hate this. So why are you being like this? Ayos naman tayo ah. Kong may nagawa akong masama or may kasalanan ako just please punch me kaya kong tanggapin yun, just don't ignore me like you did."

Dahan-dahang bumaba ang kamay kong nasa baba nya pababa sa balikat nya. My eyes almost swelled up with tears, but I held it back. Pinatong ko ang ulo ko sa balikat nya at pinulupot ang braso sa beywang nya.

"Wag ganto, Knox, please. Sabihin mo sakin kong ano ang mali," I pleaded in a small voice. Ramdam kong nanigas sya sandali. And I took the courage to bury my face in the crook of his neck.

"This is what I hate about you, Sevilliana." He tried to push me away but I refused to let him go.

"No push, no push," parang bata kong saad habang naiiling. "Don't you dare push me away and my biscuits." Matigas kong dagdag at mas lalong hinigpitan ang pagkakayakap ko sakanya.

"Fuck! Let go!"

"Will do. Sabihin mo muna sakin kong bakit ayaw mo saakin."

"What the fuck. Let go already!"

"No."

"You're such a brick headed!"

In a flash, he pulled me inside slamming my back against the wall as the door banged

shut behind him— loud and harsh. Nanlaki ang mata ko when I realized our face were only inches apart from each other.

His breath was heavy, syncing with the frantic rhythm of my heartbeat.

He looked at me straight in the eyes— not with coldness, not with anger and it's not even distant like how it used to be. His eyes flickered with something else. Something I can't quite put into words, yet I only saw it when he was talking with Zyran.

"I hate you."

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I wonder what it's really like to love someone and be loved by them in return. The kind of love that stays for a lifetime and not the kind of love that's fleeting and uncertain, but the one that stays even in silence.

My mom always says to me that love is the most peaceful feeling, but at the same time, it might confuse you. Like why your chest feels heavy even though they were holding your hands or why the quiet moments between words can feel louder than anything else.

Maybe love is both—soft and confusing. Well, to be honest I don't even know.

Feelings are complex to the point na ang hirap nitong intindihin. You hate them but when they distance themselves to you, you suddenly realize that you're yearning for their presence. It was hard to understand kaya marami ang nalilito and when they admitted it to themselves it was already too late.

"I'm bored," reklamo ko habang nakadukdok sa mesa dito sa cafeteria. Buryo na ako dito gusto ko na mag transfer.

Dorm—Classroom—Cafeteria—Garden—Dorm. Paulit-ulit nalang! God, kong hindi lang sana ako gago edi sana wala kami dito ngayon. I might say that pero deep down I kinda liked it in here, dahil nandito sya.

"I liked it in here, walang istorbo." Rafael stated, napangiwi ako dahil feeling ko may double meaning yun.

"Walang istorbo, malamang. Makakabayo ka hangga't gusto mo, nakakadiri to." I

groaned and looked at him.

He smirked and bit his burger. "Oh, how did you know?" He acted surprised though the mischievous smile in his lips barely manage to cover up his lousy acting.

My eyebrows knitted, "Tell me what's going on. Puta tropa tas nagtatago ng sekreto," I seriously utter. He furrowed his brows and shrugged his shoulders.

"Stop acting like a jealous girlfriend, will you? Nothing's going on, I swear," itinaas nya ang dalawa niyang kamay sa eri.

Back then if he said that nothing is going on we'd believe that because that's just how he is. He never lies, but this time I feel like something is off about this man, parang may tinatago. Lagi din tong naka turtleneck kahit ni ki-init init.

I squinted my eyes. As much as I wanted to interrogate him, I really can't do much if he doesn't want to tell it. I'll respect that. I shrugged my shoulders and sigh.

"Whatever. I'm not interested to hear about your sex life anyway."

He crackles, "Aww sayang naman. I'm willing to tell you step by step if you asked further. From how I f-----" Sinungalngalan ko ang bunganga nya ng burger bago nya pa matapos kong ano mang kalaswaan ang balak nyang sabihin sakin. He glared at me kaya napatawa ako.

"Masarap?" I tilted my head and teased him.

He rolled his eyes and chewed the half-eaten burger in his mouth.

"Ito oh masarap, pakyu!" he then raised his middle finger na syang ikinahalakhak ko pa lalo.

Napakasama ng ugali akala mo hindi nag grade 2 eh. I fished out my phone and open my social media accounts. I furrowed my brows when I saw that most of my mutuals have the same post nor Myday. Nasa dagat sila.

"Kainis. Yung iba nasa dagat na tas tayo nasa school pa rin. Ito nabubulok na," halos naiiyak kong saad. Gusto ko rin magpapogi sa dagat.

Malay mo nandon yung para saakin.

"Sorry iba kasi ang sinisisid ko eh," he tilted his head and grinned at me. My face contorted with disgust.

"Eww."

Humalakhak sya kaya mas lalo akong napangiwi. At this point I don't even know if he's being serious or what. I can never figure him out.

I massage my temple and slightly squinted. My head hurts. I haven't slept yet dahil sinamahan ko kanina si Knox, magpuyat. I just sat there wondering if it would kill him to treat me a little nicer since I'm being patient with his temper.

Probably yes, it would kill him. I feel like just the sight of me is more than enough to ruin his mood. Like, what did I do to deserve such treatment.

I've never felt his way before. I felt like trash. Whenever he would look at me with those eyes I feel like drowning in them. Not because it was gentle, it was beautiful...but painful.

"What's with you?" I lifted my head when Rafael spoke. His brows are knitted and his forehead creases.

"What?" I asked, trying to act cool but that just made his eyebrows raise to the highest level.

"Bat parang broken hearted ka dyan? May jowa kana?" pangingilatis nya. He leans closer as if to examine me. I pushed his face and rolled my eyes.

"Shut up Raf. Hindi porket nag-eemote broken hearted na agad?" Dahilan ko.

He reclined his body and squinted his eyes, "Lahat nang nararamdaman mo may dahilan. If you're happy then something good happened. If you're sad then something unfortunate must have occurred. If you're heartbroken, it's because you're hurt or disappointed. Never invalidate your emotions by saying 'wala to'. Acknowledge it para hindi masyadong mabigat dalhin."

Napatulala ako. am I really hurt? or am I dissappointed? but for what? what's the reason? It confuses me, pati sarili ko hindi ko maintindihan. I stay silent because I don't know how to respond. He has a point. Naikuyom ko ang kamao ko at mas minabuti nalang na wag tumingin sa mga mata nya.

I'm afraid that if I look at him, he might discover something in me that I too don't know about.

"Dami mong alam," I chuckle and brushed him off.

He just looked at me silently and shrugged his shoulders. We stayed quiet until Rayne showed up. Furrowed brows and an annoyed expression written all over his dramatic face.

Pabagsak syang umupo sa harap namin kaya nagkatinginan kami ni Rafael. Problema nito?

"Bwesit!" he cursed and snatched my burger.

"Luh! akin yan eh." Reklamo ko at hinablot ang burger na nasa tray ni Rafael. Binatokaan nya ako kaya natatawa kong binalatan at kinain ang burger.

"May roommate ako."

Napatigil sa eri ang kamay ko.

My eyes widen in shock.

Roommate?

Could it be him?

I clench my jaw and put down the burger bigla akong nawalan ng ganang kumain.

I kept on fiddling my fingers pinagpapawisan din ako.

If it is really him then ngayon pa lang talo na ako.

Just the thought of it makes my chest tightens.

It's hard to compete with someone na simula pa lang alam mong panalo na sya at talo kana. But the big question here is, why am I trying so hard to compete with him? Well maybe I just want him to care for me like how I care for him.

Just then, I saw him entering the cafeteria, smiling and laughing, with Zyran by his side. My eyes dropped instinctively as I took in the sight of his cheerful, vibrant face—so full of life. So different from when he was with me. For once, I wished that he would smile like that...why facing me.

Knox...if only you knew.

"Bwesit na Villanueva," I unconsciously voiced out my thoughts.

They asked why, but I couldn't just casually say that he was weighing on my mind since then. That I'm so pissed because he always pushed me away so I could only say...

"Hindi nya ako pinagluto."

Kinagabihan, since we don't have any food in here. I asked mang Theo ang guard nitong school to buy me some grocery. Of course, sabi ko bumili na rin sya ng sa kanila. He refused at first but I insisted kaya wala siyang nagawa kundi ang bumili rin para sa kanila. Walking distance lang naman papuntang palengke but I told him to rent some tricycle para hindi na sya mahirapan.

I could do it myself, ang problema lang need ko pa ng gate pass galing kay Knox. I could go to his office and ask for it but I'm not in the mood to talk to him. Nandito lang ako sa guardhouse waiting for mang Theo to arrive.

Hours passed and he came back with everything I requested. Agad kong kinuha ang dala nyang supot at inalalayan sya.

"Maraming salamat po talaga Mang Theo, magugutom na sana kami kong di dahil sayo," Biro ko na ikinatawa nya.

"Hindi, salamat Austine ha. Ang bait mong bata," napangiti ako dahil sa puri nya. May balak pa syang ibalik ang sukli pero I said na sakanya na lang yun. Also, a thanks for his efforts.

"Ayos lang po," I waved my hand dismissively as he tried to put the money inside

one of my plastic bags.

"Tho, malaking bagay na yung binilhan mo rin ako ng grocery. Sayo nato," he insisted but I shook my head.

"Mas makakahinga po ako ng maluwag kong tatanggapin nyo yan," I pushed back the money to him and smiled.

He sighs and gives up. He took the money kaya mas lalo akong napangiti. Nagpasalamat sya, nagpasalamat din ako bago umalis.

"Ok, may grocery na. The only problem is I don't know how to cook," napakamot nalang ako sa batok ko.

Oh at least may YouTube.

I've decided na adobong manok na lang ang lulutoin ko dahil mukhang mas madali sya. I prepared all the ingredients at hiniwa ng bite size ang manok, and the rest na pinamili ko nilagay ko sa ref.

"Amm what was the first step again? Wash the chicken? how? Should I put some detergent?" Agad akong napatampal sa noo ko gago. Isang kagat, lason agad.

Wag ganon.

I opened my phone and searched 'How to cook adobong manok' and a lot of videos came up, pero yung pinakauna ang pinili ko.

Sana masarap, ayaw kong magtapon ng pagkain kong sakaling hindi maganda ang lasa.

"Gayatin yung alin?!" Na frustrate ako dahil ang bilis naman ng tutorial na to.

I bit my lips as I took in the sight of our kitchen. Buti nalang at hindi ko pa napapaandar ang gasol at nag bida-bida kong hindi goodbye talaga. Sadyang napakakalat lang talaga. Yung mga balat ng sibuyas kong saan-saan na lumilipad.

I heave a sigh and decide to continue. I check my wristwatch, alas syete na pala. Magmamadali na ako baka kasi nandito na yun maya-maya.

Focus na focus ako sa panonood ng tutorial, hindi ko na napansin na nasugatan na pala ako habang naghihiwa ako sibuyas. I bit my lips and rinse it kahit na medjo mahapdi. Despite all the struggles I've been through sa wakas...kamuntikan ko ng masunog.

I chuckle inwardly. Magpapaturo na ako kong ganito lang din naman pala.

Nang matapos, tinikman ko ang luto ko. A broad smile escaped my lips; I bobbed my head.

"This is a work of art! pati si Gordon Ramsay mapapawow nito eh," puri ko sa sarili ko.

Nah! I was just joking. It wasn't that bad, but it wasn't that good either. There's still room for improvement and I'll take it.

Excited, I hurriedly messaged Knox, to come home para sabay na kaming kumain. Naghain na ako at pinicturan ang pagkaing nakalapag sa mesa.

Sure.

Napangiti ako ng mabasa ang reply nya. I sent the picture to him, proud ako no dahil

hindi ko nasunog.

Nag-luto ako, praise me hehe :))))))

Later that night, I waited for him to come home para sabay na kaming kumain...just this once. My wounded finger throbbed as I kept on pressing it just to gather my sanity. Each pulse stings but it's the only way to distract myself—to distract myself from the growing heaviness in my chest.

"Asan kana?" I checked my phone and it's already 10 o'clock.

Each tick of the clock was a constant reminder that he still wasn't here...hindi pa sya nakauwi.

I just sat there, under the dim light of the kitchen.

I didn't leave my seat, afraid that if I moved, I might miss the sound of the door opening. I watched the food grow cold under the kitchen light. I laughed bitterly. Mukhang iinitin ko nalang to ah. Napangiti ako hindi dahil sa tuwa, kundi dahil sa lungkot. I poured all of my efforts into making this and he also promised na uuwi sya pero wala naman.

He promised so bakit hindi sya umuwi?

"Sayang naman kong itatapon ko," I murmured to myself.

I bit my lips and decided to eat. Kahit na malamig, ok lang. Kahit na wala nang lasa ang manok sa bibig ko, ok lang.

I smiled bitterly and decided to check my socmed while eating. I was just scrolling when I came across an Instagram story, may moots pa akong taga counsel.

My pupils dilated-my heart aching. It was a photo of them eating and laughing at the cafeteria. Magkatabi si Knox at Zyran, and in that photo he was looking at him lovingly. It was posted 43 minutes ago with a caption of "Welcome Zy!"

I swallowed the lump in my throat along with the rice and chicken I had chewed.

"I see, you forgot about me."

Sinubukan kong ubosin ang pagkain ko pero nawalan na talaga ako ng gana. I clear the table at nilagay sa tupperware ang natitirang manok at pinasok sa ref. Ako lang naman ang kakain nyan kaya iinitin ko nalang.

Habang nagpupunas ng lamesa, the door creak opened with a pushed kaya agaran napunta ang atensyon ko don. I saw Knox, entering. He loosened his tie and his gaze fell straight to me.

Tipid akong ngumiti, itinabi ang pamunas. I was about to greet him when he turned his back and started walking to his room.

I watched his retreating back with lots of emotions stirring inside of me.

I clutched my chest, wow. It stings.

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I scratch the back of my head, trying to make sense of everything. He promised yet he bailed out. He left me hanging—patiently waiting for him like a fool.

I knocked on his door, I want him to hear everything that's been weighing on my mind.

"Knox let's talk. Why did you do that?" Pahina ng pahina ang boses ko habang binibigkas ang bawat kataga. "Let out. Face me."

Silence. He did not respond kaya kumatok akong muli.

"Kausapin mo naman ako oh. Lumabas ka dyan," I said, almost in a pleading tone.

I just wanted to ask him about what happened. Mali naman ata yung pinaasa nya ako. I waited for him in the dark, dishes at the table that I had prepared specifically for him. I don't cook, lumaki akong may gumagawa sa kin non and I was grateful for that.

But for him I tried so hard to at least cook kahit na wala akong alam.

Para akong tanga scrolling through social media for tutorials on how to do that, do this, do whatever I had to do.

But it seems like my efforts bear no fruits.

Dahil hindi nya man lang nakikita, he even ignored me.

My hope shattered so does my confidence.

His door creaks opened kaya umatras ako ng unti. When the door finally opened I saw him standing with his bored expression and lazy eyes. He furrowed his brows.

"What?" he asked, a hint of irritation mingled in his voice.

I licked my lips and tilted my head. "Bat di ka umuwi? I waited for you," I smiled. I gently touch the wound in my finger, the warm sensation from my hand makes it throbbed.

But nothing hurts right now more than my aching heart.

He sighs as if talking to me drained him. "I'm busy," he replied shortly.

Napakagat ako sa labi ko, "Pero you promised na uuwi ka." I chuckled bitterly.

"I did not. Saang parte ako nangako sayo nauuwi ako?" His words were harsh. My stomach churned, my breath became heavier. So ganon na yun?

So, bat pa sya nagreply sa kinong hindi lang naman pala sya uuwi.

Umasa ako.

.

.

pero putangina!

He always has a way to make me feel like trash.

To make me feel insignificant.

Nakakabwesit.

It made my self-esteem deteriorate to the lowest level.

Each attempt I made to be closer to him, he'd brush it off and say awful things and each time nagging insecure ako.

I'd try to play it cool pero puta! Tao din naman ako ah. May damdamin din ako...nasasaktan din ako. Alam ko ang rason kong bakit nagkakaganito ako pero mas masasaktan siguro ako pag-inamin ko talaga. Because I knew to myself that the moment I saw him smiling in front of him, talo na ako. In fact, matagal na akong talo.

Hearing no words from me, he sighed again and was about to close the door, but I held into it and pushed it and made my way in. I looked him deeply in the eyes.

Please notice that I'm hurting.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?!" he hissed, trying to push me away but I caught his wrist.

Way back then I wanted to see him lose his temper, I wanted him to lashed out at me due to frustration. But this time, I want him to treat me a little nicer.

"No. What the fuck is wrong with you? I'm trying my best to get to know you better, but you always pushed me away. What are you so afraid of?" Hinuli ko ang mata nya. My half-lidded eyes stare at him melancholy.

His eyes widened for a second. His hands tightly clutching my collar. Nanliliksi nyang sinalubong ang mga tingin ko. "I hated you, isn't that enough reason para layuan mo ako?!"

I shook my head, "You don't hate me. Alam kong may iba pang rason kaya ka ganyan. Puta Knox, sabihin mo na oh. Nasasaktan din naman ako sa tuwing binabaliwala mo yung efforts or ang nararamdaman ko sumisikip ito..." Tinuro ko ang dibdib ko. "Bakit ang sama mo?" I tried to accuse him of something but my voice broke.

"I can always play it cool and annoy you the next day like nothing happened but this time...yung pinaasa mo ako. That was the last straw. I even cooked for you." I utter in a mix of disbelief and pain.

He successfully pushed me away by using brutal force. "Ano ka bata? Stop acting like a child. Pagluluto lang naman yan ah? Ano bang pinaglalaman mo?!"

Pagluluto lang naman dyan.

His words echoed in my mind, a swirl of emotions built up inside of me. My eyes watered, yeah it might be a simple gesture, but I did pour all of my heart and efforts into making our dish. Para lang may makain sya.

I realized na kong gaano pala kasakit mabaliwala ang mga pinaghirapan mo. Call me shallow or what his actions truly lacerated my chest.

I nodded my head, "I see." I tilted my head and met his gaze once again. He frozen when he saw that naiiyak na ako. Puta nakakabading to. "Pero Knox, nag-effort ako para lang mapagluto ka...kasi alam kong napapabayaang mo na ang sarili mo. So, I wanted to take care of you."

He scoffs kaya mas lalo akong nasaktan.

"You like me? Kong makaasta ka para kang may gusto saakin eh. And if ever you really like me, I'll ask the dorm manager to change your dorm. Ayaw kong makasama

ka pa kong nagkataon." His voice was dark and rough Full of grievances. His sharp and firm attitude says that he means every word he says.

Well, that was harsh.

Bumagsak ang mata ko. I looked at him, and at that very moment, my gaze carried the weight of every unspoken pain that he'd caused me. My eyes screamed the pain that my lips refused to speak.

Sadness, grief clashing behind my tearful eyes until one finally broke free, cascading down and tracing a warm path on my cheeks. I wiped it away quickly, as if that could somehow erase the ache tearing through my chest.

"Bakit? Dahil hindi mo tanggap na ako yung nagkakagusto sayo at hindi sya?" Pagak akong napatawa bago tumingala. "I never knew that you would push away those people that truly cared about you. What if Zyran would do the same to you anong mararamdaman mo?"

His face darkened. "Don't you dare bring him into this." Matigas na para bang pagbabanta nyang aniya.

I took a step backwards.

A small and weak smile plastered across my face.

"You built your walls so high so that no one can climb it and open the door to your heart. But it seems like only one person can shatter those walls of yours." I tried to laugh but my voice came out crooked.

I sigh and swallow the lump in my throat.

Masakit. Sobra. I never knew that love could be this painful. I was always taught that love is a peaceful thing, but no, love is the most painful experience lalo na pag hindi ikaw.

I've never been this insecure about myself, I was constantly doubting myself, always questioning my worth. Confidence, that was my middle name.

I take pride in everything, sa kilos at gawi ko lalo na sa sarili ko. But never have I ever imagined that my confidence that I carried for almost my entire life would shatter in an instant when he came into the picture.

The guys he's been longing for.

And that's certainly not me. It will never be me.

I look at him weakly. "Pwedeng sayo nalang ako? Pwede bang ako nalang ang paakyat mo? Wag na sya oh." I lowered my head when my eyes started to blur. I sounded so desperate, begging like this.

I can't cry. Ayaw kong nakikita nya akong umiiyak. I can't let him see me in this state.

Bata pa lang lagi na akong sinasabihan na ang pag-iyak ay isang simbolo ng kahinaan.

I disagree with that concept, because for me crying is just expressing what you truly felt.

Your tears convey all the suffering that you've faced, each mountain and storms that you encounter along the way. Each drop of tears has its own story that no one will understand except for yourself.

I always believed in that.

But this time, tama nga sila. Umiiyak ako dahil pinanghihinaan na ako ng loob, nanghihina ako inside and outside. For a minute I wanted him to see me in my weak state. I want him to pity me, embrace me and say that I'm the one for him, but no, it will never happen.

I feel like my heart shattered into pieces whenever I saw him with him. My heart is constantly in its knotted form because of him. And it's harder for me to breathe each time.

It was suffocating, it was heavy but I'm ok.

Pero minsan I wished upon the star na sana Pwede bang ako na lang, Knox? Na sana I was the man he loved, those unheard wishes will remain up in the stars for a long time, probably a lifetime without him knowing that I ever wished for it to happen. I felt helpless, vulnerable and worthless.

It's just the worst. I hate this.

He stumbles backwards. "Shut the fuck up, Sevilliana." Tila ba'y nahihirapan nyang saad. "You don't like me," he insisted na para bang alam na alam nya kong ano ang nararamdaman ko.

"I like you." I confessed wholeheartedly.

"Masyadong mabilis ano? But your hard work and dedication to what you are doing never ceases to amaze me. That's the qualities that I don't have so I became more drawn to you," I tilted my head, a soft yet subtle smile escaped my lips.

He looked at me seriously. His cold demeanor urges me to shut up, but I continue

anyway.

"Even if you have thorns all over your body, I'd still hug you." I took a step forward. I close the distance between us, umiwas sya ng tingin. "That's how I'm willing to bleed for you Knox. I'll bleed and sacrifice everything even if it means losing myself in the process." I tried to smile but my voice came out crooked.

I tilted my head and looked at him weakly, "Kaya...sana ako nalang, hmm."

"G-get out. I don't wanna see you." Pagtataboy nya saakin.

He pushed me harshly kaya nasagi ko ang basong nasa nightstand nya bago ako bumagsak sa lapag. I meet the floor with a loud thud; I bit the inside of my cheeks nang makaramdaman ang panibagong hapdi sa kamay ko.

I glance at my bleeding hand at itinaas ito para makita nya.

"Ganto ka Knox. It feels like you were holding a knife, and stabbed me countless times yet I was so mesmerized by your beauty that I forgot I was bleeding severely." Dahan-dahan akong tumayo at hinarap sya. My tired eyes lingered on his face; I want to memorize every detail about him.

I want him etched in my mind. Kasi pakiramdam ko things will never be the same after this.

Kahit na napakasakit nyang gustohin, kaya ko pa naman. I also have my own internal struggles. Nawindang ako when I find him attractive, that I was drawn yet again to his lips. Ngayon lang ako nagkagusto sa taong malabong mapasakin and its torture as hell.

In desperation, I want him. Gusto ko sakanya nalang ako, I want to stand beside him,

I want him to be mine. But at this moment, I want to stay away from him.

His eyes flickered when he saw the blood from my hand. It does hurt but does it matter when my heart is tearing and is hurting. Mas ramdam ko pa yung sakit sa puso ko kesa sa kamay kong dumudugo eh.

"You should stop that. Hinding hindi kita magugustohan."

I know...

"Willing akong mag try, just don't push me away please, hmm?"

Para akong tangang nagmamakaawa sa kanya na tanggapin nya ako, kulang nalang lumuhod ako eh. Ganon ko sya kagusto, na kahit masakit handa akong sumagal. Kahit talo na ako, susugal at susugal pa rin ako.

Pero, pag sila na talaga edi titigil na ako. I want to respect and protect his heart, so I'll choose to let him go and stay away from him like what he wanted if that ever happened.

"No. Get out! Hindi ka bagay sakin Sevilliana," he firmly turned me down.

I let out a guttural laugh. "Hindi bagay sayo? Please, wag mo namang ipamukha sakin na wala akong kwentang tao oh. Sabagay, ang taas mo eh...sobrang taas. Ang hirap hirap mong abotin. Yan ba ang rason kaya hindi ako bagay sayo?" Puno nang hinahakit ang saboses ko.

Sa sobrang sakit ng nararamdaman ko hirap na hirap na akong huminga. I clutched my chest at naluluha syang binalingan ng tingin.

"Alam mo ang sakit mo. Pero kasalanan ko rin naman dahil ikaw pa tong pinili ng

putanginang pusong to. I'm really sorry dahil nagkagusto ako sayo, hindi ko naman sinasadya eh...sadyang nahulog nalang ako bigla." My lips quivered as my heart shattered into million pieces.

I breathe heavily, chest tightening with every inhale but made sure to ground myself. Matapang kong sinalubong ang malamig nyang titig, kahit na durog na durog na ako sa ilalim ng mabibigat nyang mata.

A thin smile made its way on my lips—one that masked the ache but failed.

"You know what," I whisper, barely above a whisper. "I wish I hated you, Knox. God, I wish I did."

Saglit akong napatigil, pilit na nilalabanang bumagsak ang mga namumuong luha sa mata ko.

"Kasi kong kaya kitang kamuhian baka hindi na ganon ka sakit ang maramdaman ko. Na baka makakalimutan agad kita if I despise you...if I hated you, pero wala eh." My lips trembled; I let out a shaky breath before finally turning my back ready to walk away from him.

"I wish I could."

## Page 19

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

The cost of trying means sacrificing a lot of things.

It's not even for your self-growth nor for your ambition rather than a self-erasure. You pour all your energy and care to meet others' expectations or gain their favor, often without reciprocation.

As time passes it eats your sense of self-your dignity-yourself worth and you even neglect your own boundaries.

The cost of trying isn't often worth it especially when your efforts go unnoticed and the worst part is when you've completely lost yourself in the process; you become invisible to them-especially to yourself.

The pain from trying and never being seen is the worst kind of pain.

Agaran akong lumabas sa kwarto nya at tumakbo sa kwarto ko. I grabbed a few things before heading out. I fished out my phone and messaged Rafael.

You up? don ka sa kwarto ni Preston matulog, lemme crash to your room for tonight.

After I sent my message I locked my room and made my way to our front door. Seconds later my phone lit up.

Go somewhere else fucker.

Napagakat ako sa labi ko at inirtang nagtipa ulit nang irreply.

Baka gusto mong isumbong kita kay Rayne, na kamuntikan mo nang maibangga ang kotse nya sa poste? Pili ka, papatulogin mo ako dyan o makakalbo ka ni Rayne? Madali lang naman akong kausap.

Fuck you! pag talaga na laman kong sinabi mo ibuburol kita agad.

Binalik ko sa bulsa ko ang phone ko when I read his message. Bitbit ko ang unan ko, I was about to twist open the door when his voice rang kaya napatigil ako.

"Where are you going?" He asked. I licked my lips and forced myself to not turn around, I might give in once I saw his face.

"Wala kang paki," I uttered. I can totally imagine his expression right now. Furrowed brows and his usual blank eyes.

"I'm asking you properly," diin nya.

"And I'm answering you properly."

"Stay here."

My body stiffens. Stay here? after what he just said to me? I scoff and make my way out nang hindi sya pinapansin. Puta, he's so hard to figure out.

Knox, I'm not angry or what, I just needed some time to figure out my feelings for you-what I really want because I feel like I've been hasty by my confession and if I wanna pursue you despite how hard you pushed me I'll make sure na gusto talaga kita.

I don't want to make any hasty decisions that might hurt him-hurt the both of us. I'm still giving him the benefit of the doubt.

This time, sarili ko muna. Kasi masyado na akong nasaktan. Pipilitin kong intindihin ang sarili ko para hindi ko sya masaktan kong hindi pa buo ang utak ko.

I'm afraid to be honest. I've been into girls for as long as I can remember and then one day nag confess ako tas ang malala pa sa kapwa ko pa lalaki. Of course, nagulat din ako. Kasi indi ako nag-iisip sa mga oras na yun basta nalang lumabas sa bibig ko.

My mind is in chaos-clouded by all sorts of things that never ceases to pierce my heart.

"Nandito na si Austine, Raf!" Preston announced when he opened the door for me.

Rafael walked out from the shower, tanging tuwalya lang ang nakatapis sa pang-ibaba nya.

"Ginagawa mo dito?" masungit na saad nito.

Dumeretso ako sa sofa nila at isinalpak ang sarili. "Wow. Hellon Raf, I missed you too," sarkastiko kong saad.

He scoffed and joined me. Inakbayan nya ako kaya napaikot ang mata ko.

"What's up?" he asked. Bumuntong hininga ako and buried my face in my pillow.

"I don't know!!" Frustrated kong sigaw sa unan. "Nakakainis naman to!"

Binatukan nya ako kaya binalingan ko sya. I squinted my eyes and was about to pull his towel when he stood up.

"Bro chill! Pag ito nakita mo malilintikan ako sa baby ko. Sya lang dapat makakita ito!"

Napangiwi ako dahil sa sinabi nya kaya pinili ko nalang na batuhin sya ng unan.

"Kadiri ka."

"Magbihis kana don Rafael, naaalibadbaran ako sayo," Si Preston nakakarating lang.

He smiled at me and handed me the glass of water. "Thanks."

"Wow, may gana kang ngumiti sa iba tas pag ako sinusungitan mo," Rafael chimed in. He pursed his lips and approached Preston. "You should talk to me just like how you scream my n---- hayop!" hindi na niya natapos ang kanyang sasabihin when Preston pinched his side kaya napaigtad si Rafael.

My forehead creases may kakaiba sa dalawang to. Something I can't quite put into words.

Pinanlakihan sya ng mata ni Preston kaya napa tahimik sya. "Magbihis ka don." Utos ulit ni Preston.

Rafael nodded submissively. "Yes bab-boss."

He turned his back, halata mong may sama ng loob ang gago.

"Anyari don? Bat ang bait ata?" nagtataka kong tanong. Ayos ah.

"No idea." He then shrugged his shoulders. He sat beside me and briefly glanced at me.

"Is something the matter? Nag-away ba kayo?"

Bumagsak ang mata ko bago bumuntong hininga. We didn't argue, he just pushed me

away.

"We didn't argue...it's more complicated than that." I chuckle bitterly. I recline my body and stare at the ceiling. "I'm just tired..."

He went silent for a minute before sighing. "I don't know what really happened, but I think you should talk things out. Pangit naman pag naging awkward ang atmosphere nyo, iisang kwarto lang kayo." He stated and I chuckled again.

"Mahirap kausapin ang taong ayaw makinig sayo. Hindi na ata madadala sa usap tong nangyari sa amin, masyado akong nadala sa damdamin ko kaya nasabi ko ang mga bagay na hindi dapat sabihin." I said, voice almost too low to even hear.

He might be a little rough on the outside but I'm certain Knox isn't a bad person.

Kaya ko nagustuhan yun eh.

His personality is strong; he believed in things that he thought were good for all of us.

He's selfless- he prioritises others more than himself. Dedication and discipline, that's basically his Middle name and surname.

Funny but his rough personality only added to his allure that drew me to him every time he spoke and moved.

"What did you say? Maybe the way he reacts is solely because you said something deep that made him scared," he uttered while smiling. My mind became distant.

Afraid? Of what? My confession? But what for?

I waved my hand dismissively and faced him. "How would you react when a person

with the same sex as you confesses that he liked you? What will you do?" I asked.

His eyes widen for a moment, halatang nagulat din sa sinabi ko. Silence gets the best of us until he sighs deeply and looks away.

"I'd be scared and probably pushed him away," he replies, a half-smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "I'll be scared knowing that society doesn't favor that kind of relationship. Makasalanan ang maging bading kaya nakakatakot lalo na pag-alam mong you might sway that way. There are multiple instances but from my perspective that's my reason."

"So, you'll push them away dahil lang sa takot ka?" nagtataka kong tanong.

"Oo. Takot akong masaktan sya-na baka madamay, kaya mas pipiliin kong itulak sya papalayo. May mga bagay na hindi natin kayang kontrolin, ang damdamin natin-mga pananaw natin sa buhay pero isa lang ang sigurado lahat ng mga nangyayari may dahilan." He smiled at me gently, like a sweet cotton candy-soft, comforting and fleeting.

"Bat naman madamay kong choice nyang madamay?" I asked again. This time puno ng pagtataka.

He met my eyes and tilted his head.

"Madamay sa sarili kong gulo. If I'm drowning in my own chaos, why would I pull someone else in my own storm just to suffer with me, right?" balik nyang tanong sa akin na syang ikinatahimik ko. "Bat ako magpapapasok ng ibang tao sa buhay ko when I'm trying to make sense of my own mess?"

I clenched my jaw, spread my legs and lowered my head. Then which one is it? Ano ang rason kung bakit patuloy akong tinutulak palayo ni Knox.

"It's called being self-aware. The fact that you know that your life is a mess, unstable or you're going through personal struggles, it might not be fair to involve someone else. Pinoprotektahan mo lang ang sarili mo sa maaaring sakit na maidudulot nila." Tumayo sya kaya napatingala ako at sinundan sya ng tingin.

"At the end of the day hindi mo malalaman ang dahilan kung hindi mo sya kakausapin. Persist until he gives in," he added.

Rafael walked out from his room fully dressed. "Ok na to," he said bago lumapit kay Preston and kissed his temple. "Nakabihis na baby,"

Holy shi--??!!! My eyes widen in shock as in pure shock. Putangina? Alam ko naman na may mali sa dalawang to pero hindi ko aakalain na may ganito na pala ang nangyayari. Sensing how shocked I was Preston's eyes immediately widened and kicked Rafael's side.

"W-wala yun mahilig lang talagang mag biro s-si Rafael," kanda-ugaga nyang paliwanag. He laughed nervously as he tried to explain what just happened.

"N-nakakadistorbo naba ako?" nakangiwi kong tanong.

"Yeah, so go aw-puta!" namilipit sa sakit si Rafael when Preston uppercut him. Napakagat ako sa labi ko at hinarang ang unan sa harap ko.

Mukhang delikado to si Preston ah.

"Of course not, welcome ka dito wag mo lang pansinin yang ulupong na yan," aniya, halatang kabado rin.

Sa sobrang tahimik ni Rafael hindi ko alam na may relasyon na pala sila ni Preston, so sya rin pala yung-agarang nanlaki ang mata ko when realization hit me.

So si Preston ang kasama nya nong tumawag ako sakanya nong nakaraan. I gasped habang pabalik-balik ang tingin sa kanilang dalawa.

"S-so si Preston ang kasama mo nong tumawag ako nong nakaraan?" I tried to confirm it pero di makasagot si Rafael dahil namimilipit pa rin sa sakit sa sahig.

"Hoy hindi ah! Walang nangyari saamin!" Preston denied immediately.

"Wala naman akong sinabi eh!" sigaw ko na halos naiiyak na.

Mga bading.

"Manahimik kana nga Austine, sasampalin kita tamo!" pananakot ni Rafael. Dahan-dahan syang tumayo at sinamaan ako ng tingin.

"Gago! Bayolente! Naiimage kong sinasampal mo rin si Preston habang nasa kama ka-hala takbo!" agad akong tumayo at tumakbo when he jumped at me.

"Shut the fuck up Austine!" he roared habang hinahabol ako.

"Kalma tayo tol! Wala akong sinasabi ah!"

Bat ba lagi nalang akong hinahabol. Paikot-ikot kaming dalawa sa sala, habang nakatayo at nakatungaga pa rin don si Preston sa harap ng sofa, pulang-pula din ang mukha nya.

Hindi ko napansin ang water bottle sa lapag, aapakan ko ito dahilan ng pagkadulas ko.

I hit the floor with a loud thud.

I groaned and tried to stand up para lang makatakbo ulit when Rafael launched himself at me pinning me to the ground again.

Umupo sya sa bandang tyan ko making it harder for me to even move a muscle.

"Papatayin kita! Ang ingay mo!!!" Itinaas nya ang kanyang kamay and positioned himself as if to choke me kaya napalunok ako.

"Pag-usapan natin. We've been friends for almost our entire life, we can talk this out don't resort to violence," I held out my finger and form it into a peace sign and smile crookedly

"Oh, don't worry no violence is needed dahil papatayin kita sa kakatawa."

And with that kiniliti nya ako sa tagiliran. I burst out laughing and wiggle as much as possible para lang makawala sakanya.

"Putanginamo! Bitaw! Naiihi na ako parang-awa mo na!" halos mangiyak-ngiyak na ako kakatawa but this fucker won't stop.

With my free hand I caught his hand and yanked it. I reached for his neck using my arm and headlock him. Nabitawan nya ang isa kong kamay kaya kinuha ko ang opportunity na yun para kilitiin din sya sa tagiliran nya.

"Putanginamo!"

"Putanginamo rin!"

Naghalo na ang tawa naming dalawa. I let go of his neck, I pushed him off of me at natatawa syang sinipa.

"Gago ka," ani ko.

He raised his middle finger at me. "Mas gago ka."

"Gago kayong dalawa," sabat ni Preston, nagkatinginan kami ni Rafael bago humalakhak.

"Mas gago tong jowa mo, breakan mo na nga." Suggestion lang naman.

"Pag ako talaga hiniwalayan nyan, syempre iiyak ako," natawa ako dahil sa tugon ni Rafael habang namumula naman si Preston.

"Shut up! yung mga basura don ilabas mo na. Ikaw itapon ko eh," utos nito kay Rafael. Napakamot naman sa batok si Rafael, dahil wala syang magagawa.

"Yes boss." Aniya at dumiretso sa kusina.

Napailing nalang ako dahil para syang tuta. I glance at Preston, the kind of glance you'd make when you spotted the crush of your friend. Pinakyuhan nya ako kaya mas lalo akong napatawa.

"He's rubbing off of you," I chuckled.

He sticks out his tongue, "Palabasin kaya kita." Banta nya kaya napatahimik ako.

"Sorry na boss." Ani ko at umupo sa isang tabi. Sabi ko nga tatahimik na, ayaw ko pa namang bumalik don.

Baka pag nakita ko si Knox, eh halikan ko agad.

Hindi, biro lang.

"Aust! may sunder ka!" Sigaw si Rafael mula sa labas.

He entered the room and looked at me with the same confused expression I was wearing.

"What?" I asked.

"Nasa labas si Knox hinahanap ka ata----"

I rushed outside hoping-praying na totoong nasa labas sya. My mind spun with different questions, the biggest one echoing over and over again like a old radio that's been on repeat. Bat sya nandito? I almost stumbled in my hurry, but it didn't matter, but it didn't matter.

Once outside my breath caught in my throat when I caught a glimpse of his back walking away under the dim light.

"Knox..." I whispered his name, lips trembling and I took off running.

If don't run, I feel like palayo ng palayo ang distansya naming dalawa. I reached out for him only to find out that he's been long gone out of my sight.

"Knox!" I called out, voice cracking dahil para mapahinto sya. "Please Stop!" I yelled again when he quickened his pace.

He ran.

So I ran too.

I caught up to him and grabbed his shoulder to stop him- breathless and shaking. I feel him flinching with my touch.

"W-What are you doing here?" Hinihingal kong tanong. He remained silent. "Knox... answer me." Halos pagsusumamo kong saad.

"Bakit?" aniya. "Bakit ka umalis?" His voice broke-shaky, hoarse, the kind of sound that only comes after crying alone for too long.

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

My mind is in the wasteland; I couldn't grasp what was going on nor do I have any idea what's going on inside that big brain of his.

"Hindi mo maiintindihan."

Was the only word he said that embedded deep within my consciousness that night. How am I supposed to know kong pilit nya akong tinutulak. Instead of talking directly he'll give me a fucking mix signal that confuses the hell out of me.

He will push me away and then minutes later he'll come running to me like a lost puppy. Puta anong rason mo Knox?

Isang linggo. Isang linggo ko na syang iniawasan. Hindi ko mawari kong ano ang dapat gawin pag kaharap ko sya. Baka masapak ko pa dahil sa sobrang inis.

Though I knew damn well na hindi ko kayang makita syang nasasaktan. Let alone hurt him.

"Ba't parang ang tamlay mo?" Inilayo ko ang ulo ko when Abigail shove a soda in a can in my face. Kinuha ko yun sa kamay nya. Umupo sya sa tabi ko and stare at me for a second. "Broken? Or rejected?" she asked.

I breathe sharply and open the soda she gave me. "Both, kaya manahimik ka dyan," walang ganang saad ko.

She chortled and slapped my back. "Gago totoo? Nagkatotoo ata yung sumpa ko sayo," she laughed hard. Inirapan ko sya at nilagok ang coke na hawak ko.

"Oh edi kasalanan mo pala?" paninisi ko kahit na alam kong wala syang kinalaman. She stopped laughing and leered at me.

Her face became serious as she straightened her back. "Pero totoo nga? What exactly happened? Bat ka nireject? Tas nino?" sunod-sunod nyang tanong.

I looked down and took a deep breath. I actually don't want to talk about it dahil na ddrain lang ako. As much as I want to understand him I just wouldn't because he chooses to keep his mouth shut and leave me guessing and wondering what really happened or what's going on.

Sensing my hesitation, she cleared her throat and whacked the back of my head. She laughs awkwardly...and loud. "Ano kaba! Hayaan na you don't need to tell me kong hindi ka pa handa. Tanginamo hindi ako sanay na ganto ka, arat habulan."

My lips slowly stretched until I let out a chuckle at hinuli ang beywang nya. Nanlaki ang mata nya at inambahan ako ng suntok pero nauna ko syang kilitiin.

"Hayop! Madaya," she shouted amidst her laughter. Hinila ko ang buhok nya at agad na tumayo para tumakbo. "Agay! Puta ka, Austine napaka pangit ng ugali mo!" she shouted behind my back. Tumakbo ako palabas sa classroom.

"Sino ba nag-aya ng habolan?" I laughed as I dodged the pen she threw in my direction. Marami ang napapatingin saamin pero patuloy lang sya sa paghabol saakin.

"Wait taympers! Balik ka muna ihuhug lang kita sa leeg hanggang sa magbayolet kang hayop ka!"

Tawang-tawa ako habang tumatakbo.

"Sus aminin mo na gusto mo lang talaga akong mayakap." I teased as I dodged yet

another notebook.

"Kapal! Tangina hindi kita type mandiri ka nga," her voice echoed in every corner of this building. Napahalakhak ako dahil sa rebat nya.

"Ayan nanaman sila."

"Takbo Austine! Baka pagsamantalahan ka ni Abi pag naluhi ka nya."

Nakasalubong namin ang iba naming classmates. Patawa-tawa ko namang niyakap ang sarili ko.

"Tulong! May magnanakaw na humalabol sa kin!"

"Tanginamo Pakyu!" aniya. I look past my shoulder only to see her sending middle fingers to our classmates.

I shook my head and continued running, however somehow my feet started to feel heavy, as if some invisible shackle tugged my feet making my pace slower when I saw him—walking side by side with Zyran.

Ah...

He caught my eyes and his smile vanished in an instant.

"Huli ka!"

Abigail's heavy weight pressed on my back as she wrapped her arms around my neck.

"Tangina bilis mo ah—oh! Si Knox oh," she pointed out.

I clenched my jaw and wrapped my arms around her waist, "Canteen tayo. Libre mo," Binalingan ko sya ng tingin. She furrowed her brows and flicked my forehead.

"Ikaw na wala akong pera." Inirapan nya ako at kumalas sa pagkakayakap sa leeg ko. "Saglit kakausapin ko lang muna si Knox, about don sa application namin. Ma terminate na kasi ang club dahil kulang kami sa members."

Akma nyang kakalasin ang pagkakahawak ko sakanya, when I tightened my grip and looked straight in her eyes.

"Maya na please," I said, almost begging. Ayaw kong makaharap sya ngayon. Ayaw kong lumambot dahil lang sa tumama ang mata namin.

Mas lalong lumalim ang kunot sa noo nya, aalma pa sana sya when she saw how my eyes glimmer from tears. She clenched her jaw and pulled me away kaya nabitawan ko ang beywang nya.

Tahimik lang kami...tahimik lang akong nagpapahila sa kanya. With my head bow down, mixed emotions started to surge within me again.

"Sya ba?" she accused me as if I've done something wrong.

I scoffed and licked my lips. Don ko lang napagtanto na dinala nya ako sa garden. Umupo sya sa lilim ng puno.

"Was he the one who rejected you?" she rephrased her words. Umupo ako sa tabi nya and rested my head on her shoulder.

I nodded my head. "Surprised huh?"

"You like guys?" she asked again.

Napaisip ako, was I into guys? But kong tagalang oo, then why is it that whenever I look at other guys, I feel nothing. No spark...no complicated thoughts...no butterflies...just nothing. But whenever I'm with him, it felt different.

Whenever I'm with him, my chest tightens in a way I can't quite understand or put into words—a sudden rush of emotions that are too foreign for me. Sometimes, my stomach flutters, sometimes it churns, it depends on how he treats me. Sometimes butterflies, most of the time it was painful.

I don't know what it is about him that kept me hypnotised, but one thing is clear both in my mind and heart—I've only ever felt this way with him and no one else in this world.

"No. I like him, there's a distinct difference," I said, in a low and small voice.

She sighed and rested her head on the tree trunk.

"You know, what I've said nong nakasalubong ko kayo sa clinic na sana mareject ka...I was just joking kasi hindi pumasok sa utak ko na maaari kang ma reject. I mean ikaw na yan eh, Austine Yohan Sevilliana, a fine-looking man. The Pride and Joy of the Architecture Department..kaya...I'm sorry if it jinxed you in some way." She apologized sincerely.

I chuckled. "It's not your fault. We couldn't have predicted what was about to happen in the future right? Sadyang may mga bagay lang talaga na hindi para sayo. It's like seeing something you really like in the store—however, by the time you decide to buy it it's already sold out ...."

My breath was unsteady, and I started to fiddle my fingers. She remained silent, like she's really listening, so I continued.

"...Life is kind of like that. In love too. Maybe in everything. Just because you love someone doesn't mean they'll love you back. Feelings aren't always reciprocated simply because yours are genuine. Sometimes, it's not always what you thought it would be. A lot of twists and turns can happen in a matter of seconds, there's no way we can anticipate what was about to happen."

I bit my lips at ini—angat ang ulo mula sa balikat nya at ginaya sya. I rested my head on the tree trunk.

"I'm about to get married," she confesses kaya bahagyang nanlaki ang mata ko. She tilted her head to meet my eyes, when she saw my reaction, she laughed. "Putangina mo!"

Humalakhak sya habang gulat pa rin akong nakatunganga sakanya.

"Huh? May pumatol sayo?" ang reaction ko.

Hearing my words, her laughter abruptly stopped. Napangiti sya. "Grabeng ugali to, napaka sama." She rolled her eyes.

I chuckled, hinampas nya ang balikat ko bago tumayo kaya napatingla ako sakanya. She smiled and extended her hands. "Chika ko sayo sa susunod kain muna tayo, kanina pa ako nagugutom."

I clicked my tongue and grabbed her hands. "Pabitin."

"Mas mabuti ngang sa chismis ka lang nabitin. Kawawa nga ako dahil na bitin sa lapla—"

Agad kong sinungalngalan ng bibig nya ng panyo kong may uhog dahil sa kong ano nanamang kabastosan ang lumalabas sa bibig nya.

She muffled a shout kaya napatawa ako.

"Putangina ba't may malagkit?!!"

Humalakhak ako at tinaggal ang panyo sa bibig nya. When she saw what was in my handkerchief she freaked out.

I was mid-laugh, shoulders shaking dahil sa tarantang reaksiyon ni Abi. The sun was warm and soothing. The kind of light that makes everything feels lighter than it actually is.

But something made me glance past her—some strange pull in the back of my mind. I was stiff when I saw him.

Knox stood a few meters away from us hidden behind the bushes, half turned like he wasn't really looking, however, his eyes betrayed him...his eyes were on me. It was quick, quiet, like he didn't mean to be caught.

My chest thundered. He didn't smile, didn't wave, just held my gaze longer than he should. Ito ang unang pagkakataon na tinignan nya ako sa mata ng matagal... malalim at nanghahalina.

His expression faltered. His jaw tense, his eyes glimmer with something. His fingers twitched like he needed something to hold on. I swallow the lump in my throat, steady my breathing and look away.

This time, hindi ako ang unang magsusurrender. Tama na muna.

How ironic it was when Rayne knew what was waiting for me before I could even start paving my own path.

Nang humiwalay sa kin si Abi dahil may tumawag sa kanya. I fished out my phone in my pocket and dialed Rayne's number. It took a few rings before he answered his phone.

I greeted him with my bitter laugh. "Fuck Rayne, I'm trapped. I'm fucking trapped and I didn't even know if there was a way out."

He was silent for a minute until he realized what I meant.

"What happened?" he asked, curious.

"I said I'm trapped," I chuckled softly. "And somehow it's painful. You know I love the ocean right? And somehow I really wanted to drown in them—maybe I'll be at peace by then."

He let out a shaky sigh. "Do you think drowning means ending your suffering with peace? Sometimes the most painful death was drowning in silence. Just because you love the ocean doesn't mean you have to drown in it."

"But what if drowning is the only way I can escape this hellhole?" I asked.

"Hellhole agad? Nainlove ka lang eh," tumawa sya sa kabila kaya tumawa din ako.

"Sorry na oa ako, nagmana lang talaga sayong bwesit ka," rebat ko.

"Gago!" bigla syang tumahimik sa kabila kaya napatikhim ako. "May bebetime pa ako, pwedeng mamaya nalang? bar tayo total friday nanaman."

Napailing nalang ako. "May pumatol sayo?"

Tumikhim sya, "Meron, wala pang label."

"Ok lang yan, no label enjoyer ka naman t—hayop na taong to."

I cursed when the line beep, tangina pinatayan ako? kita mong nag eemote pa ang tao tas bababaan lang ako? the audacity?

Gusto ko rin mag emote kaso feel ko busy yung dalawang yun. Oh edi kayo na masaya.

Ibubulsa ko na sana ang cellphone ko when it rang again. My lips stretched when I saw my grandma calling me. Agad ko iyong sinagot.

"Mem---" My words got cut off when I heard her hurried and panicked voice.

"Hey what's wrong?" kinakabahang tanong ko.

"Baby, are you in school?" she tried to keep her voice calm but I can sense the urgency beneath it. "Can you come home? sa hacienda?"

"What? why? please tell me what was happening," tumatambol na ang dibdib ko dahil sa sobrang kaba dahil sa tono ng kanyang boses.

"Your mom's room...your dad..."

Without even finishing her word I already understand what she meant by it. Agaran akong tumakbo papuntang dorm para kunin ang susi sa kotse ko.

I dialed my dad's number. I cursed under my breath when the call went into voicemail.

"Answer you fucking shit."

I dialed his number again this time he answered.

"Wh--"

"What the fuck are you doing?!!" I roared, my hands trembling, my eyes watering.  
"Sir itatapon ba tong pana?" I heard someone say on the other side that when I lose it.

"Don't you dare touch her things," kalmado ngunit madiing saad ko. Halos mamuti na ang kamao dahil sa higpit ng pagkakakuyom ko.

"It's an old room. Kianna and I decided to make it her—"

"Shut the fuck up you fucker!" I roared. My throat burned, my chest heave. My eyes bloodshot from grief and fury, blurred with the tears I could no longer hold back.

"Tangina! yan na nga lang ang natitirang aalala ni mommy kukunin mo pa? awa na lang sana oh." My voice cracked, fragile and breaking, like my heart in that moment. My tears poured down—like a fucking dam, unstoppable and heavy. Puta.

The thought that he could just demolish the room we once shared shattered my last bit of hope for him. He could just throw it away as if they were junk. As if the memories he had with her meant nothing to him.

As if everything she was, everything she left behind—meant nothing.

"It's just an old room Austine, why are you so worked up?" galit na rin sya pero mas nag-aalab ang galit na namumuo sa puso ko.

"Do you even fucking remember what's in that room? Do you even fucking care what's inside that room? Fuck Kianna! Fuck you! Fuck you all. I hated you. Puta! pati ba yan ipagkakait nyo pa sakin? akin na lang yan wag nyo nang galawin please..." I

broke down.

My knees buckled, and I crumbled to the floor like a lifeless human being.

Putanginang hindi lang naman yan kwarto lang eh. Naging tambayan namin yun ni mommy. The shared laugh we had vanished into thin air, the silence was louder than our laughter.

I sobbed, chest aching, throat drying. It wasn't just about the things, it's all about her. The memories. Pag wala na yung kwartong yun pakiramdam ko nilibing na rin nila ako kasama sya. Her scent still lingered in her room like it was preserved by time. Pag nawala yun...pano nalang ako?

Napasalpak ako sa sahig habang hawak-hawak ang dibdib kong kumikirot. Please not that room...

Not my mom's room.

Putanginang mga taong to!

"Fucking leave that goddamn room dad, please..."

Silence.

Just my sobbed echo in our dorm. The door opened but I couldn't care less who it was.

"Austine?"

Putanginang bat ba lagi nalang akong nasasaktan?

"Fuck what happened?" I heard a hurried footsteps coming my way, but I remained silent.

"Stop it dad please...don't do this to me oh." I sobbed again.

This time, I felt a warm embrace behind— steady, and grounding. A strong arm wrapped around me, pulling me in, as if trying to hold together every pieces of me that was pulling apart.

I didn't resist.

I couldn't.

I just let myself fall into it.

Muling bumaha ang mga luha ko—this time, it was heavier, the kind that came not from rage, but from heartbreak. I buried my face in his arms, letting the silence cradle my grief.

"Knox..." My voice barely above a whisper against his chest, trembling and fragile.  
"Bat ang hilig nyo akong saktan?"

My words hung in the air---soft yet somehow sharp like I'd had enough of this pain.

He didn't answer. He remained silent. And maybe he didn't need to answer me, because the silence between us had already said enough.

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I give up.

"Shhh...It's ok. Everything's gonna be alright," he coaxed, still hugging me.

I've never broken down in front of anybody pero putangina.

Please...let me rest.

"Makaasta kayo parang di ako tao ah. Ganon na ba talaga ang tingin nyo sakin? ni hindi mo man lang ba inalala na napapagod din ako? nahihirapan? nasasaktan?" Pagak akong napatawa, I sigh heavily and lower my head.

He remains silent just observing me. Tangina talaga.

My lips quivered as I spoke again. "Yan ang hiras sainyo eh— hindi kayo nag-iisip bago magbitaw ng mga salita. Damn, Knox, tao ako hindi robot. Nasasaktan din naman ako ano bang tingin nyo sakin? hayop? Hinay-hinay lang ha? baka kasi hindi ko kayanin yung sakit."

When was the last time someone actually cared about me—cared about my feelings? When was the last time someone asked me kung okay pa ba ako? kung kaya ko pa ba? kung kamusta na ako?

All I want is for someone to understand me. I don't need someone to fix me kahit makinig lang sakin ok na...mahirap ba 'yon? mahirap ba akong pahalagahan?

Why do people always push me away? kahit sandali lang gusto ko rin maramdamang

mahalaga ako.

I want a love that will absorb my entirety. I want someone to stand by my side through thick and thin—ups and downs—and even through sanity or insanity. I want someone to embrace me—my flaws, my abnormalities, my overall being.

Mahirap yung pinipilit ko silang intindihin at tanggapin pero patuloy nila akong binabasura. Nakakaputangina! I don't want this.

Mom...please take me with you. It's cruel down here. Mom...Please...yakapin mo ako.

"I...I'm not pushing you away. I'm pushing myself away from you," he's voice broke, small and full of bitterness.

I shook my head. "I'm afraid hindi ko naiintindihan. Pushing yourself? What the fuck are you talking about?" I let out a croaked laugh. Gusto kong kumalas sa pagkakayakap nya pero mas pinili kong manatili.

I twisted my body and hugged his waist and buried my face in his stomach. My breathing relaxed when he didn't resist nor pushed me away. Instead, he let me hug him and he caressed my back.

"Tell me what happened?" my eyes widened when his voice came out breathy, soft and almost wooing me.

This is not him. He never talked to me like that.

Though...it was nice to hear him speak to me with such tenderness.

Sasagot na sana ako when my phone beeped revealing the text my grandma had sent me. Nanghihina ko itong binuksan. Agad na nanlaki ang mata ko when I read it.

Agaran akong tumayo at tumakbo palabas.

Putanginamo!

"Yung portrait ng mommy mo pinatapon nya."

I exploded.

My chest clenched, so tight it might rip itself apart.

My blood roared in my ears, boiling with every breath.

My fist balled, my knuckles turned white—hands trembling, not from fear—from rage coiling like a snake in my gut.

It wasn't anger anymore. It's something bigger.

Something primal.

A fucking storm howling deep within me—ripping me and ready for its released.

Fuck that man!

"Sevilliana! You're not allowed to go out!" I heard Knox's voice following me.

I halted, looked past my shoulder and stared at him coldly. His eyebrows jerked when he saw my expression.

"Shut the fuck up, Villanueva and give me that goddamn gate pass." Mahinahon ngunit bawat bigkas ko sa mga salita may diin na kasama.

He looked at me shocked for a moment before snapping out of his mind.

"Then go, I'll handle things here."

And with his cue I ran again. I don't care about anyone anymore; I just wanted to punch that jerk's face and make it bleed like how he made my mom's bleed in her last moment.

The guard tried to stop me but failed. Timing naman na nagsasara sya nag gate. I squeezed myself out and ran to my car in the parking lot. Once I reached it, I immediately dialed the number of Elise's nanny.

She picked up right away. I gripped the steering wheel so tight my knuckles turned white again.

"Hello Sir, asan po kayo?" Bungad nya, and I heard Elise's cry on the other end.

"Take Elise somewhere, don't let her see me. I'm on my way," I uttered calmly.

I don't want my sister to see me in my dishevelled state of mind. Ayaw kong makita nya kong paano ko sungalngalin ang magaling nyang tatay.

"Sige po, pakibilisan po sir. Ayaw magpaawat ng tatay mo, yung lola mo nandito din," aniya na syang ikinatango ko.

"Take care of Elise, ilayo mo muna sya dyan."

"Ok sir."

I ended the call without a word.

Gabi na and the roads are thinning out but not fast enough.

I swerve through traffic, cutting every car in front of me.

Horns blared behind me—followed by anger shouts from others.

My hands were locked on the wheel, jaw clenching, vision tunneling.

Pakiramdam ko sasabog na ako dahil sa sobrang galit.

I never despise someone this much nor did it ever cross my mind that I will despise my own father. Despise? I think that word isn't heavy enough to convey what I truly felt. I loathe him, that's the right word.

"I don't know what I would do once I see that fucking face of yours...dad."

I swear the first thing that I would do is to punch that asshole's face.

Nang marating ang hacienda, I saw big trucks just outside the gate. I took a deep breath and honked...long and loud. Mang Jeff, our security guard ran to my direction.

I got out of my car, put my hands inside my pockets and walked straight to where he was. Nakita kong nasa labas na ang ibang gamit ni mom kaya mas lalong kumulo ang dugo ko, but what really boiled my anger was when I saw my mom's portrait thrown like a fucking trash outside.

I scoff. I saw his golf cart, so I grabbed his most sturdy golf club. But later change my mind when I saw a baseball bat, kaya yun ang kinuha ko.

Makita ako ng ibang kasamahan namin sa balay pero ni isa walang lumapit sakin. You ruined it, I'll ruin yours.

"Fuck you!"

I swung the bat with everything I had—the crack of metal shattering sent a shock through the air as it obliterated the side of his gun rock. The sound was sudden—deafening, and loud enough to turn their head in my direction...including his.

When he saw me ravaging his golf cart his brows jerked with fury.

"What is wrong with you?!" galit nyang sigaw habang nakasunod sakanya si Kianna at ang lola ko.

"God, August! Gibain mo pa!"

"Mom!" My father shouted.

I swung the bat again this time hitting its mirror.

"It's not enough," I murmur to myself. I need something...something that might ruin them also. Something special for them...

I roamed my eyes around and spotted the garden he and Kianna basically planted. It was their bonding, dito din sila ikinasal. The garden is full of different flowers, maganda, mabango, at puno ng aalala nilang dalawa. Ha! Pathetic.

I walked over it. Trampling its neat rows without a glance. The flowers crushed beneath my feet as I made my way to the Pavilion at the center of their little paradise. I raised my bat, clicking my jaw.

I swung hard, aiming at every delicate bloom within my range. Petals flew, the one you saw in fairytales, though this one isn't a happy ending. Stems snapped. Instead of

flowers, chaos bloomed to where beauty once stood. Wala akong ibang nararamdaman kundi galit, pighati at poot.

Kianna's squeal cut through the air, and then came my father's voice—loud, furious, tearing through the air like a goddamn thunder.

"Austine! Are you out of your mind?!!" He reached my shoulder and pushed me so hard that I stumbled.

I cocked my head and looked at him blankly, "I should be the one asking you that. Are you fucking out of your mind?" I shouted. I tried to control my anger pero ang hirap lalo na't nasa harapan ko ang bwesit na to.

His jaw tense, and in a swift move his hard and heavy hand landed on my face sending immense pain in my cheeks. My head tilted dahil sa pagkakasampal nya sa akin. I stayed in that position. I licked my lips only to taste the metal taste of my own blood.

I chuckled humorlessly, clicked my tongue and wiped the blood with the back of my hand.

"Are you done?" I flatly uttered.

He heaves a sigh and shook his head. "I'm disappointed Austin—"

"And do you think I care? Fucking cheater bastard."

He angrily pointed his fingers at me. "Sumusobra ka na! Hindi kita pinalaking ganyan! Patay na ang mommy mo! How do you move on when the last memory of her is the only thing keeping you together? Ha!" He angrily shouted.

I furrowed my brows.

Disappointment etched in my face.

"How can you say that to her? Putangina! Sa tingin mo matatanggap ko na kakamatay pa lang ni mommy noon tas inuwi mo na agad yang putanginang kabet mo?! Wala ka bang hiya? Anong klase ama at asawa ka? While mom is suffering, where were you? Nasa tabi ng babae mo? Eh gago ka pala e—"

My words hang in the air when he strikes me again.

"Don't you ever talk to Kianna like that. Wala kang alam." Madiin nyang ani habang galit na galit na sinasalubong ang mata ko.

I laughed bitterly. "Ah talaga? How ironic. Nagawa mong pagbuhatan ng kamay ang anak mo dahil lang sa kabet mo? Gobernador ka ba talaga?"

"Sebastian! That's enough, you're being unreasonable!" Memere shouted as she approached my dad.

He looked frustrated when he brushed his hair up and licked his lips. "Pagsabihan mo nga tong apo mo, he's making a big deal out of it. Kianna just wanted that room for her stu—"

This time I didn't let him finish. I harshly grabbed his shoulder and forced him to face me. I clenched my fist so tight before I landed it on his jaw.

"Putanginamo mong hayop ka! Kahit tatay kita hindi ako magdadalawang isip na bugbogin ka. Puta! Napaka gagomo, ang gago mo! Napaka gago mong hayop ka!" unti-unting nang hina ang boses ko, iilang butil ng luha ang muling kumawala sa mata ko.

My grandma rushed to my side while Kianna helped my dad. His glare burned my soul but all I could think of was my anger.

"Tama na! I'm sorry kasalanan ko ang lahat. Please just stop this," Kianna's voice broke. I laughed half heartedly. Puta napaka plastic.

"Oo kasalanan mo. Pinatay mo mommy ko eh. Pinatay nyong dalawa..." I averted my gaze back to my dad.

"Do you even fucking know how hard it is for me? Nandon ako! Nasa tabi nya habang hinuhugot nya ang huli nyang hininga. She called your name multiple times but you never came! Busy ka kakalaro ng bahay-bahayan dyan sa putangina mong kabet! Kaya wala kang karapatang gibain yang kwarto nya at ipagamit sa kabet mo..."

I shook my head, tears streaming down my face. I looked at him helplessly, nakakuyom ang kamao nya kaya napapalatak nalang ako.

"...I will never forgive you."

Binato ko ang bat sa salamin na nakasabit sa Pavilion na pinagawa nito, causing it to shatter into pieces before hitting the floor.

I let out a sharp breath. Ramdam ko ang paghampos ni Memere sa braso ko.

"Shh..." she coaxed.

I lowered my head as the cool drops of rainwater touched the back of my neck—the sky started to darken. The rainwater started off as drizzle, soft and cool, like my tears—then it turned heavy. Each dropped felt heavier than the last.

I wanted to just stay here and let the coldness embrace me. But then it hit me; a jolt of

panic ripped through my chest when I realized something.

"Ang painting."

Agaran akong tumakbo kong nasaan nandon ang painting ng portrait ni mommy. I tried to save it...but it was too late. The painting was soaked and the paint smudged, making the face of my mom unrecognizable. My knees weaken.

"No..."

Nilagay ko sa dibdib ko ang canvas, trying to protect it from the rain but it was futile. It's ruined. The painting...my mom...everything is ruined.

I cried in silence watching all my mom's belongings being soaked by the rain. It's all their fault. I just kneeled there under the dark vast sky—feeling helpless.

"Kuya ko!"

Napaangat ang ulo ko when I heard Elise's voice. Nakita kong tumatakbo sya sa direksyon ko. In her pink pajamas sinulong nya ang ulan ng gabi para lang mapuntahan ako.

"Elise..."

"Kuya Austine ko!" She sobbed when she reached me. She hugged me dahilang para mamuo ulit ang luha sa mata ko.

"Elise, inaaway ako," I buried my face in her neck. Despite her sobs she comforted me under the rain.

Humiwalay sya and cupped my cheeks. She wiped her tears before wiping mine. Her

little and soft hand was trying so hard to wipe all my tears away.

"No cry please, kuya no cry. Elise doesn't want to see you cry," she said in her small voice. "Daddy and mommy are bad for making you cry. I hate them..."

I tried to shield her with my hand from the rain, my legs were too weak to stand-up and carry her.

"Don't hate them... that's bad. Let kuya hate them, but love them ok?" I said softly.

"Pero they make you cry."

"That's between the 3 of us. Love them hmm? Don't hate them, kuya will get mad."

She nodded her head and motioned me to stand up but I shook my head. "You'll get sick kuya, come on hurry up." She pulled my hand trying to make me stand but my legs gave out earlier. There's no strength in it.

"Susunod si kuya, pumasok kana muna don," I insisted but she shook her head.

"No. Sabay tayong papasok." She uttered firmly.

Aangal na sana ako when the rain stopped. Not because it ended—something was blocking it, an umbrella. I looked up, my breath immediately caught in my throat when I saw the person looking down at me.

His eyes were full of worries, a mix of panic and relief when he saw me.

"What are you doing here?" I asked, throat drying up.

He smiled lightly, "I'm sorry, I'm late."

Knox crunches down and caresses my hair.

"Alam mo ba na ang dami mong traffic violations? Good thing sinundan kita dito. I borrowed Rayne's big bike." He explained.

I furrowed my brows. "Bat mo ako sinundan? Bat ka nandito?"

He tilted his head, meeting my eyes. His eyes weren't cold like how it used to be, it was something. Something I didn't know. Something...just something.

"I'm worried." He confesses.

And just like that, the cold didn't matter anymore. The chill from the rain that seeped through my bones faded—all of it. My eyes stayed on him— searching, trying to read him like what I always did. Every try meets with failures, he's harder to figure out.

Then I saw it. The flicker in his eyes. How it glimmered every time he looked at me. I didn't know what it meant. The tenderness in his eyes made it even harder to look away.

"Kuya, mamaya na kayo mag-usap ng boyfriend mo. Nilalamig na ako dito." Nabaling ang tingin ko kay Elise, yakap-yakap nya ang sarili nya habang nanginginig kaya napatawa ako.

"I'm sorry baby."

### Warning

"Get up," he extended his hand. I looked at it for a second before grabbing it. Nauna na nyang ihatid si Elise sa loob ng bahay. Kanina ko pa naririnig ang sigaw ng magaling kong tatay mula sa loob ng bahay.

"I hope you won't laugh at me," pagak akong ngumiti sakanya. He pressed his lips together and shook his head.

"Never, kaya tara na." I looked at him for a second. I hope so.

Tatayo na sana ako when my legs gave up, good thing he catches me. Nabitawan nya ang payong when he grabbed my waist. God, I felt helpless.

"I'm sorry..." I whispered.

Pinagdikit nya ang noo namin, under the cold rain he smiled at me. "I should be the one saying sorry."

Mahina akong napatawa, "Habulin mo rin ako, malay mo mapatawad kita."

"Ang kapal ng mukha mo." Umiiling ngunit nangingiti nyang saad.

"Alam kong nahihirapan ka rin, pero pwede bang wag mo akong bigyan ng mix signal? Hindi ka naman mahilig sa jollibee bat nagiging mix and match ka." Saad ko sa mahinang boses na syang ikinatahimik nya.

"I had my reason."

"What reason?"

I tilted my head to see his face clearly. He averted his gaze kaya naningkit ang mata ko.

"Shut up."

Tamo! Magsasalita pa sana ako when he picked me up and put me on his shoulder like a goddamn sack of rice. Nanlaki ang mata ko dahil sa ginawa nya. Nagsimula na syang maglakad papuntang bahay.

"Hoy! Ibaba mo ako," I wiggle in his shoulder. He halted for a second and pinched my inner thigh. Napangiwi ako dahil sa sakit, magrereklamo pa sana ako when he pinched me again kaya tumahimik ako.

"Isa pang galaw malilintikan ka sa akin," banta nya. I acted like I zipped my mouth dahil mahirap na.

Thinking about it, hindi ko na naisalba ang painting. It sadden me dahil sa bawat oras na lumilipas na wala sya unti-unting nabubura ang imahe nya sa utak ko. That painting is the only thing that reminded me of her. No photos, dahil matagal na yung sinunog ng tatay ko.

I feel like mawawala ako sa tamang pag-iisip kong isang araw magigising nalang ako na hindi na maalala ang kanyang mukha.

I loved my mom cuz she's the only one who kept her promise till her last breath. Hindi ko alam kung anong sakit nya, itinago nila sakin yun. I cried without knowing what was going on.

"Alak Knox, inom tayo," ani.

He hums a reply, "Sige."

Napangiti ako. Ang sarap sa tenga pakinggan ng boses nya. It was soft—gentle that caressed my heart, putting me at ease.

Agad nya akong binaba ng makarating kami. He cupped my face and wipe my tears.

"Let's restore that painting," he said. Despite not knowing what was happening he comforted me. Kaya nalilito ako sakanya eh.

"I don't think we can do that, Knox. It's beyond recognizable." I fiddle my fingers.  
"Without it, I'm afraid baka makalimutan ko sya..."

He smiled at me. "You might forget her physical form but the most important thing is that she will always reside inside your heart."

Napakagat ako sa labi ko at yumuko. "I still want to remember her face."

"Gagawan natin ng paraan."

natin? Napangiti nalang ako. Namin...gagawan namin ng paraan.

"Do you really have to cause such a scene huh?" My father's voice rang kaya nawala ang ngiti sa labi ko.

Nanatiling nakayuko ang ulo ko, walang gana para harapin sya.

"Gov, I hope maintindihan mo ang nararamdaman ng anak mo. He's not causing a scene, he was just hurt..."

My eyes widened in shock when I saw him standing in front of me, his body angled protectively as if trying to shield me from whatever danger lay ahead of me.

For a moment I feel like even the rain that's been pouring relentlessly halted mid-air—the noise, and even time itself. Dahan-dahan kong inangat ang ulo ko, my gaze drawn to the strong line of his back.

No one has ever stood for me like this.

"This is a family matter you stay out of your line iho," he reprimanded.

I grabbed the hem of his shirt. Napatingin sya sa akin, ngumiti ako at umiling.

"But..."

"It's ok Knox." I said softly. I gently grabbed his wrist at tinago sya sa likuran ko.

"Dad...galit ako sayo but I still loved you. My younger self wouldn't believe it when he knows na hindi na tayo ganon ka close. I will respect you but do respect me also. Wag mong ipagamit kay Kianna ang kwarto ni Mommy, I can't allow that." mahinahon kong saad.

Hindi ko na hinintay ang kanyang sagot, hinila ko si Knox at nilagpasan namin sya.

I can feel his eyes lingering. I look past his shoulder, "May bagyo ata, dito ka nalang matulog." Saad ko.

"Are you ok?" He asked worriedly. Napahinto ako saglit.

"Maybe..."

Dumaan kami sa mini bar nitong bahay. I grabbed dad's Chateau Lafite wine, alam kong tinatago nya to pero sorry sya.

Binitawan ko ang kamay ni Knox, I open the bottle at diretsong tinungga ang alak. Napapikit ako ng mariin when the liquor burn my throat.

"Damn that was strong," I chuckle at tumungga ulit. This time halos ubosin ko na ang wine ng hablotin ito ni Knox sa kamay ko.

With furrowed brows he flicked my forehead. "That's enough."

Isa lang alam ko sa mga authentic na wine, mabilis kang malasing. Umikot ang paningin ko kaya sumandal ako kay Knox.

"Hoy, hindi mababa alcohol tolerance ko ha sadyang matapang lang talaga," inunahan ko na sya.

He chuckled and wrapped his arms around my waist. "Sige sabi mo eh."

Napanguso ako. "Ayaw ata nitong maniwala ah."

Tinignan nya ako at tumawang muli. "Naniniwala nga kasi sabi mo."

I squinted my eyes. "Liar."

Napailing nalang sya habang inaalalayan ako. Nakasalubong namin si Elise sa hagdan kaya huminto kami.

Pinasadahan nya kami ng tingin.

"You look like a cute couple, Kuya." She said almost giggling.

Napangiti ako, "Nililigawan nya pa ako Elise," turo ko kay Knox. Hindi sya umalma at ngumiti lang.

"Sorry baby, were not a couple yet, babawi pa ako sakanya."

Luh gago.

"Kyaaaah really? So, if you become my Kuya's boyfriend I'll support you. I like guys who protect my brother because most of the time he's standing on his own. I'll resign from being his protector pag sinagot kana ni Kuya, Kuya Knox," magiliw nyang saad.

I pressed my lips together. All this time alam nya pala.

"Sure, I'll do that." He smiled at my sister. Napatingin ako sakanya, he side-eyed me mouthed 'what' but I just shook my head. Hindi ko mawari kong totoo ba or ano.

"Yay!! Why don't you join me Kuya's? Let's play," aya nya.

"Babalik kami Elise, magbibihis lang kami ng kuya mo," he ruffles my sister hair.

Yumuko ako unti and kissed her forehead. "Thank you for protecting Kuya, Elise."

Ngumiti sya sakin at hinaplos ang pisnge ko.

"Para sayo kuya." She kissed my cheeks and turned her back. "I'll wait for you in the living room."

We nodded our head at pinagmasdan syang bumaba sa hagda. Kakapalit nya lang ng damit, still in her favorite pink pajamas.

Binaybay namin ang daad papuntang kwarto ko. We stayed silent until he pushed

open the door.

"Maligo ka muna, baka lagnatin ka." Aniya at ginaya ako papuntang banyo.

"Hmm.."

Agad akong tumalikod sakanya, grabbed my clothes in the closet at pumasok sa banyo. Lumilibot na rin ang paningin ko dahil sa tama ng alak, tangina hindi ko alam na ganon pala yun kalakas. I should have been more careful.

"Bahala na."

Agad akong natapos maligo at nag bihis na bago lumabas. I dried my hair with my towel.

"Hey, I'm done, you can use the bathroom—holy?" napatigil ako when the bottle of wine rolls to my feet. Nakita ko nalang na nakaupo si Knox sa isang sulok, nakayuko ang ulo.

Agad ko syang nilapitan. "Hey, are you ok?"

"Malakas nga sya," he laughs at tumayo. "I'll shower first."

Kinuha nya ang towel sa balikat ko at pumasok sa banyo.

Napabuntong hininga ako at umupo sa gilid ng banyo. I really wanted to hear kong bakit sya nandito. Hindi ako naniniwala na sinundan nya ako dahil baka magiba ang pangalan ng Paaralan kong may kagagohan man akong gagawin.

I won't buy that. I need to hear what's behind his actions at kong bakitganon nalang sya kong makaasta.

I knew all along that he doesn't like me, but his actions are just so confusing.

Delulu pa naman ako. Baka mag-assume ako na gusto nya rin ako. Ganon ako katanga.

Sabi ko sarili ko muna, but fuck! Ang hirap lalo na pag ganon ang pinapakita nya sakin.

I waited for almost 20 minutes for him hanggang sa bumukas ang pinto sa banyo at lumabas syang nakatapis lang nang tuwalya.

"Anong ginagawa mo dyan?" He asked when he noticed me.

Tumayo ako at hinarap sya. Namumungay ang kanyang mata halata mong medjo tipsy na.

"Let's be real here, Villanueva. Why did you follow me?" My eyes linger on his face as he averted his gaze and licked his lips.

Humigpit ang kapit nya sa towel na nakapalibot sa beywang nya. His toned body glistened because of the water cascading down. I always saw him with his hair up, neat and clean---seeing him with his wet hair makes him a hundred times goddamn attractive.

"I need to make sure that you're alright. Paaralan ang mananagot dahil sa padalos-dalos mong desisyon." He said, still not meeting my eyes.

I titled my head and took a step forward. "Is that so, hmm?"

His jaw clicked as he took a step backward. I meet his gaze with my half-lidded eyes, tumaas ang balikat nya at agarang umiwas ng tingin.

"Stay right there you fucking jerk or..." banta nya habang pinanliliksihan ako ng tingin na syang ikinatawa ko.

"Or what Knox?" I taunted.

He shut his eyes tightly. Veins are protruding in his neck and surprisingly because of the liquor I find it hot, and it fucking turns me on. I smirk and keep walking in his direction.

He glared at me. "Don't you dare, Sevilliana."

I snorted, finding his reaction amusing. "Oh, I'm afraid I'll dare. Hindi mo sasabihin sakin? Ok fine..."

His jaw clenched and his eyes darkened. He stared at me for a couple of seconds---eyes evaluating and calculating, as always. He took a deep breath, shook his head thinking my actions are nothing but a play. I scoff mentally. There he is again, brushing me off like good old times.

"Uuwi ako sa amin."

When he turned his heels and started walking back to the bathroom.

I strode to his direction and caught his waist.

Nagulat sya dahil saking ginawa.

He turned his head to scold me but when our nose touched he immediately retreated.

I smirk and pull him closer to me before pinning him to the wall next to the bathroom door.

His face pressed against the wall as he groaned.

Nang pupumiglas sya sa pagkakahawak ko but my pressed my body against his back earning another muffle groan from him.

"Where are you going hmm?" I whispered in his ears. Voice deep and hoarse.

"Fuck! Are you out of your m---" agad syang napasinghap when I buried my face in the crooked of his neck, kissing it lightly.

I snake both of my arms around his waist and pull him closer to me; I want him to feel me.

I want his warmth, I want his touch, I fucking want this man.

Goddamit, lasing na nga ako.

I sharply inhale in his neck.

I groaned and I almost threw my head back.

We both used the same body wash but why does he smell so fucking good.

So fucking good that my throat starting to dried up, my mind clouded with all sorts of thoughts and all I could think of is to suck his neck until I quench my thirst.

"Not this time Knox, I will not let you off the hook right now," I grumble in his neck and suck it lightly. I traced my hand to his chest down to the crack in his abdomen until I reached the only piece that's covering him right now.

His breath hitched, his body stiffen. Kukunin ko na sana ang towel na nakapalibot sa

beywang nya when he caught my wrist and squeezed hard. So hard I thought it might break, but I just laughed it off and pressed my body on his back again.

"I swear I'll fucking kill you. Hands off, Sevilliana."

"Kill me? Have you forgotten na matagal mo na akong pinatay?" I accused him. Tumahimik sya at nanatiling hindi gumagalaw. "Knox...I dare. What are you gonna do?"

"G-get away, Austine please..."

A satisfied grin crept on my lips as I heard his weak and trembling voice.

Ah.

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it's the same person but the way he acts right now is far from the Knox I knew. Seeing him break like a fucking vulnerable porcelain doll satisfied me at the same time sends a thousand volts in my body and it almost made me shiver.

Fuck! I'm going insane.

"Fuck Villanueva! You're fucking turning me on...shit" I grind and he let out a shaky breath.

"This is wrong, let go already," he tried to yanked my hands, my lips stretched again when his grip was weak making it impossible for him to yanked it off.

His breath became heavier, the room felt hotter than usual.

Lumabas ang mumunting halinghing galing sakanya when I fully devoured his neck. His jaw is still clenching but I feel zero resistance from him. My palm tracing every inch of his body--- caressing it, remembering where I should touch next time.

"Why exactly? Cuz you don't like me?" I challenged him. I nibbled his ear lobe, I saw him biting his lips as he squinted his eyes tightly. Damn, that was sexy.

"I-it's not like that..." he stammered and I just hummed a reply in his ear.

A thunder hammered in the air lighting up the surroundings---it was loud and furious.

It was deafening but the only sound that registered in my mind was Knox's soft and muffled moan. I love it when he twitches when I press harder on his back. I loved it when he called my name and begged me to stop. I love it when his breath hitches everytime I suck his neck. I loved it when he didn't resist.

"Knox...I want to taste you more...let me kiss you." I said almost begging. My shorts tighten even more and I'm sure he can feel it.

I slowly thrust and groaned in his ear. "Knox..."

I nibble his neck, slowly hanggang sa hindi ako nakuntento at sinipsip ang bawat sulok ng kanyang leeg leaving red marks all over it.

Humiwalay ako sa leeg nya at pinagmasdan ang pulang marka sa likod ng kanyang leeg.

I grin sheepishly as I slowly traced it with my finger.

This one is mine and mine alone.

Wala akong paki kong patuloy nya akong itutulak papalayo, I'll chase him and I know he'll chase me also.

"You're so helpless," lumayo ako ng unti at pinasadahan ko ng tingin ang matipuno nyang katawan. I bit my lips as I stare at him. Napunta ang tingin ko sa towel na nakapulupot sa beywang nya. He was holding it, afraid that if he let go he might expose himself.

Nakakuha sya ng kaunting distansya kaya instead of his face, his forehead is now pressed on the wall, nakayuko sya at halata mong hingal na hingal. I smirk again.

"You should be yelling at me right now, telling me off how disgusting I am and that you hated me. But you remained silent and let me do whatever I want, bakit kaya...hmm?" I taunted.

Ginapang ko ang kamay ko sa beywang nya and pressed myself again kaya napasinghap syang muli. I looked down, halos manginig ako dahil sa sobrang init ng katawan ko. His bottom pressed on my hard on.

I threw my head back. "Fuck!" I exhale sharply.

I grabbed his hand that was holding his towel. Aalisin ko na sana when he grabbed my wrist with his other hand---firmly. Nagtataka ko syang tinignan. He looked past his shoulder to meet my eyes. He smirk, lean his body on mine kaya ramdam na ramdam ko ang init na nanggaling sa katawan nya.

He bit his lip sexily, my eyes landed on his lips kaya napalunok ako. He was drunk...not from the liquor we just had but with my touch.

"Strip Sevilliana." He commanded, still meeting my gaze with his drunk and lustful eyes.

I flinched when he slowly moved his hip, grinding at my hard on.

"W-wha---ahh fuck...Knox..."

My words got cut off when he turned around, wrapped his arms around my neck and nibbled my ear. My jaw clenched, my body acting up. Despite the chilly temperature in my room, his skin is more than enough to burn me alive. He's hard. He's fucking hard. I can feel him.

"Strip." He whispered in my ear in a guttural manner.

I swallow hard nang humiwalay sya saakin.

"What's this? Your kink?" I teased but he just looked at me jadedly.

He took a step forward and I took a step backwards. His eyes are a mirror to what I'm feeling right now. And my eyes mirror his. He grabbed my collar and forcefully pushed me onto the bed. My eyes widened when my back hit the soft mattress of my bed.

"You're drunk..." he began. "You have no idea how hard I tried to stay away from you. I built those walls for a reason, and you just have to fucking climbed it no matter how tall it was." He stood between my legs, his eyes flickering—his jaw clenched. His face right now says that he is tired of running away, that he was tired knowing I'll still follow him even in the depths of the earth.

Napalunok ako. The liquor hits my nerve, but I know exactly what I'm doing—what we are doing.

"Then why did you push me away?" I asked in a low voice.

He shook his head. I furrowed my brows tangina ito nanaman sya. Babangon na sana ako when he pushes me again kaya napahilata ako ulit.

My chest heaved when the atmosphere that surrounds him changed. He looked at me like a fucking prey of his. His eyes were cold but not distant. His voice is cold, but it only makes my body burn even more.

"Hubad, Sevilliana." He ordered dominantly.

I sat on top of my bed and nodded my head submissively. I slowly took off every garment I was wearing. Mas lalong umaalma ang buong katawan ko dahil sa nag aapoy nyang mata. His eyes burned even my soul.

"Knox?" nalalasing kong halinghing sa pangalan nya.

"Hmm?"

His eyes hovered when I finally took off the last piece of clothing that was hanging in my body.

I chuckled and flexed my body, but his eyes landed on my crotch. Mayabang ko syang tinignan when I saw how his Adam's apple moved.

"I told you, malaki to." I smirk.

Umangat ang mata nya at sinalubong ang tingin ko. He looked at me for a second, tinanggal nya ang tuwalyang nakatapis sakanya. I clenched my jaw when he exposed himself to me. Goddamit! I reached for his waist and pulled him closer to me, but since he was standing his shaft slapped my face instead.

I side-eyed it.

"Holy shit, Knox."

I gasped.

He cupped my cheeks and lifted it so that I could meet his gaze.

"On your knees, Sevilliana. Suck it before I lose my shit." He growls. Inalalayan nya akong tumayo. He pushes me down gently but firmly. Umupo sya sa kama. He spread his legs and leaned back as he looked down at me.

I knelt—shallow the lump in my throat and bit my lips.

I chuckled. "You should be the one kneeling in front of me but whatever. Ready yourself Knox, hindi ako papayag na lalamunan ko lang ang mawawasak ngayong gabi. I'll do you good, you goddamn sexy jerk."

"Ang ingay mo." He guides his shaft to my lips, rubbing the head against them. The body wash that he used, and the musky scent of his hard dick almost send to the edge. "Open up," he commands, his tone authoritative.

I grabbed his shaft and moved my hands up and down. With a challenging look I smirk. "Let's see kung sino ang mas maingay sa ating dalawa dalawa."

He grins, and slides his cock into my mouth slowly, kaya wala akong nagawa kundi ang hayaan nalang sya.

He threw his head back and cussed. His reaction sent shiver down my spine kaya ginanahan akong tikman ang bawat sulok ng kanyang ari. The taste, I don't know how to explain it or find the the right word to use all I know is he fucking taste so good.

"Good boy..." He begins to move his hips gently, fucking my mouth with slow deep thrust and I did my best to welcome it.

He groans as I suck it lightly. I chuckled, "Who's maingay now?"

He shot me a glare. "Stop talking dumbass...shit!"

His movements become faster and rougher as he face-fuck me, holding my head in place and thrusting deeply. I gagged and my eyes watered when his shaft reached my throat.

I lifted my head to see his reaction. His eyes flash with intense pleasure as he feels me gag and saw me tearing up with his deep thrusts. He loves that sound—the choked, wet gags as his dick hits my throat.

"I'll make sure na hindi kana makakapagsalita. Fuck shit, Austine! Ang sarap mo. Goddamn," he growls softly, he watches my body convulse slightly each time he hits my throat. He knows his big and he's taking that to his advantage to fuck and wreck my throat. He spreads my jaw wider with his thumb and pushes deep again making me gag loudly.

I can't breathe but I can't bring myself to pull away.

He's so deep inside my throat that his balls rested against my chin, and my face buried in his abs making it harder for me to breathe. Tangina. He stays like that, completely still. With his shaft buried in my throat for several seconds, just to hear me gag and choke.

"Fuck...fuck...fuck!"

He slammed his hips forward, hitting the back of my throat with each thrust. I worked

my tongue diligently, trying to pleasure him as much as possible. He grunts as his eyes roll to the back of his head. I rested my hands on his hips as if guiding him.

"I'm gonna cum..."

His movements become more frenzied as he gets closer to the edge. His fucking my mouth so hard that his balls slap against my chin with each thrust.

Suddenly, he pulls out, allowing me to cough and sputter as I desperately try to catch my breath.

Napahawak ako sa lalamunan ko at sinamaan sya ng tingin.

He smirked.

I feel like pulang-pula na ang pisngi ko, my eyes watering, saliva and his pre-cum drip from my mouth.

He wipes the corner of my lips with his thumb.

"I'm not done yet. Open wide...I'm gonna cum in your fucking mouth."

I open my mouth and stick out my tongue like a goddamn slut.

He stood up and started jerking off right in front of my face.

His breath heavier with each thrust, I watched him pleasure himself.

My shaft twitched just the sight of him, desperately stroking himself to cum.

Eyes tightly close, veins protruding in his shaft, hand and neck.

He growled, and I watched how his dick twitched as hot ropes of cum splatter on my face. I caught some of it and swallowed it. I stroked his dick clean and he just watched me.

Ang hot nyang labasan.

"Satisfied?" garalgal kong taong bago tumayo.

Ngumisi at pinunasan ang pisng ko. He dragged his fingers with his cum to my lips. I bit my lips and sucked his fingers clean. I grabbed his wrist and pulled him closer to me. So close our dick rubbed onto each other.

"My turn." I murmur.

I harshly grabbed his jaw and crashed my lips into his. Sinalubong nya ang labi ko ng mapupusok na halik na syang binabalik ko rin. He wrapped his arms around my neck to deepen our kiss. I bit his lower lip, napaawang ang bibig nya kaya agad kong pinasok ang dila ko.

Hinimas ko pababa ang balakang nya, I slowly caress it until my hands reached his butt. I squeeze it and fondle it. I spank it lightly and he moans between our kisses. I grin and keep doing that. I feel his dick twitching against mine.

This way, I'll make him pay for hurting me so much.

The smooching sound filled the room. His grunts and moans sound fantastic in my ears. He used to hurt me with his harsh words but now he squirms under my touch.

Nawawalan na ako ng hininga pero mas pinili kong wag humiwalay dahil na aadik ako sa lambot at sarap ng kanyang labi. He might like Zyran, but I kissed him first. I saw him naked first. And more importantly he reacts to my touch.

I don't care anymore. He kissed me hungrily—deeply. He pushes his tongue deep into my throat, mimicking the action of his dick. I moan softly at pilit na nilalabanan ang halik nya.

Damn. He's so rough.

He pulls back. We both gasped for air. We looked at each other intently, we both looked like a goddamn rabbit in heat. Napakagat ako sa labi ko habang pinagmamasdan sya. He licked two of his fingers before pushing it to my lips.

I tilted my head, a mischievous grin on my face.

"Suck my fingers like you would my dick."

I chuckled. "Yes sir,"

I sucked his fingers, twirled my tongue around it. My gaze focused on his face. Come on Knox, you should stay drunk forever.

Inalis nya ang daliri nya sa bibig ko. I sigh and flip him on his back. Itinukod nya ang kanyang kamay sa kama, he looked past his shoulder and glared at me.

"Spread your legs wider, Villanueva. Let me see you," I commanded. I stroked my cock and pressed it on his hole. The contact of our flesh sent shivers down my spine as if to electrify me.

His shoulder jolted. "W-we can't do this..." angal nya.

"Don't worry I'm not gonna fuck your hole," I reassured him. "Instead..."

I slide my dick between his thighs. Kamuntikan na akong labasan dahil sa init ng

kanyang hita.

"Close them tightly Knox...panindigan mo ako. Please..." I begged.

He swallow his saliva at inipit ang ari ko sa hita nya. Napasinghap ako, his soft inner thighs feels like a pussy. I leaned and kissed his neck.

"Tighther baby," I breathe heavily against his ear. He gasped for air and moved his hips. Napangiti ako at kinawit ang kanyang balakang, he's eager like me.

Umulos ako trying to sync his thrust. Umabot sa tenga ko ang impit nyang ungol. God, I wish to be inside him pero alam kong hindi pa sya ready, at ayaw kong gawin ang bagay na ayaw nya.

"Bilisan mo, putangina." Reklamo nya kaya napatawa ako.

"Yes baby—ah damn," I moaned when he squeezed my dick in his thigh.

Talagang hinahamon mo ako ha.

My cock rubs against his sensitive flesh.

I started thrusting slowly, my hands gripping his hips tightly.

Mukhang nawalan na sya ng pasensya cuz he slammed himself hard and rough and I completely lose my control.

I grabbed both of his wrist with my one hand and pulled it as I started to thrust harder between his thighs.

"Impatient bastard."

My breathing becomes ragged as the precum drizzles down between his thighs as I drive faster and faster between them. Heavy breath, flesh slapping, muffled moans filled every corner of my room and I fucking love it.

I grabbed his neck, with his head sideways inangkin kong muli ang labi nya.

"I feel like I'm fucking you for real," I said between our kisses.

He chuckled and bit my lips, "I won't let you fuck me, I'll fuck you instead." Nanunuyang saad nito. He gasped when I harshly slammed my hips.

"I'll do you first.."

I pull away and snake my hands around his neck. I fuck his thighs hard and rough thinking it was his ass instead. Nearing my climax I increase my speed. Mararating ko na sana ang ruok ng kaligayahan when a loud knock erupted followed by Elise voice from outside.

"Kuya Austine! Kuya Knox! Open up sabi nyo babalik kayo? Come on let's play," she shouted.

Nagkatinginan kami ni Knox—eyes widening, deputa. Dali-dali akong tumakbo sa cr when she twisted the doorknob.

"Putangina ka hindi mo nilock?" Mahinang sigaw ni Knox at tinakloban ang sarili ng kumot.

"Malay ko tangina!" mahinang balik ko.

Tangina ang puson ko. Putangina. Pakiramdam ko nawala yung kalasingan ko dahil sa sobrang kaba. Elise!!!!

## Page 23

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

After that night I thought that something would change between us. But oh god I was wrong about it and just assumed things.

I watched him walk past me like a ghost. Zyran by his side. What the fuck Knox? May pa sabi-sabi ka pang gagawan natin ng paraan ang painting tas you would just fucking ignore me again?

Gago putangina. Nakakaputa.

"Is something wrong?" Abigail asked when she noticed my gaze.

I smiled bitterly, "Wala. Pakiramdam ko ginagago nalang ako."

I watched his back as he faded through the crowds. He never even spared me a glance nor talked to me. The day that follows I tried reaching out to him, but he ignored each of my calls and text.

"What exactly happened?" she asked curiously.

Walking down the hall I sigh. "Akala ko ok na eh, akala ko may nagbago na pero gago wala pa rin talaga," pagak akong tumawa. My throat closing up as my heart hammered in my chest.

She patted my back and looked at me sympathetically, "Wala kang respeto sa sarili mo. If that person hurts you over and over again lumayo ka don't let yourself grow accustomed to the pain as it will break you in the end. Respect yourself Austine, wag kang manhid."

Napalunok ako. Was I growing accustomed to the pain he'd given me? that I forgot to respect my own boundaries? Was I?

"What if...what if may rason sya?" My voice low.

She rolled her eyes and exhale in exasperation. "And so? does that justify his actions cuz he had a reason?" she said, sarcastically emphasizing the word 'reason'.

Every now and then, I pray to god to let me have my peace. A kind of peace where my heart is a ease. Sometimes I stared at the ceiling and asked god 'why' bakit ako pa?

I looked down at piniling manahimik nalang. I know that everything happens for what reason?

"I..I just need to..."

"Shut the fuck up Austine. Alam mo naiinis na ako sa tuwing makikita kita lagi ka nalang malungkot na para bang pasan mo ang buong mundo. When I first saw you, wala yan oh, wala yang lungkot na yan sa mata mong gago ka." Halos pasigaw nyang sermon sa akin habang dinuduro-duro ang mata ko.

"...just please for one choose yourself! mix signal enjoyer kaba? gago ang sakit naman ng kink mo. Lumayo ka. And fucking leave that love in the constellation."

Leave this love in a constellation?

Patuloy lang sya sa pagsermon sakín hanggang sa nakadating kami sa classroom. Kinuha ko sa bulsa ang phone ko planning to text him again when Abigail snatched my phone in my hand.

"No. No, you will not, gago manhid kana nga martyr kapa. Alam mo sasakalin na kitang bwesit ka para matauhan ka. Daw gago ka bala ghang, maan ah katalaka simong ungo ka."

My brows furrowed. "What's ungo? tagalog or english please feel ko iniinsulto mo ako eh," Nginiwian ko sya.

She rolled her eyes. "Talagang iniinsulto kita, gago ka eh." She fired again kaya mas lalong umasim ang mukha ko.

Hayop na kaybigan to.

"Akin na..." inabot ko ang phone ko sakanya. "I'll message my grandma, uuwi ako mamaya. Magpapaalam ako sa dean." I explained, she heave a sigh of relief and give me my phone back.

"Disappointed lang ako kasi akala ko may bago na pero, I thought wrong. I shouldn't have assumed things..."

Just because we share something intimate that doesn't change the fact that the person he liked was never really me. Maybe Abi's right—I have no self-respect.

I don't love myself as much as I love him. I give him all of myself, forgetting to save some for myself. And actually, it hurts cuz I don't love myself as much as I am intoxicated for him.

"Settle down. We'll discuss our last lesson before the midterm. Makinig kayo dahil parang review na rin to..."

The hours that passed felt infinity. Long and boring. I blankly stared at our professor. I should focus but my mind is elsewhere.

I should...run away, right?

"Anyari? Para ang sinuklaban ng langit at lupa dyan," Ani Terrence sa gilid ko.

Kakatapos lang nang last class namin and now we are walking back sa dorm namin. Sumabay sakin si Terrence at Abi.

"Malamang. Nagsalita ka kasi," I said and he deadpan me. "Anw, need mo ba ng bagong roommate? May kasama kana don?" I faced him and grabbed his shoulder.

His brows furrowed. "Gago may roommate na ako." He brushed my hands off of his shoulder.

Napalabi ako, "Palit tayo." I insisted, which made his brows furrowed deeply.

"May problema ba kayo ni Knox?" he asked kaya napatahimik ako. "Ayaw ko nga, gago ikaw ba naman maka roommate ang school president, ayaw ko oi!" he added as if the thought of sharing a bedroom with Knox scares him.

Napabuntong hininga nalang ako.

Bwesit.

"Terrence you go first, kakausapin ko lang si Austine." Abi grabbed my arm and pulled me away.

"Oh...ok?"

"What's up?" I asked her as she kept on dragging me.

Hindi sya sumagot sakin. Binitawan nya lang ang braso ko when he reached the

garden. She faced me seriously kaya nagkasalubong ang kilay ko.

"Are you really sure Austine? Do you really like him?" she asked worriedly.

My breath got caught up in my throat. "What do you mean?"

She sighs loudly as if nasstress na sya saakin. "Look at yourself. Tangina para kanang tanga Austine. If loving him means ruining yourself, you should stop. I'm serious this time. Austine, stop."

Napakagat ako sa labi ko trying to find something to say but my mind remained blank.

She cupped my cheeks and looked me straight in the eyes. "You can't do this to yourself...please wake up. This love is not for you. It's torture..."

Mahina nyang sinampal ang pisngi ko at hinilang muli pabalik sa dorm. Nanatili akong tahimik.

If I run away would things be better? Would It bring me peace?

Napabuntong hininga nalang ako. Patuloy naming binabaybay ang daan papuntang dorm when we saw them from the distant kaya parehas kaming napatigil ni Abi.

Knox and Zyran. Instead of smiling his brows furrowed and it seems like his mind is elsewhere. He looked distracted somehow.

"Na ah. Wag tayo dito..." Abi murmured and dragged me again away from them.

I glanced at him one more time and caught him staring so I completely averted my gaze.

Habang naglalakad my phone vibrates kaya napahinto ako. Abi let go of my wrist and stared at me. I shrugged my shoulders and fished out my phone.

Rafael's name flashed on my screen kaya agad kong sinagot ang tawag.

"Sup Aust!" He greeted me.

"So?"

He cleared his throat before speaking again. "Heard from Terrence na lilipat ka daw ng dorm? Bat may problema kaba?" He ask kaya agad na kumunot ang noo ko.

"Pano mo nalaman?" I asked curiously as I glance at Abigail na syang at nagkibit balikat.

"Bro, baka nakalimutan mong part ng council si Terrence, nabanggit nya lang and he asked Knox kong nag-away ba kay...."

Hindi ko na sya pinatapos and I ended the call. Biglang tumambol ang dibdib ko. Putanginang Terrence, nakalimutan kong council din pala ang gago.

Now what? Fucking shit.

Dali-dali akong tumakbo papuntang dean's office. Nakasalubong ko pa si Rayne, pero hindi ko sya pinansin at patuloy ang pagtakbo papuntang office.

No way. Terrence gago talaga. Kakaiwan lang namin sakanya and he run his mouth. Kay Knox pa talaga nagtanong bwesit. Hayop. And pano nalaman agad ni Rafael?

Whatever.

"Yes Dean, we'll keep you updated sa progress ng event."

When I reached the office, I knocked and opened the door. I found the dean talking to one of the councils, the one with the glasses. They both looked at me, surprised. I licked my lips and approached the dean.

"Can I have a favor?" agaran kong saad. He looked at me for a second before signalling the girl to leave.

She glanced at me first before heading out.

"Sit..." tinuro nya ang upoang nasa harapan nya kaya umupo ako don. He rested his elbow on top of the table. "What pleasure do I owe you, Austine?" he uttered.

"Can I go home?" agaran kong tanong. His forehead creases, his brows furrowed as he lean back, eyeing me.

"May emergency sa bahay and I need to go home..." palusot ko.

He squinted his eyes, still suspicious.

"Does the president know about this?" he questioned kaya napalunok ako.

I lowered my head and shook my head slightly. "No..." I murmur. I looked up to him and sigh.

"Can I just go home? I really need to—"

"No one's fucking going home."

My heart skipped a beat the moment I heard his cold and authoritative cold. Each

word that left his mouth felt like a strike, heavy and full of disappointment. My chest pounded as my heart hammered in my chest. Slowly, almost unwillingly I turned my head towards him.

Our eyes met.

The moment his gaze landed on mine, my eyes widened. In a brief moment his mask slipped. Behind his stern and cold look hide was a look that held me there. Yearning, Pain, Panic...it caught me...breathless.

"I'm sorry there must have been a misunderstanding. Sorry to bother you dean, " he said to the dean. He grabbed my hand and forced me to follow him.

I let him drag me.

"Just like the same old time..." the last thing I heard from the dean before the door shut behind us.

"Knox, let go!" I tried to yank my hand from his grip but he wouldn't let go.

"N-no," his voice weaver.

Under the cold afternoon breeze, I can feel his trembling hand wrapped around my wrist.

He held it firmly—there's strength but it wasn't forceful, but desperate, as if letting go would mean losing me for good.

I watched his trembling fingers—it was cold, this demeanour of his betrayed the storm that he kept beneath his stern and firm exterior.

Hindi ako nagsalita. I just followed him silently. I watched his back heave with heavy breaths.

"What exactly do you want..." I asked. Napahinto sya at don ko lang napagtantong nasa likod kami ng dormitory.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?!" his angry voice filled the air kaya kumunot ang noo ko. Nakatalikod pa rin sya saakin.

I sneer. Sya pa talaga ngayon ang may ganang magalit.

"I should be the one asking you that, Knox. What the fuck is wrong with you? Gago ka ba? I tried reaching out to you and you just ignored me? Ano? Nandidiri kana sakin? You regretted it? You regret what we've done?" sarkastiko kong saad. I brushed my hair up and licked my lips.

He remains silent kaya pagak nalang akong napatawa. I nodded my head, like understanding something for the first time.

"So ganon nga? Nandidiri ka sakin kaya mo ako iniwasan? Gago ka pala eh. Kong iiwasan mo lang din naman pala ako sana hindi ka nalang nagbitaw ng mga salitang panghahawakan ko. Puta! Akala ko may chance na ako Knox eh! Akala ko!!!" I shouted in pain. My lips tremble.

"What? You wished that it was him and not me? Ganon b——"

Hindi ko na tuloyang natapos ang sasabihin ko when he suddenly turned around and his fist landed directly on my jaw. I groan in pain as I meet the ground with the thud.

"Fuck!"

Napahawak ako sa labi ko when stinging sensation reach my brain.

I looked up, ready to fire back but when I saw his bloodshot eyes. I froze. Sumampa sya sa akin at hinawakan ng mahigpit ang kwelyo ko.

"I should be relieved if I feel disgusted, but fuck! I liked it! Ginusto ko...hindi ako nandiri. Mas madali sana kong ganon eh pero gago! Hindi eh...." His voice became extremely low. And I watched him—eyes red, hands trembling, lips like trying to say something but buried in sobs.

"Ang gago mo..."

He tried to punch me again pero agad kong sinalo ang kamao nya. I grabbed his waist and force myself to sit kaya nakaupo sya ngayon sa kandungan ko. I bit the inside of my cheeks.

Nanginginig na din ang kamay kong nakahawak sa beywang nya. I swallow the lump in my throat.

"T-then why did you ignore me?" I asked hoarsely. My eyes blur, nagbabalak na tumulo ang mga luhan kanina ko pa pinipigilan.

"The Painting...I painted your mom's portrait." He murmurs, his voice low and trembling. "I found an old article nong nanalo ang dad mo sa halalan. Nandon ang mommy mo and you had the same smile. I spend the days buried in my canvas, and all those times ikaw ang nasa isip kong hayop ka." He punch my chest but not as strong. Napakagat ako sa labi ko.

My heart thundered in my chest as I watched his shoulder tremble.

He then looked at me—eyes searching and softening.

"I didn't ignore you. I can't. I was just caught up. The image of you crying and hugging your mom's portrait were still in my mind...and everytime I remember it...nasasaktan ako. D-don ko na realize kong gaano din ako kasama sayo, kong gaano kitang nasaktan. I'm sorry..." he trailed off.

"...I was never too far to forget you."

Kumabog ang puso ko...so much that I thought it would leap out of my chest. The wind brushes against us, his eyes linger on my face—trying to memorize every piece of me.

My eyes blur as tears welling up. My chest tightens this time not from pain, but from the words I've been longing to hear. Bahagyang tumulo ang isang butil ng luha sa mata ko hangang sa sunod-sunod na silang kumawala.

Knox's heavy hands wipe the tears that's streaming down my face using his thumb softly.

"I've been praying for you for years, Austine..."

He reached for my hand and squeezed it gently. Anchoring himself cuz anytime he might drown. His voice thick with emotions filled with longing and yearning that he buried deep inside him. His eyes welled up with tears as he looked at me.

I didn't move. I can't. The only thing that I could hear right now is the abnormal beating of my heart and the sound of his breath.

"Knox..."

"I thought of you..." he achingly confesses. "More than I should have."

My chest rises with shallow breath.

"Then why did you hurt me? Why did you push me away?" nanghihina kong tanong sakanya.

His eyes glimmered as I waited for his answer. He lowered his head and gently pressed his forehead against mine.

He cupped my cheeks. "Because I'm afraid I still want you..." huminga sya ng malalim. "And oh god, I still do."

The gust of wind blew his neck tie. Instinctively he raised his hand, not to fix it but to tuck the loose strand of hair behind my ear.

His hand lingered for a moment.

Bumaba ang kamay nya papuntang kamay ko.

He interlocks our fingers.

I glance down at our joined hands and something catches my chest.

My breath hitch.

I love how he draws small circles in my knuckles.

The feeling of his hand against mine, sent a sense of warmth in my heart.

A warmth that I thought wasn't for me.

Akala ko...puro nalang akala ko ang pumapasok sa utak ko.

"Can I stay?"

Not from our dorm. Not from his moment. I meant in his life. His heart.

He caressed my cheeks and looked at me intently. His gaze fell on my lips and I unconsciously licked it. Without a word he leans in and I tilted my head to welcome him.

His lips brushed against mine and I instinctively closed my eyes.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and the kiss deepened. It wasn't hurried or wild but deliberate, tender and soft. We held each other under the golden hue of the sun.

When we finally parted our forehead met again. Our eyes met and he smiled. The real one. A smile I always saw but longed for.

"Let's take things slowly, babawi ako. Liligawan kita..." He gently releases my hand.

"Talagang babawi ka, tangina sinaktan mo ako eh. Mag eexplain ka pa," parehas kaming napatawa dahil sa sinabi ko.

"I swear you're not even my type," rebat nito.

I smile. I lifted his head and kissed his lips. "And you are exactly my type Mr. President."

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

I toss and turn that night, still wondering if this time totoo na ang lahat. I sigh in exasperation as I glance at my ceiling. Wala sa sarili akong napahawak sa labi ko. That was our second kiss. The first one was unintentional, the second one was deliberate in times of desperation.

"Gago kinikilig ako," itinago ko ang mukha ko sa unan at don sumigaw.

Ang corny.

After what happened I realized that no matter how hurt I am, no matter how he pushed me away, I still can't afford to hate him. The way his eyes glint as if he's trying to hide something—something deep pulls me every time.

Napabuntong hininga ulit ako. Nasa kwarto ako ngayon, nagmumukmok dahil mamayang 3 pm pa ang klase ko tas pe pa. I checked my socmed accounts and saw my cousin message me.

I got off from my bed and dialed her number. After a few rings she answered her phone.

I smirked when I saw her boyish face grinning at me.

"Sloane, how's canada?" I greeted.

Sloane, my cousin from my mother's side. She has this elegance wrapped in androgynous cool in her. Nilagay nya ang skateboard nya sa kanyang balikat and fix her cap in her head. Sya yung taong isang tingin mo palang alam mo nang Hev Abi

ang tugtugan.

"Boring, I wish you were here," she grinned. "Nabalitaan kong nag-away kayo ng daddy mo."

I scoff, I sit at my desk and lean my back against the chair slightly positioning the phone higher. She whistled when she saw my topless body.

"Damn bro, you could pull off any girl with that body of yours." Pinasadahan nya ng tingin ang katawan ko kaya napangiwi ako at binaba ang phone.

Yeah, but the thing is I pulled off a guy.

"Shut up Sloane, when are you coming back?" I asked. It's been so long since I last saw her.

She groaned and found a bench to sit on. "Next week. My girlfriend and I broke up a few days ago. Tangina masyado daw pang kalye ugali ko," naiirita nyang saad na syang ikinatawa ko.

Sinamaan nya ako ng tingin kaya mas lalo lalo akong napatawa.

"Hindi lang pang kalye ang ugali, pati amoy pang kalye din," tukso ko. Namilog ang kanyang mata at inamoy ang sarili. Natatawa ko syang pinagmasdan.

"Hayop ka, kahit ilang araw akong hindi maligo mabango pa rin ako. Napaka hayop ng ugali dito!" singhal nya na syang ikinahagalpang ko pa lalo.

I feel like magkakasundo sila ni Abigail nito. Parehas matabas ang dila.

I wipe the corner of my eyes. "You should meet my friend, Abigail. Magkakasundo

kayo non parehas kayong maasim eh." I grin.

Napaayos sya ng upo. "Abigail?" she asked, her brows furrowed.

Napataas ang kilay ko because of her tone."Yeah, why?"

Bumuntong hininga sya and nodded her head. "A lot of people have the same name as Abigail right?" Tanong nito na syang nagpalalim sa kunot ng noo ko.

Alanganin akong napatango. She sighs again as if some heavy weight of her chest was suddenly lifted.

"Her name? I didn't know that you had other friends aside kay Rayne and Rafael. Sabagay sa maasim mo namang ugali sino ba ang magsstay," she leaned back, her grin still plaster in her face.

I rolled my eyes, I shouldn't have called her back. I'm getting dissed here.

"Abigail. Abigail Bliss Levine, that's her name."

As soon as the name escapes my lips. Her arrogant grin dropped. Her eyes are fixated on the screen but it seems like her mind is elsewhere. Nagtagpo ang kilay ko. What's with this girl?

"Levine?" wala sa sarili nyang saad.

Bahagya akong gumalaw sa kinauupoan ko. "You ok cuz?" I asked worriedly. She pursed her lips and smiled at me, not the arrogant one but a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

She shook her head and licked her lips. "Fun. Where did you two meet?"

I squinted my eyes but chose not to press her. I lean back and recall the moment where Abi and I meet. "At the archery room. And oh god she's a piece of shit. Ayaw akong tantanan when I rejected her offer."

Sa tuwing naalala ko kong pano bumagsak ang pwet ko sa sahig dahil sakanya napipikon pa rin ako.

"Archery huh? Interesting..."

I focused my eyes on her face. I saw a smirk that she always wore when she was irritated or just wanted to mock someone.

"What's your deal? Do you know her?" I finally asked.

She snapped out of her thoughts. Panicked filled her eyes. "N-no. I mean no, it's my first time hearing that name." She smiled awkwardly. I squinted my eyes and was about to ask another question when she ended the call.

My half-opened mouth hung in the air. Putang ina?

Fuck you.

I sent her a message and massage my temple. Minsan ang sarap nyang bangasan sa totoo lang.

Ang pangit mo kasi.

I immediately blocked her number. Hindi ko to pinsan.

I got up and decided to take a shower at don ko naalala na hindi pa pala ako inaaksep ni Knox sa facebook. Tanginang ugali parang di lang ako hinalikan.

While in the bathroom I wet my body and let the water cascade down my abdomen.

I wrapped the towel in my waist, brushed my hair up and opened my camera.

I faced the mirror and smirked before snapping a photo.

The photo turned out good kita yung kagwapohan at kakisigan ko.

My disheveled state looked hot under the shower head.

Lunch, baby?

I sent it to Knox. I grinned with satisfaction. Happy lunch Knox.

I should get going. Paglabas ko ng kwarto agad akong dumiretso sa kusina. My eyes immediately caught the sight of a blue lunch box sitting on top of the counter. I furrowed my brows as I approached it.

Agad akong napatingin when I saw a sticky note on top of the lid.

Bacon. Eat before you go, I cooked for you. I'll get going first dahil may event pa kaming pinaplano. Good morning, Austine.

—Knox

Pinagmasdan ko ang malinis syang penmanship. A broad smile escaping my lips. Kinuha ko ang sticky notes at tumalikod at bahagyang hinampas ang ref. I fished out my phone at kinunan ng litrato ang notes.

Is this how you chase? hmm. Interesting. I've never seen this kind of thing even sa mga soap operas.

I opened the lunch box and saw a carefully placed bacon and egg sa itaas ng kanin. I stomp my foot, mas lalong lumalapad ang ngisi sa labi ko. I took a picture of it also—pwedeng ipa freeze ko nalang to? iddisplay ko sa kwarto ko.

Napakagat ako sa labi ko and decided to hide the lunch box inside of my room. I stick the sticky note again to where it was placed by him. Mamaya ko na kakainin.

"Pag ito napanis, iiyak ako." I murmured to myself.

It's nice to feel his gentleness, it's nice to see him slowly opening up, though I can still feel the invisible wall between the two of us. Hence, I'm giving it my all.

Isang paramdam pa na I don't matter at lilipad ako sa brazil agad agad.

Pagkatapos kong kumain ng tinapay agad na akong humayo papuntang gym. Volleyball yung P.E ngayon. Seriously?

"Bruh! para akong piniritong toccino!" Reklamo ni Abigail habang pinupunasan ang pawis nya. Kakatapos lang nang isang game namin.

Girls vs. Girls. Boys vs. Boys. Bwesit I didn't know na tournament pala tong klase namin.

I sat down on a bench and grabbed my own water bottle.

"Sabagay ang oily mo kasi," si Terrence sa tabi ko.

Abigail's sharp eyes landed on him kaya napatawa nalang ako. I averted my gaze when she fiercely looked at me. Wala akong kinalaman dyan.

"Hindi ako oily, taba mo lang to napunta sa mukha ko!"

Napapikit nalang ako dahil sa lakas ng boses nya.

Terrence huffed angrily at tumayo para harapin si Abigail. It's funny how Abigail acted so tough despite her height. I mean hindi sa 4'11 ano lang 5'3 and given sa height na Terrence na halos 6 foot na nagmumukha syang galit na langaw.

"Ang kapal ng mukha mo! hindi ako mataba!"

"Mas makapal ang mukha mo! Mataba kana nga oily ka pa!"

"Tangina, body shameless ka pala! taninang ugali yan!"

"Ang bobo Terrence, body shaming yun! Tanga talaga kahit kelan!"

Napailing nalang ako, tumayo ako dahil nakukuha na nila ang atensyon ng iba.

I put my other hand on my hip, grabbed the hem of my shirt and used that to wipe the sweats on my forehead. It's so hot.

"Si Austine? Yeah, the pride and joy nang department nila. But I don't know if he's aware of that."

"May girlfriend naba?"

I side-eye those students who are talking about me. They gasped and turned away when they caught my eyes. Binaba ko ang damit ko at napabuntong hininga. They talked about me as if hindi ko rinig.

Alam kong gwapo ako, pero may nagmamay-ari na nang puso at isip ko.

Pupunta na sana ako sa locker ko para magpalit when I saw someone leaning against

the wall while crossing his arms around his chest and looking at me straight in the eyes. A gold rimmed glasses sat on his high bridge nose—his brows furrowed with visible irritation. Anyari nanaman dito?

Napangisi ako at tinawid ang distansyang namamagitan sa'ming dalawa. While walking, he's stern and serious gaze locking on mine.

May ibang napapatingin sakanya kaya mas binilisan ko ang paglakad ko.

"Hey..." I greeted him when I reached his spot. I was about to grab his waist when he took a step backward. My eyebrows met but he just looked at me intently without saying anything.

I stretched my arm to grab his wrist but he turned his back and started to walk away.

"Hoy! Knox. Anak ng," tawag ko at sinundan sya.

I tried to grab his shoulder to make him stop pero masyado syang mabilis. Kong malaki ang hakbang ko mas malaki yung kanya.

"Knox, slow down."

Fudge.

Nilakihan ko pa ang hakbang ko in an attempt to levelled his pace. Akmang malapit ko na syang maabotan ng lumiko sya sa isang abandonadong classroom kaya napatigil ako.

"Anong?—"

Hindi ko na natapos ang sasabihin ko when he pulled me inside and slammed my

back against the wall. My eyes widened in shock as he put his hands over my neck.

His breath was laboured, his half lidded eyes landed on my lips kaya wala sa sarili akong napakagat sa labi ko.

"What happened?" I managed to asked despite the restrain on my neck.

He groan and lowered his head.

"Are you an idiot?" he asked darkly. Napakunot ang noo ko.

I purse my lips. "Cat ako gago," maktol ko sakanya habang nakanguso. Umangat ang ulo nya. Nagkasalubong ang kilay nya at nagtataka akong minata.

He raised me an eyebrow. "Cat?" he asked.

I smiled sheepishly. "Cats me I'm falling in love with you," I touch his shoulder, bit my lips and wink at him.

Salamat sa rizz Instagram.

He clenched his jaw and threw his head back. His hands are still on my neck. He held it firmly but not too tightly still enough for me to breathe properly.

"Fuck you." He murmured.

I tilted my head, I licked my lips as a small grin tugged at the corner of my lips.

"Ganto pala kink mo? Nananakal?" I teased.

His gaze became more intense. Wala sa sariling bumagsak ang ngisi sa labi ko nang

sinalubong ko ang tingin nya. Beads of sweats formed on his forehead, veins are protruding in his neck. His hands frigid and his breath became heavier.

Napalunok ako. I know this look...better than anyone.

I harshly cupped his cheeks and crashed my lips against his.

I grabbed his waist and pulled him closer to me.

His hands are still on my neck. My hand found its way at the back of his neck.

He groaned and parted his lips slightly.

I furrowed my brows magrereklamo na sana when he let go on my neck and took off his glasses.

"You'll pay for what you've done." He whispered languidly.

"Make me."

He smirked and grabbed the back of my neck before crashing his lips again into mine. My eyes are half open and I wanted to see how he reacted. Nagkasalubong ang kilay nya, I chuckled and bit his lips.

"You have no idea kong gaano kahirap mag pigil." Madiin nyang saad habang binabawian ng kagat ang labi ko.

My hands roamed around outside of his neat clothing. I chuckled.

"What? binibigyan lang naman kita ng tanghalian ah?" I said in between of groaning.

"I haven't eaten yet, that's why I'm claiming my lunch here." He opened his eyes slightly, dumaosdos ang kamay nya sa likod ko kaya napapikit ako dahil nakikiliti ako at the same time it stirs something inside of me.

My breath hitched when his hands slipped under my T-shirt. My heart hammered on my chest kasabay ng pag-init ng katawan ko when he slides his tongue inside my mouth.

Oh fuck.

Shit.

"Hmm...Knox." Halinghing ko sa pangalan nya.

His name sounded so sweet.

"I'm claiming my lunch."

He then slipped his hands inside my short and gripped my butt cheeks. Even though I'm still wearing my boxer, I can feel the warmth of his hand—and goddamn he added some fuel inside of me that makes me burn with anticipation right now.

Nag-iinit ang katawan ko.

"K-Knox?"

"You shouldn't have sent those pictures."

Napapikit ako ng mariin. Tangina

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Woah, easy!" I chuckled in between our kisses, when he lifted me and sat me on top of one of the tables here.

Gigil nyang kinagat ang labi ko na syang binalik ko rin. I wrapped my arms around his neck to deepen our kiss. A small smirk tugged at the corner of my lips when I saw how his forehead creases while kissing me.

Nanliligaw pa lang to.

And as shameless as it might sound, I'm liking it—more than you could ever fathom. I never imagined this kind of thing with him because my mind is occupied by how he hurt me. May instances where I want him to break me, wreak me, ruin me and I'd still crawl back to him like a fucking loyal dog.

He's right. I'm a fucking slave of his.

"Are you in a hurry?" I groaned when he bit my lips again. Tangina, dudugo na to.

He just let out a muffled growl, like a hungry lion pouncing on its prey. His kisses landed on my jaw so I reclined my body.

"Fuck."

His lips found mine again. He takes full advantage of my reclined body,

deepening the kiss and pushing his tongue past my lips. His hands squeeze my ass cheeks hard as he grinds his length between my thighs.

"Damn it," He suddenly pulls back, nipping my bottom lip.

He looked at me drunkenly and with his half-lidded eyes, he pushed my chest kaya napahiga ako sa itaas ng mesa. Bigla akong napabahing dahil sa alikabok na dumapo sa ilong ko.

"Masyadong madumi," reklamo ko at minata sya. He looked down at me before pulling me up. He took off his black blazer jacket leaving his white polo shirt.

Kinawit nya ang beywang ko, and with his other hand he laid the blazer on top of the table. He shifted his body and kissed my temple kaya napapikit ako ng maharapan.

"Lay down, Sevilliana." He said hoarsely.

Kukunin nya na sana ang glasses nya pero pinigilan ko sya.

"Wag mong tanggalin. Kink ko yan, masarap kang tignan dyan," mahina akong natawa as I brushed his hair up.

He grinned and pulled me closer to him. "Perverted, do you like me in this state?" pinatakan nya ng halik ang labi ko.

I raised him an eyebrow, "Yeah. Keep it on, mas na tturn on ako."

His grin became broader each time I opened my mouth. Napatango sya.

"Well then..." he pushed me again sa itaas ng mesa. "... lay down."

Fucking hell!

His lips, trace the line of my jaw down to my neck. My heart pounded on my chest

when he slightly bit the skin of my neck. A moan escaped from my throat kaya napaangat ang tingin nya saakin.

"You like it?" he asked and sucked on my neck kaya napadaing ako.

"Hinay. Let's continue sa dorm natin amoy pawis pa ako," I pushed his chest lightly pero mas diniin nya ang katawan nya sa katawan ko.

Muli ko namang naramdaman ang bukol sa pants nya. My jaw clenched as he grind himself on top of me. Putangina mo Knox.

"I don't think I have that much patience...and besides, you smell so fucking amazing. So much so that I wanted to fuck you raw right now, " he then dived right back on my neck. Napasinghap ako and threw my head back.

His hand roamed around until he lifted my shirt and fondled my nipples. Biglang nakuryente ang katawan ko sa mga haplos nya kaya hinayaan ko nalang na tuloyang bumagsak ang katawan ko sa ibabaw ng lamesa.

He left multiple hickeys on my neck. Napakapit ako sa kanyang buhok, trying to push him down.

Umangat muli ang tingin nya and I meet his blazing gaze.

I begged using my eyes, I want his mouth on my dick right now.

As if he knew, he smirked and pulled my shirt off.

Itinukod ko ang siko ko sa magkabilaang bahagi only for him to push me again.

"Stay still." He said.

"Putangina mo Knox, wag kang pabitin," reklamo ko.

He chuckled and played with my nipple, kumunot ang noo ko at napakagat ako sa labi ko.

"Are you that eager? Putangina nakakalibog yang mukha mo," he softly growls. He bent down and my back arched when he put my nipple on his mouth.

"Putangina. Shit ang sarap..." halinghing ko when he swirls his tongue on my nipple, further electrifying my body.

His touch feels hot—making my dick twitch with anticipation each time. He began to touch me everywhere with his mouth on my other pecks. He pinched the other one, scratched my side and lightly slapped my face—he knew damn well that I like to add a little pain to my pleasure.

"Bumaba ka Knox," I pleaded, my voice croaked and small. He chuckled and the vibration sent shivers down my spine. "Suck mine..."

Hindi sya umalma at unti-unting bumaba ang halik nya. He watched how my abs contracted every time he gently sucked on my skin.

"Eager..."

Napatawa ako, "Sayo? oo."

"Ang ingay mo."

"Dibale nang—fuck!" Umikot ang mata ko when he grabbed my dick under my shorts and stroked it gently. He stared at me kaya mas lalong uminit ang katawan ko.

He pulled down my shorts and boxer, I breathe heavily dahil expose na expose na ako sakanya. He stared at me for a second and grabbed my dick again. The warmth from his hand is enough to give me immense pleasure.

"Putangina Knox, napaka sarap ng kamay mo," I grunted when he started to move his hand. I buckle my hips trying to synchronize the movement of his hand.

"Hindi ko alam kong anong butas ba ang masarap pasukan, yang bunganga mo or your asshole...ngh! fucking hell!" My breath hitched dahil mas lalong bumibilis ang kilos ng kamay nya.

"I'll be the one fucking your brains out, Sevilliana." He insisted. Napangisi ako kahit na halos pipikit na ang mata ko.

"I'll be the top, my dick is bigger than yours," rebat ko.

"No, you'll be the one screaming my name as I fuck you roughly," he squeezed my dick kaya napaungol ulit ako.

Ahh shit.

"You don't get to decide that..."

"I do."

"Pustahan, if you made me cum with your mouth in a span of 10 minutes I'll gladly welcome your cock, Knox. And if lumagpas ng 10 minutes na hindi pa ako nilalabasan you'll spread your legs for me," Hamon ko.

Confident ako na aabotin ako ng halos 20 minutes, and by then I get to fuck him...

He cock his head, "And if you do cum? I'll be the one fucking you, Sevilliana. You better not run nor hide..." he said darkly.

"You bet....ngh, madaya!" he knelt in front of me and kissed the tip of my shaft.

Nalalasing ko syang pinagmasdan, he looked at me one more time before he wrapped his lips around my shaft.

Pinagmasdan ko syang kunin sa bulsa nya ang kanyang cellphone, probably to set a timer. He put it beside me.

"Time starts now..."

"Ah! shit!" A loud moan escaped my lips when his hot and steamy breath wrapped around my whole system. My eyes roll at the back of my head. My breath became rapid with each suck he made.

"Should I treat it nice? Or swallow every inch like the hungry slut like you? " the vibration from his throat reached my cock kaya agad akong napahawak sa buhok nya dahil nakikiliti ako.

"Shut up will you?" naiinis kong saad sakanya, pero ang gago ngumisi lang.

"Ang sarap gago...." nag didiliryong kong saad sa bawat kataga.

"Cum, Austine. Cum..."

"Manigas ka—fuck!"

He used his tongue to swirl around my shaft, bobbing his head up and down quickly. He gagged deliberately around my shaft, making wet noises and choking

sounds—using his hand to pump what he couldn't fit in his mouth.

"Mmph... mmph...Knox..." I arched my back, desperately wanting it deeper in his throat. The slurping filled the room as he gave me a drunken yet hot blow job.

Bawat pag-ulos ko sa bibig nya tinitingala nya ako para makita ang mukha nya. And every time he would do that mas lalo akong na tturn on. I like how he desperately tries to please me with his mouth.

Pabilis ng pabilis ang pag taas-baba ng kanyang kamay at bibig sa gitna ko. He gagged slightly when I pushed his head deeper hitting his throat. Kunot noo nyang sinalubong ang mata ko pero halos mawala-wala na ako sa sarili ko kaya napakagat nalang ako sa labi ko.

"Putangina ang sarap mong gago ka..." nagawa ko pang isinggit.

He sucked the tip of my shaft kaya napasinghap ako. The vacuum sensation almost made me cum. Wala akong makapitan so I grabbed his hair again and gently tugged it. I need a breaker pakiramdam ko lalabasan na ako.

"Taympers, slow down, Knox...shit!"

"Hmm..." he moaned around my cock, clearly enjoying being forced down by my length. Mariin akong napapikit I can't cum...hindi pwede.

Minata ko ang cellphone na nasa gilid ko. 5 minutes...puta.

"Knox, enough..." I begged. Tears are starting to welled up in my eyes. Dahil sarap na sarap na ako at pakiramdam ko any seconds lalabasan na ako. I can't lose...

Sensing my release he eagerly took me deeper, his nails digging into my thighs as he

took my hands from his hair and held it firmly. The noises that he made were pure sin, vibrating around my dick.

"Come one...cum." He mumbled around my cock. He looked up with tear-filled eyes and drool running down his cheeks. I wanted to push his head away pero hawak-hawak nya ang kamay ko. Nakatabingi na rin ang glasses nya, he looked completely wrecked—I talked much because I knew I'm wrecked too.

"Please lumayo ka muna, Knox. Please," I cried when my abdomen contracted as I near my release.

Nilalabanan ko pero mas ginagalingan nya. I bit my lips and admitted my defeat. I yanked my hand forcefully and grabbed his hair roughly.

"If you could fuck me, I might as well destroy your throat." I said evenly.

He could see the pure lust and dominance in my eyes, the way I gripped his hair tightly, the way I thrust my cock into his mouth without mercy. He loved it. He loved being my dirty little bitch. He took me even deeper, gagging loudly as he tried to swallow my entire length.

"You like this huh? you like being fucked with your mouth," I chuckled darkly. "Watched the teeth, Knox." I warned him.

He let me completely take control, his hands gripping my thighs for balance as I brutally face-fucked him. Tears streamed down his cheeks, mixing with the saliva dripping from his stretched lips. Gagging noises filled the room with each deep thrust.

I threw my head back. "Ah! sarap puta!"

He might be the reason why I can't walk, but at least I am the reason why he couldn't talk. A fair share of pain... with pleasure.

"Cumming..."

My warning only made him suck harder. He tried to take my entire length down his throat as my hot seed hit the back of it. He moaned loudly, swallowing every drop like a good little whore. My thick length pulsed on his tongue, releasing load after load.

"Putangina, Knox! ang sarap!" I pushed his face down hitting his throat again.

My body twitches as I release the last load of my cum in his throat. With my toes curled and eyes rolling back I let go of his hair. I heave a heavy sigh.

He spit my cock with a pop, wiped his mouth and reached for his phone beside me. Pinagmasdan ko syang ayosin ang sarili nya at kalikutin ang cellphone nya.

"7 minutes. Means you lose," He held out his phone on my face with a triumphant smile. I let out a defeated groan and covered my eyes with my arms.

"You sucked so hard you jerk," nahihingal ngunit natatawa kong saad. "Fine, you win...this time."

"Fucking spread your legs, Austine." He growls possessively, I watched him spit on his finger and bring my other leg on his shoulder.

Nahihiya kong itinago ang mukha ko sa braso ko when he teased my hole with his thumb. My dick twitches again, narinig ko syang mahinang napatawa but I did not dare look at his face.

"Get it over, masakit na likod ko," I whispered, barely above a whisper.

"Yeah, sure. I'll fuck you rough and nice if you may," he said. I can feel his saliva dripping down on my whole kaya napakagat ako sa labi ko.

He slowly pushed his fingers in, napaungot ako dahil sa sakit. Kinuha nya ang braso ko sa mata ko. He wiped the tears in the corner of my eyes and kissed my forehead.

"Slowly," garalgal kong pagmamakaawa. He nodded, crashed his lips onto mine and added another finger kaya napapikit ako ng mariin.

"Relax," he cooed.

He slowly pushed his fingers deeply, curling them to hit that sweet spot inside of me. I gasped, inabot ko ang kanyang balikat for support.

"Got it, faster?" wala sa sarili akong napatango.

Without a warning he slammed his fingers inside of me rapidly. I can feel him steering my insides with his fingers. Pinagmamasdan nya lang ako, eagerly wanted to watch my reaction. I bit my lips, meet his gaze as I moan his name like a fucking girl.

So ganto pala nararamdaman ng mga babae ko sa tuwing finifinger ko sila. Puta ang sarap.

My face scrunched up slightly, eyebrows furrowed enjoying the pleasure from the pain he's giving.

My mouth was half-opened, letting out small noises each time his fingers pushed deeply.

He added another finger, and for a second I forgot how to breathe.

I relax my body and spread wide to give him full access.

"You look so damn hot, Austine," he uttered between his laboured breath. He grunted and quickened his pace.

I reached for his neck and kissed him. "Tell me what you want, Knox?"

"Don't ask me, you might regret it if you knew what was in my mind," matigas nyang ani sa gitna ng paghahalikan namin.

"Why? does it hurt your ego if you tell me—ngh!" I gasped when he touched my dick with his free hand.

"Fine, I'll tell you. What I want is to feel how much you want me inside of you," he growled lowly against my ear. "I wanted to see if you're leaking for me."

He rubbed his thumb over the sensitive tip of my cock, spreading the precum around. He reduces the speed of his fingers and looks down at my hard on.

"And look at that—you are," he then proceeded to fuck my hole with his fingers.

Oh god. I can't

"Enough..." I interjected his movements. "I want it," I massage his bulge with my feet—his breath hitched, veins protruding in his neck as he threw his head back. Hot.

"I want to see that big, thick cock of yours stretching me open. I want to feel it hitting my prostate every time you bottom out," halos wala na sa sarili kong saad. All I want right now is for him to ravage me mercilessly... completely.

I sounded like a fucking slut in heat.

I feel him shivered, a mischievous smile curving his red lips.

He pulled out his finger and without hesitation, he shoved all three fingers back inside of me, moving them fast and hard.

I feel him curling his fingers inside of me causing it to hit my sensitive spot. I moan loudly, spreading my legs wider.

Wala na akong paki kong may nakakarinig sakin at this point and besides parang wala din namang paki si Knox.

"Enough, I might cum pag pinagpatuloy mo yan," mahina ko syang sinipa papalayo sakin. Tumawa sya at tinanggal ang kanyang mga daliri sa loob ko.

"Chill, ibibigay ko sayo to," pabigat ng pabigat ang paghinga ko as I watched him unbuckle his belt. He lowered his pants kaya agad na bumalandara ang kahabaan nya sakin—napalunok ako.

Habang tinanggal nya ang pang ibaba nyang saplot, his eyes were glued to my face. I swallow the lump in my throat. Aangat na sana ako para tulungan sya but he pushed me down yet again.

"Putangina mo!" I hissed pero tinatawanan lang ako.

He grabbed my thigh, dug his nails and position the tip of his shaft. He glanced at me so I nodded in approval. He slowly entered me.

My face contorted in a mix of pleasure and pain, I purse my lips and shut my eyes tightly.

"You're so fucking tight," he gasped.

"A-are you in?" I asked.

"Not even half way through," he bent a little and kissed me on the lips to ease the pain.

"Tangina," I wrapped my legs around his waist and pushed his hips. "Ram it in," I said impatiently.

"You might get hurt."

"Shut up." I then pulled his waist closer, harshly. He both groaned when he entered me fully.

My jaw dropped, tears streaming down my cheeks. Puta masakit!

"Fuck, Austine!" he grunted. "Are you ok?"

"F-fine...you can move now."

Halos mawalan ako ng hininga. Mamamia, coca cola. Masarap inom. Mamamia coca cola masarap inom.

He started to move slowly at first, watching my face closely for any signs of discomfort. My expression was one of pure pleasure now though, eyes closed tightly and mouth open in silent moans. He picked up speed gradually until he was fucking into me hard and fast like earlier with his fingers.

"You take me so damn well, Sevilliana. I didn't know that the only thing to keep your mouth shut is to fuck you." He then rammed his dick hard kaya halos mapasigaw ako.

"A-and I didn't know na ang ingay mo palang bumayo," I manage to retaliate kahit na puro halinghing nalang ang lumalabas sa bibig ko.

Matunog syang ngumisi, "Ang sarap mo. The first time I saw you naked way back then I had a dream where I fuck you like this."

"Nagiging honest ka pala pag...nalilibogan," I teased him. He just closed his eyes and fuck me relentlessly.

His hips slapped against mine loudly as he fucked into me mercilessly. He grabbed my legs and pushed them back towards my chest, opening me up even more for him.

"So fucking tight...argh.."

"K-knox, slowly...please..."

He did not listen.

His movements became more erratic and uncoordinated as he got closer to his orgasm. He leaned down and captured my mouth in a rough, sloppy kiss, biting and sucking on my lips.

"I'm gonna... I'm gonna cum inside you, okay?"

I nodded. Wala na sa tamang pag-iisip. All I could think right now is how he takes my manhood away, and I'm not even complaining.

"Sabay tayo...Fuck Knox! I'm coming!"

With a loud groan, he buried himself deep inside me and came hard, filling me with his hot seed.

He kept thrusting through his orgasm, milking every last drop into my stretched hole.

Kasabay non ang syang paglabas din nang katas ko sa damit nya as I held him tightly.

My body's convulsing each time he thrusts his hips back as he releases his cum inside of me.

As he finally slowed down, he collapsed on top of me, panting heavily.

"Fuck.."

I bit his exposed skin kaya napaungol sya.

"That was intense, I never knew that Mr. President can fuck like that," I chuckled and brushed his hair up.

He looked up from my chest and pursed his lips.

"Again?" Nanlaki ang mata ko when he teased my hole again with the tip of his shaft.

"Aren't you tired?" hindi makapaniwalang singhal ko. Umiling sya at binuhat ako.

Angal sana ako pero pinasuot nya saakin ang damit ko, inayos nya rin ang sarili nya. Kumunot ang noo ko, I was about to ask him when he lifted me like a bride and wrapped his blazer around me.

"Hoy gago! puta ibaba mo ako!" Angal ko.

"Stay still sa dorm natin to tataposin,"

Minata nya ako kaya nanahimik ako.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and let him carry me like his goddamn bride. I buried my face on his neck. Buti nalang natatabunan nang blazer yung tumitigas nyang alaga pati na rin ang cum stain na galing sakin kanina.

Amm...can I say that I'm doomed? I regret not holding it in at nagpadala sa ulos ng damdamin kundi bottom ako ngayon.

Putangina, I never knew that getting fucked from behind is as good as fucking someone. Ngunit, Iba ang pakiramdam, mas masarap, mas nakakanasa mas nakakabasa.

Pag dating sa dorm, agad akong nilapag ni Knox sa sala. He basically ruined my shirt and shorts. He claimed me again and again. From the sala, kitchen, bathroom and even on his bed. He never let me rest. Not even once!

We started at 4 pm and right now it's past 10 o'clock and my body is aching!

"K-knox let's rest first..." I basically pleaded.

My body is covered in hickeys the same as him. Hindi ako papayag na hindi ko sya mamarkahan. Sweats trickle down his forehead and landed on my back.

He slapped my ass kaya napapikit ako.

Napakagat ako sa bed sheet while he fucked me from behind.

"Austine... Austine.... Fuck I'm cumming again!"

With one deep thrust he came...inside of me again. I don't think hahamonin ko pa sya sa pustahan ulit. Tangina, sumasakit na likod ko. Next time I'll have him have a taste of my cock.

I breathe heavily as I'm nearing my orgasm yet again. "It's here...argh..."

He watched in awe as my orgasm seemed to go on forever, my hole pulsing around his still-hard dick, milking out the last drops of his semen. When I finally collapsed face-first onto the bed sheets he slowly pulled out, watching as a thick stream of white cum leaked out immediately.

He whistles, "Hot."

Maria Clara?

He flipped he over, His eyes were glued to my face as I came undone, taking in every contorted expression.

"Look how messy you are right now," he teased.

My face was scrunched up in ecstasy, eyes squeezed shut and mouth hanging open in a silent scream. A deep blush spread across my cheeks, and beads of sweat dripped down my forehead.

Sisinghalan ko pa sya sana when sleep pulls me in. Unti-unting sumara ang talukap ng mata ko, and before my consciousness drifted into slumber I saw how he smiled softly and kissed my forehead.

"Goodnight, baby. Yung adobo ang tabang."

Kinaumagahan nagising ako dahil sa mabigat na nakadagan sakin. I slowly open my eyes, blink twice to adjust my vision. Si Knox, agad ang una kong nakita, he was laying next to me, his hands wrapped around my waist.

Napangiti ako.

"Mukha kang anghel pag tulog, and you looked like a demon in heat in bed," I chuckled remembering how he sucked my stamina.

I was never a sporty person but my stamina is above average, kaya nagulat talaga ako when he kept on fucking me for 6 hours straight. Fuck! is that even humanly possible?

Napansin ko rin na may damit at malinis na ako, even the sheets smells fresh new.

"You're a monster," mahina akong napatawa.

I watched his face closely. Knox, If there's a time where I vanished will you look for me? will you wept because of my disappearance or you would completely act like I never existed and continue with your life?

Bumuntong hininga nalang ako. Dahan-dahan kong kinuha ang kamay nyang nakapatong sakin at bumangon. Napakagat ako sa labi ko when an immense pain from my back surged through me.

My head immediately snapped back to see the culprit behind this. Ang sarap ng tulog mong hayop ka ah.

"Aray, aray, aray, putangina. Parehas naman kaming 9 inches tas lamang pa ako ng unti, tangina ginawa akong bottom." Reklamo ko, as if he could hear me.

Nakakawala ng pagkalalaki.

I carefully got off his bed and slowly reached for the door. Napahawak ako sa balakang ko dahil pakiramdam ko mababali ito ano mang oras. Agad akong pumunta sa kusina para uminom ng tubig. I glanced at the wall clock. 7 am na buti nalang wala akong pasok.

Kinuha ko ang pitcher at di na nag abala pang kumuha ng baso. I'm so damn thirsty. Pansin ko rin na maayos na ang sala at nandon na ang bag ko.

I licked my lips. Kinuha nya?

Hindi ko nalang sana papansinin nang biglang tumunog ang cellphone ko. Alam kong cellphone ko yun dahil titititititit ang ringtone.

"Who?" paika-ika akong pumunta sa sofa para lang masagot ang tawag.

I rummaged through my bag and fished out my phone. Agad na umayos ang postura ko when I saw who's calling. Ay puta wrong move mas sumakit likod ko.

I swiped to answer her call.

"Mèmère, ang aga mo atang napatawag?"

Umikot ako at dumapa sa sofa. Sitting would make me uncomfortable. It took her a few seconds to answer me.

"Come home, something happened."

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"This school is diabolical, imagine no party on weekdays after school? Bro what if my chikababes miss me already? Why am I here in the first place?" I watched Abigail, pacing back and forth in front of me. Napabuntong hininga nalang ako.

"Would you please stop? Pati ako nahihilo na sayo eh," reklamo ko sakanya.

"Bruh, imagine the look on their face when they didn't see me for a whole week ang lungkot ng mga buhay nila dahil wala ako. Remind me why am I here," halos mangiyak-ngiyak nyang saad. As if ikakamatay nya kong hindi sya makakapunta sa bar.

"Why did you choose this school to begin with tas mag rereklamo ka?" Patrick, one of my classmates, chimes in.

I heard her sharp intake of breath. Hinarap nya si Patrick at pinameywang. "Do you think I would choose this school?! If I were to decide I would never pick this human jail school. This is torture!!!" She yelled na ikinatawa ng iba. Napailing nalang ako at dumukdok.

I groan inwardly, masakit na nga ang likod ko naiinitan pa ako dahil sa suot kong turtleneck.

"Masama ugali mo kaya dito ka tinapon ng pamilya mo," I simply said. Pabagsak syang umupo sa tabi ko at tinapik ang malikat ko.

"Bro, I'm the best daughter they could ever ask for. Sadyang mahal lang talaga nila ako. Takot sila na baka may umampon sakin at iwan ko sila kaya pinasok nila ako

dito para protektahan ako."

I almost rolled my eyes.

"In short ayaw nila sayo," I drawled.

Tumahimik sya saglit bago hinampas ng malakas ang balikat ko. I straighten my back and whip my head in her direction. Tinaponan ko sya ng masamang tingin na syang ginawa nya rin.

"Kaya ayaw nila sayo eh!" I gritted my teeth.

"Sumbong kita sa mama ko, mahal nila ako bawiin mo yun kundi malalagot ka saakin!" balik nya. She reached for my head and put it in between of her arms.

"Bat ko naman babawiin eh totoo naman? Ayaw nila sayo kaya ka nandito!" Pilit kong tinatanggal ang braso nya sa leeg ko pero mas lalo nya pang hinigpitan.

"Isusumbong na talaga kita kay mama!"

"Edi sumbong mo, tignan natin kong mahal ka nila!"

"Ikaw yung hindi mahal ng mama mo!"

"Patay na yung mama ko gaga."

Binitawan nya ang leeg ko. "Ay sorry hehe."

"I'm confused, college ba ito or elementary?" nabaling ang tingin namin sa isa naming kaklase.

Tumayo si Abigail at lumapit sakanya. "Janice babe, r u jealous na mas close kami ni Austine?"

Napa facepalm nalang ako. This again.

I heave a sharp sigh at dumukdok ulit. Knox was still sleeping when I left our dorm.

Hindi ko na sya ginising at hinayaan nalang syang makatulog don.

I've been thinking a lot since my grandma called me.

I don't know what to do. She told me that I needed to come with her overseas. I don't know why but I refused to go.

"Yeah, ang cute nga nila eh. Tas nakita ko yung wallpaper ni Pres, si Zyran! Like omg fr?" agad na pantig ang tenga ko sa narinig ko.

Two girls sat in front of me, I shifted in my seat. An uncomfortable feeling started to rise in my chest.

"Feel ko gusto ni Pres si Zyran, I mean I can't blame him since ang ganda ni Zyran. Damn, he's even prettier than any other girl." The other girl giggled.

Pres? Knox? No that can't be, he doesn't like Zyran...anymore? Does he?

My heart sank.

"I saw them this morning and the way Knox smiles at Zyran? Bro! I swear you can totally piece it together that he liked him."

That can't be...Pano ako?

I looked up and stared at the back of their head, their voices turned into muffled buzz as something inside of me twisted . I shifted again, trying to breathe past the tightness coiled in my chest.

What if he was thinking of him while doing it? What if sya pa rin talaga? Putangina eh ano yung mga pinakita nya saakin? That thought was enough to punch me in the gut.

I clutched the edge of my desk, to tight my knuckles turned white. My eyes burn.

No. I refused to be swayed with this. Agad akong tumayo para nahapin si Knox, I need to talk to him.

I'm fucking frustrated. Nakakagalit. Lalo na't alam kong what we had was never clear. We never talked about it. Never labeled it. Just let it be. Now, nagsisisi akong hinayaan ko nalang.

I never questioned him because it felt so real. But then being real doesn't always mean enough.

"Aust? Where are you going? Class is about to start, you idiot." Abigail's voice trailed behind my back.

Hindi ko sya pinansin at nagpatuloy sa paglalakad. Each step of mine demands answers from him. Each breath lacerates my heart, to the point na nahihirapan akong makahinga.

I check everywhere I could think of— the office, hallway, garden...just everywhere I knew he would be there.

I hate this.

I hate that I'm looking for him when he's the one who made me feel invisible.

I hate that I still care—still want him—to choose me.

I hate myself for craving affection...

I stopped by the staircase, took a deep breath and decided to check the cafeteria. The only place I haven't checked. I put my hands inside my pocket and lowered my head while walking.

Putanginisa ang bigat. Ayaw kong magpaapekto sa mga naririnig ko but damn, it hurts. If I heard a rumor about him and another girl, I might just laugh it off but a rumor about him and Zyran?

Knowing he once liked Zyran...it made me...feel insecure. Unsure of everything.

"Let's talk to him—"

The words got stuck in my throat the second I lifted my head to look through the glass window of the cafeteria.

And for a second I regretted coming down here. Everything inside of me crumbled.

He was there.

With Zyran.

Nanghihina kong hinakbang ang paa ko para sana kausapin sya when I saw his face clearly.

His laughing with him, eyes half-moon, lips pulled into that genuine smile I thought

was rare—reserved.

My stomach churn, bile rising up from the heartbreak. I tried to deny it, tried to understand him, tried to gaslight myself that he was falling too...but no. He never did.

Everything was a lie.

So, it's true huh? He never stopped loving him. That beautiful ray of sunshine.

How about me?

What about those moments that we've shared? I gave myself up, only to find out it was never me to begin with.

Alam ko naman, but he made me believe that things are taking a different turn between us. Akala ko may meaning ang lahat. The way he followed me when he sensed something was wrong and embraced me when I broke down.

He offered his hand, I took it. He held my hand tightly, I held onto it. He let go of my hand, I tried to grab it only for my hands to bleed. I begged him to give me his hand, he ignored me.

I tried everything, breaking myself in the process until when I thought he finally gave in when he reached for my hand again, just when I hoped...but I realized that the hand he was seeking wasn't mine to begin with.

I'm like a soft place to fall when his world is too loud for him. A silence he ran to while waiting for someone he truly never wanted to let go. An option.

"P-putangina..." pagak akong napatawa.

I'm tired of almoses, of maybes, of people who hold my hand like they mean it—only to let go when I need them the most.

Love didn't break me—hope did. And I'm done being a fool waiting for something that only knows how to leave.

I'm done.

I clenched my fist. This time hindi ako umiyak...I just back down.

As I turned my back from him I saw him lift his head and looked in my direction. I didn't stop nor did my steps falter just because he looked at me once.

I fished out my phone out of my pocket and dialed my grandma's number. Agad nya namang sinagot ang tawag ko.

"August?"

When I heard her soothing voice, my legs gave in. Umupo ako malapit sa may basurahan and don na isa-isang tumulo ang mga luha ko. Hearing my whimper my grandma's anxious voice rang again.

"Jusko apo, anong nangyayari sayo? August, what the hell happened to you?" nag-aalala nyang saad. "If you're sad because I forced you to come with me, then I'm sorry. I won't do it again, I'll let you stay here, I promise."

"I'm coming, Memere. Please isama mo ako..." My voice cracked as my lips trembled.

If finding love means losing myself then fuck that shit, I'm running away. This time, totoo na. Ayaw ko na nakakapagod. Nakakabwesit. Nakakasakit. If it's not for me

then god knows I already gave up.

Bat ko kasi hinahanap sa taong iba naman pala ang gusto.

That afternoon, wala sa sarili kong niligpit at sinilid sa maleta ang mga gamit ko. I'm not planning to tell him. Let him be confused...I want him to feel how hurtful it is to be abandoned by someone.

"Are you sure? Parang kanina lang nagbibiroan lang tayo ah tas aalis kana pala," she looked at me as if trying to read what's on my mind when I told her what happened

I weakly chuckled. "Chill bro, hindi pa ako mamamatay ."

Magsasalita pa sana sya when Rayne and Rafael came. Tumayo sya at pinagpagan ang kanyang suot.

"Una na ako, you better talk to them before you leave," she said and patted my head.

I nodded. Tinignan nya muna ako, her eyes tells that she really pity me. It's nice to have someone...but being pitied by them just because of my situation I don't really need that.

"Bro what happened?" Agad na tanong ni Rayne ng makaupo sila sa tabi ko dito sa harden.

Mahina akong napatawa. "Busy nyo ah, minsan nalang tayo magkita partida iisang school lang tayo," I joked.

Natahimik silang dalawa.

"W-We thought you're doing ok so..." I cut Rafael off.

"Just because you think I'm doing good that doesn't mean na hindi na kayo magpaparamdam sakin. Trio tas hindi nagpapakita mga hayuf," I tried to laugh it off but it only came out croaked.

Bumuntong hininga ako. "Anyway, that's not the issue here. I'm flying to Costa Rica. March na at malapit na ang summer break natin I'll be staying there. I don't know kong panandalian or for good na." I said.

Humugot ng malalim na hininga si Rayne at tinapik and balik at ko. "I'm so sorry Aust, a lot happened kaya wala akong time para makausap ka. But I swear it wasn't my intention to not talk to you."

Tinaasan ko sya ng kilay and yanked his hand off of my shoulder. "Ang drama mo gago. Ayos lang, alam ko naman na may kanya-kanya tayong buhay. Oa mo par," tumawa ako na syang ikinailing nya.

"What happened?" napabaling ako kay Rafael. Seryoso nya akong minata kaya napakagat nalan ako sa labi ko.

"Grandpa was involved in a car accident just this morning. Nasa Costa Rica sya ngayon and Memere, wanted me to come with her," I told them.

"Was it the only reason why you're coming? Or was it because you wanted to run away?" His question hung in the air and I stayed quiet.

I opened my mouth to speak, but no words came. Para bang bigla nalang sumarado ang isip ko sa mga bagay-bagay. Kasi paano ko naman ipapaliwanag sa iba that I'm not running towards anything anymore—

just away from everything that ever made me feel not enough?

How do I admit that I'm so tired of staying in places where my heart is always second choice?

That you're not chasing love— I'm escaping the wreckage it left behind?

"I'm worried for my grandpa, Rafael." I pointed out kaya tumango sya.

"If you say so," he shrugged.

Tumayo ako at pinagpagan ang pants ko. Wala sana ako dito kong hindi lang ako gago. Akala ko makakahinga na ako but I never imagine that in this school I found nothing but pain.

"How's your grandpa?" Rayne asked at tumayo din. Pinulupot nya ang kanyang braso sa balikat ko.

"He's fine. Aside sa na fracture ang ribs at paa nya, ok naman sya.

He just need someone to take care of him kaya lilipad kami don para alalayan sya.

He was reckless as heck. Ang tanda na tas ang tingin nya pa rin sa kalsada race track kaya ayun namalas," I laugh.

I imagined his old face contorted not because of pain but because he was irritated.

Being bedridden meant he could no longer rode his horse.

Tinapik ni Rafael ang balikat ko. "Kahit hindi mo sya kadugo pakiramdam ko sakanya ka nagmana. Parehas matigas ang ulo," he shook his head and I manly rolled my eyes.

"Yeah sure whatever."

Feel ko rin. I'm a risk taker kaya lagi akong nasasaktan.

They say love would heal you, but all it ever did was teach me where it hurt the most.

I hope one day he would realize how lucky he is that he has me at those moments.

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

It took me months to finally run away from the pain that caused me to act like a fool. A part of me did not want to admit that I was a sucker for it, but I knew better than anyone na tanga ako, manhid and would do anything just to keep him at bay.

You know when you already love someone when you can't hate them despite all the pain that they inflicted on you. And that's probably the dumbest thing your heart does.

"Ilagay mo sa likod yang maleta mo." I nodded at Memere and loaded my suitcase at the back of her car.

I hugged myself when a cool breeze enveloped my body. Bahagya kong binigyan ng sulyap ang gate ng paaralan bago bumuntong hininga. Malapit nang mag summer break kaya wala masyadong gagawin.

I did not even realized na summer break na pala maya-maya, I was too busy to even realize it.

"Get in, 4 am ang flight natin pa Costa Rica baka malate tayo. 3 am na," Tumango nalang ako at pumasok sa sasakyan.

I groan and lower the hood of my jacket. I feel miserable.

Memere senses that I don't want to talk about what happened so she just stayed quite hanggang sa makarating kami sa airport. Hindi ako nagpaalam, wala akong iniwang bakas. I want to leave without a trace. I want to leave with nothing in mind but calmness.

When I left our dorm in the middle of the night, my foot halted midway and glanced at his door. A silent goodbye of mine.

We boarded the plane exactly at 4 am, timing na nasa window seat ako. I watched as the clouds danced across the canvas of the blue sky, while the sun, with golden brushstroke, painted the world below this soaring plane.

I smiled warmly, when the sun kissed my face through the open window.

"It's nice isn't it?" Napabaling ako kay Memere ng magsalita sya. Her eyes focused on the scenery outside the window. I averted my eyes back to the window and nodded slightly.

"Yeah," I answered, voice ragged and exhausted.

I feel her hands caressing my back kaya bahagya akong napapikit.

"Sumama ka lang ba sakin dahil may gusto kang takbohan?"

I clenched my jaw and hugged my body.

Nang walang sagot na nakuha sakin bumuntong hininga sya. "I really don't know what happened apo, pero I wish na sana hindi basta-basta tong desisyon mo." She said worriedly.

I inwardly chuckled. Sigurado naman ako kaya nga tatakbo ako papalayo sakanya. I had enough. I fucking had enough. Ain't no robot, puta tao ako. Imagine what you might actually feel when the guy you thought liked you, may ganong rumors?

Nasaktan ako and I don't want to face the possibilities na baka hanggang ngayon sya pa rin.

I'm done chasing someone who keeps on running away from me.

"I..I just need to breathe...gusto kong magpakalayo-layo sa mga taong walang ibang ginawa kundi saktan akoo," I said through gritted teeth.

She sighs again. She reclined her body, I could feel her gaze lingering on my back but she did not utter another word.

Masama bang mas pinili kong tumakbo?

I guess not. Tumakbo ka papalayo imbes na harapin ang problema mo. Sometimes running away isn't a sign of weakness, more often it is the first step towards healing. The sky must let go of its storm before it can shine again.

Sometimes peace is found not in staying, but in the courage to leave what hurts.

Napatingin akong muli sa bintana. I soft yet melancholy escaped my lips. "Hahanapin mo kaya ako or hahayaan mo nalang akong mawala? Which one would you choose, hmm?" Napapikit ako at hinayaan nalang na lamunin ako ng antok.

Isang araw kaming nasa himpapawid, napakagat ako sa labi ko nang sumakit ang likod ko. Tangina. Ang layo ng Costa Rica.

"Fucking hell ang likod ko." Singhal ni Memere habang hawak-hawak ang kanyang likod. Napatawa ako pero agad ding napawi ng mas lalong sumakit ang likod ko.

Gago.

"Tawa mo?" tinaasan nya ako kilay kaya napairap ako.

"My back hurt," reklamo ko rin.

"Paki ko?"

I deadpan her.

"Marayuma ka sana." Rebat ko.

Magsasalita pa sana sya ng tumunog ang Pre-landing announcement kaya napatahimik kaming dalawa.

"Ladies and gentlemen, as we begin our final descent into San José, Costa Rica, the local time is 10:49 PM, and the weather is mostly cloudy with a temperature of 66 degrees Fahrenheit, or 19 degrees Celsius.

Please make sure your seat belts are securely fastened, your seat backs and tray tables are in their full upright positions, and all carry-on items are properly stowed.

On behalf of your captain and the entire crew, we'd like to thank you for flying with us today. We hope you've had a pleasant journey and wish you a memorable stay in beautiful Costa Rica. Pura vida! Welcome!"

After the announcement, I fished out my phone. Naka airplane mode sya kaya halos isang araw na akong offline. Napatitig nalang ako sa screen ng cellphone, I heave a heavy sigh once again and turn off my phone.

"Your grandad, he's still as careless as ever.

.." I averted my gaze back to my grandma.

She's caressing her phone, worry is evident in her aging face.

"...Looking back now, you and him are similar in any way.

You wouldn't talk if something's wrong and.

.." she tilted her head and met my eyes. "...nalulungkot ako."

I swallowed the lump in my throat and forced myself to look away.

"I...I'm not ready to open up yet Memere," I said, voice low.

"I spend all my life in quiet corners of the house.

I kept my feelings, opinions and tears in a bottle.

So...please give me time para masabi ko sayo kong ano ang nangyari.

" I smiled, pero ang mata ko nasa kamay ko lang.

I remained that way hanggang sa pumatong ang kamay nya sa halos nanginginig ko nang kamay.

"I understand. And I'm sorry if I wasn't around when you need someone to cry on..."

Napakagat ako sa labi ko. Sinalubong ko ang mata nya at nginitian sya. Hinawakan ko ng mahigpit ang kanyang kamay, not wanting to let go. Her hand was the first one to reach out to me when I stumble and almost give up.

"Ang oa," natatawa kong saad. Marahas nyang kinuha yang kamay nya sa kamay ko at hinampas ako sa balikat kaya napa daing ako.

"Sorry ha! sorry kong naapakan ko yang emosyon mo!" halos pasigaw nyang saad.

May ibang napatingin sakanya. Embarrassed, sinuot ko ang headphone ko and

pretended not to know her. Nagpipigil ako ng tawa ng makitang nanlaki ang mata nya.

"D-don't worry I'm talking to my grandson," nauutal nyang saad sa flight attendant ng lapitan sya at tanongin kong ano ang problema.

Nang umalis ang flight attendant, her sharp eyes landed on mine and she slapped my shoulder kaya napatawa ako.

Kinurot nya ang tagiliran ko kaya napaigtad ako. "Walang hiya ka." Madiin nyang ani.

"M-masakit!!" reklamo ko, but seeing her reddened face hindi ko mapigilang mapatawa ulit.

"Why would you do that!" she muffled a scream to my ear na syang ikinatawa ko ulit.

"You're too loud, Memere."

Inirapan nya ako bago hinampas ulit. I massage my shoulder dahil sa bigat ng kamay nya.

We buckled up when the plane landed.

As I stepped outside into this unfamiliar place, a tang of pain seized my pace. Though unsure, I'll try to hide the hurt, caused by yesterday's sorrowful heartbreak.

Maybe...just maybe.

"Welcome to Costa Rica," My grandma grinned at me. I smirk when my feet touch the ground.

I remembered that my family owns a resort near Manuel Antonio National Park. Isang beses lang akong nakapunta non, nong buhay pa si mommy.

I breathe the fresh air of Costa Rica, a small smile tugged at the corner of my lips.

"Balot!!!! May Balot dito!!!!"

Bahagya akong napasimangot ng may pamilyar na boses akong narinig.

"Sloane and her antics," Memere laughed. I followed her line of vision, and there I saw Sloane holding up a cardboard box with our names written across.

Nang makita niya kami, agad syang tumakbo papalapit sa amin. I watched how she nearly fell from the ground dahil sa katangahan nya.

"Austine mah bro!!!" She jumped on me and wrapped her arms around my neck. I groan dahil tumunog ang likod ko.

"Get off Sloane, ang baho mo," I elbowed her, but she just laughed it off. "Why are you even here?"

She clicks her tongue, "Mani lang yang Canada at Costa Rica sakin." She boosted. I furrowed my brows and yanked her hands off of me.

Bumaling sya kay Memere at niyakap. "My gorjas Grandmother! Wow, you look hot in that dress. Too bad grandad is injured," she winked at her.

"Gaga," natatawa nyang batok sa pinsan ko. "Let's go, I badly need some rest." Aya nya kaya lumabas na kami sa airport.

Someone is already waiting for us there. Before we enter the car Sloane nudges me

kaya minata ko sya.

"H-How's Abigail?" she asked, though her eyes were distant. My forehead creased, before I could ask her, she turned her head and smiled, cutting my thoughts off. "You said that the two of us are very similar, I figured that I wanted to be her friend."

Minata ko pa sya ng ilang segundo bago tumango. "She's fine."

Hearing my answer she nodded at pumasok na sa sasakyan.

Binaybay namin ang daan tungo sa resort namin. Gabi na at antok na antok na ako but my minds still cloudy with heavy thoughts. I sigh and fished out my phone. I wanted to check my social media accounts, but my phone is dead kaya binulsa ko nalang ulit.

Pag dating sa resort namin agad akong pumanhik sa kwarto na binigay sakin. I forgot to charge my phone nor changed my clothes dahil sa sobrang pagod. Once my body hit the soft cushion my eyes immediately closed and my mind drifted into slumber.

I sleep like a log that night at hindi ko na namalayan na anong oras na pala. I check the clock on the wall at mag aalas tres na nang hapon.

"That was long."

I got off from my bed and stretches my body. Agad akong naligo at bumaba pagkatapos kong mag-ayos. Na charge ko na rin ang cellphone ko. And while waiting I might as well stroll in the beach.

I'm wearing white sando and a khaki short and a flip flop. Pagbaba ko sa kwarto agad na bumungad saakin ang mga turista na nag bbook ng kwarto. Our room and the room for the tourist are separated. Kumbaga hotel ito.

Nakita kong nasa lounging area si Sloane, busy kakalikot ng cellphone nya kaya nilapitan ko sya.

"Where's Memere?" I asked her. She flinched and immediately hid her phone.

She looked up and met my eyes nervously kaya nagkasalubong ang kilay ko. "At the hospital," she cleared her throat and stood up. "Come on let's eat. Punta tayong park pagkatapos." Aya nya.

"Nah, I'll probably be at the beach," nauna na akong maglakad sa kanya papuntang dining area.

"Becky will be here, I'll introduce you to my girlfriend," she informed me.

I looked past my shoulder and eyed her. "Not Thea?" I asked. She shook her head and smirked at me.

"We broke up last month," she said at hinabol ako.

"Ayos ah, nakakita ka agad. I bet pang 3 days mo lang yan. Fb15 ba," she laughed at my remark at inakbayan ako.

"The moment she saw you, makikipag break agad yun sakin," she taunted with a smirk.

It's always been like this. Sa tuwing may ipapakilala sya sakin na jowa nya, the next day mapag-aalaman ko na break na sila. I think sumpa ako para kay Sloane, but she kept on introducing her girlfriends as if she's trying to prove something.

"Tas diko alam na may hidden animosity kana pala sakin," I scoffed. Humalakhak sya kaya mas lalong umasim ang mukha ko.

"How can I hate you bro! the only thing that keeps me from dating you is the fact that you're my cousin." She said and I almost rolled my eyes.

"As if papatulan kita. Tabi nya kukunin ko yung cellphone ko sa itaas."

Lowbat pa yun pero wala akong paki.

Tumakbo akong muli sa itaas papuntang kwarto ko. When I entered my room, I grabbed my phone at tinanggal ang charger. I turned it on. For a few seconds, I just stared-watching as the light slowly bled into the screen, like it was struggling to wake from a long, heavy sleep.

The moment it powered up, I switched off airplane mode.

Before I could even type in my password, the phone buzzed violently in my hand.

A message and call from the same person. Over a hundred missed calls and texts.

Austine, please where are you?

That was sent two days ago.

As I scroll down my eyes burn. Each message came like a punch to the chest-desperate, unraveling, raw. I could feel his panic bleeding through the screen, his words getting shorter, shakier, more broken. And the last message was sent 10 minutes ago.

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

Before it's too late

I let the waves crash onto my feet. I let the wind embrace me as its presence soothes the ache in my heart. A small smile tugged at the corners of my lips, I bent down and picked up the seashell that was washed up from the shore.

Pretty.

"Aust! Let's go! Pupunta na tayong park," Sloane shouted kaya napatingin ako sa direksyon nya. Park pero may dalang salbabida. She's wearing my jacket and khaki shorts naka-akbay din sya sa babaeng nakasuot ng floral dress.

Tinapon ko ang shell sa dagat bago maglakad papalapit sakanila.

"Akala ko magiging mermaid kana, you've been staring at the ocean for almost half an hour already. Missing your home?" She smirked at me nang makalapit na ako.

"Shut the fuck, Sloane. I'm enjoying my last few days here," saad ko at nilagpasan sila, but she caught my arms and pull me back.

"Nga pala she's Hannah, my girlfriend," she introduced to the girl beside her. I glanced at her and her cheeks changed color. Short hair, petit, just her type.

"Hello." I politely greeted her. She bit her lips and pinasadahan ng tingin ang basa kong katawan.

"H-Hi, ang gwapo mo pala sa personal," she shyly utters. Napatingin ako kay Sloane

na nakatingin din sa jowa nya.

I smirk at hindi nalang sya pinansin.

"Sir, towel po," inaabot saakin ng staff ang towel. I smiled at tinanggap yun.

"Salamat po." I said, she nodded and returned to her work.

Some of the employees here are Filipino. Paps wanted his staff to be Filipino dahil sumasakit daw minsan ang utak nya kakaenglish tas minsan hindi nya daw maintindihan kong ano ang sinasabi ng mga taga rito.

"Does he have a girlfriend?" the last thing I heard from those two dahil pumasok na ako.

Aakyat na sana ako ng humabol sa akin si Sloane at inakbayan ako. "Akin nalang yung phone mo, naka off lang naman yun sa bedside mo tas bumili ka rin ng bago." She nudged me.

"Iniwan mo lang don?" I asked.

Matunog syang ngumisi. "We broke up already."

Napailing nalang ako. "Should I say sorry?" tinaasan ko sya ng kilay na syang ikinatawa nya.

"Nah, bro. I should be the one saying Thank you. I don't want someone na basta-basta nalang akong iiwan pag nakahanap ng mas better saakin," she uttered whole heartedly. My forehead creases. Buang.

"What's your deal really? I somehow don't get you. You introduced your girlfriend to

me and when they show a bit of interest in me nakikipag break ka kaagad."

She grinned, "I was testing them if they're loyal or not, that's all. Nothing less, nothing more." She shrugged her shoulders.

Bumuntong hininga ako at kinuha ang braso nya sa balikat ko. "Hindi kaba natatakot?"

"For what?"

I looked at her for a couple of seconds before sighing in defeat. "Wala, j-just be careful."

She rolled her eyes at malakas akong hinampas sa balikat. "Ang oa par, akin nalang phone mo nawala ko yung akin eh."

Napangisi ako. "Akin na lang yung PS5 mo swap tayo."

She tsked at tinulak ako kaya napatawa ako. "Taangina naman, wag na lang. Sayo na lang yang cellphone mo." And she walked away.

Pinagmasdan ko lang ang likod nya habang naiiling-iling. I sigh at umakyat sa kwarto ko.

Isang linggo na akong nandito sa Costa Rica at isang linggo ko nang hindi nabubuksan ang cellphone ko. I bought a new phone para may magamit ako dito. I fear that if I turn on my phone at pag nakita ko ang pangalan nya magiging martyr ako.

It's been quite a while since I last heard from him. I wasn't sure if he was doing great or not... or if he was looking for me. Not that he cares but still.

"Apo?"

Napahinto ako ng may kumalabit saakin. I looked past my shoulder and saw that it was my grandpa. Hinarap ko sya at ngumiti.

"Paps, kamusta?" I asked at inakbayan sya. He smirked and flexed his arms.

"Malakas ata kapit ko sa panginoon, hindi ko pa daw araw. Feel ko gabi ako kukunin," he cackles kaya napatawa ako. Him and his jokes.

Despite being nearly 70 years old, he's still as strong as ever and as hyper as ever.

"Sana ma-inform ako head on para ka alarm ako if ever," balik ko na syang ikinahalakhak nya.

Kakadischarge nya palang nong nakaraan tas ang una nyang ginawa ay inaya akong mag scuba diving. He liked it risky, motto nya kasi sa buhay "You only live once, might as well experience all the good things before dying."

Pagkasama mo sya, it's an endless adventure for you.

"It's good na nandito ka. Nagsasawa na ako sa mukha ni Sloane. Lagi nalang broken," he tsked and bobbed his head.

I grin. "Hayaan mo nayang tomboy na yan," biro ko. Nangingisi nya akong binalingan.

"Pag talaga nalaman ko na naging baliko mga apo ko, jusko isa-isa ko kayong itatapon sa labas," he said. Napatigil ako. Napakagat ako sa labi ko and let out an awkward smile.

"Does it bother you? Masama ba maging iba?

Masama bang magmahal ng kapwa mo lalaki?

" I asked. Makahulogan nya akong minata ng ilang segundo kaya halos kabahan ako.

I averted my eyes, cuz if I looked a little longer into his eyes baka may malaman syang hindi sya dapat malaman.

It was a total silence not until matunog syang ngumiti.

He ruffled my hair and chuckled softly. "Apo, it's a testament to your courage. Being gay, bi or even transgender isn't a bad thing. Sadyang may ibang tao lang talaga na sarado ang isip sa mga bagay-bagay. I won't be mad if you tell me that you liked a boy. It takes courage, you know.

...Loving yourself in a world that tries to make you feel like you shouldn't is powerful. Your difference doesn't make you any less of a human..." he smiled gently, his voice soft—a quiet warmth in his eyes. Napakagat ako sa labi ko at tinignan sya sa mata.

"...It makes you beautifully, unapologetically unique, Apo."

Expressing yourself takes courage. Loving yourself takes guts. Knowing yourself means embracing your flaws. How beautiful could it be.

Tinapik nya ang balikat ko. "Gym muna ako apo, baka maka score ako mamaya sa lola mo," he winked at me kaya napangiwi ako.

"Ew..." reaksiyon ko na syang ikinatawa nya.

"Malay lang natin!" pahabol nya na syang mas lalong ikinaasim ng mukha.

"You're literally 70 years old."

"Shut up! Single kalang eh!" halakhak nya at tumakbo papalayo.

Napatampal nalang ako sa noo ko. He makes that kind of joke every time he gets just to make us feel awkward.

We spent our last day here in Costa Rica going to places and eating all sorts of foods na hindi ko kayang ipronounce yung alam ko lang is yung Gallo pinto, it's rice and beans basically.

Nasa Rescate Wildlife Rescue Center kami ngayon.

Memere wanted to visit this Zoo kaya pinuntahan agad naming apat kinaumagahan.

Bumuntong hininga ako, somehow, letting myself run away is the best decision I've ever made.

Maging kalmado ako these past few days. Pero sa hindi ko malamang dahilan pakiramdam ko may kulang. I can smile but I feel like it wasn't genuine enough. Parang there's a hollow pit inside of me. A void I'm afraid to acknowledge.

While strolling where the lion cage was, Sloane grabbed my shirt and pulled me aside.

"Anong problema mo?" I asked her. She just looked at me dead in the eyes and let out a sharp breath.

"Rafael called me just a minute ago, he's asking when are you coming home," she

started. She bit her lips and continued. "I said you'll be coming home tomorrow and he said that you should check your phone."

I rolled my eyes and fixed my shirt. "No need."

She looked at me frustrated. "Sure kana ba talaga?" she asked conflictedly. I squinted, scanning her from head to toe.

"Do you know something? Does Rafael tell you anything?" I accused. Her eyes widened.

"W-wala naman," she stammered, the suspense in my chest only grow. Tanginang Rafael. "Punta tayo don sa may amm...manok. Last day mo na natin dito kaya sulitin na natin to." And yep there she goes, she bolted.

But manok?

Hindi ko nalang sya pinansin at nagpatuloy sa pag tingin-tingin. Halos ilang oras din kaming nandito dahil ayaw magpaawat ni Memere kaka picture. Nang mapagod napagpasyahan na naming umuwi. It was fun and all pero ang sakit na nang paa ko.

"Let's go to the bar," Sloane whispered. I smirked at her and agreed.

"Baka mahuli tayo, hintayin muna nating makatulog sil-"

"HOY! Anong hintayin ha!"

Napatalon kami sa gulat nang may sumigaw malapit sa tenga namin. Napahawak si Sloane sakanyang dibdib at mahinang hinampas sa balikat si Memere.

"Memere naman! tangina I almost peed my pants!" singhal nito habang hawak-hawak

pa rin ang dibdib.

Tinaasan lang sya ng kilay ni Memere and crossed her hands around her chest. "Walang lalabas. Maaga ang flight natin bukas," she said firmly.

We both disagree in unison.

"Aw men." Said Sloane.

Napapalatak si Memere. "Pasok." She commanded kaya wala kaming magawa kundi ang pumasok nalang.

Sloane complains but she can do nothing to our grandmother. Wala kasi ang iba kaya hindi kami makaalma. If the whole Sevilliana cousins are together, Memere is no match from us.

"Impake nalang tayo, inang yan pakiramdam ko ang bilis lang natin dito. Pag pikit ko nasa Costa Rica ako tas pag mulat ko nasa Pilipinas nanaman ako. May makikita nanaman akong mga maasim. Balik nalang akong Canada, bat ba ako sasama sainyo." Si Sloane.

Hinayaan ko nalang syang dumada. Ganyan talaga yan pag hindi pinayagan sa gusto nya. Actually, thankful ako dahil narinig kami ni Memere. Wala ako sa mood makipag interact sa ibang tao.

I packed my things that night, a heavy feeling starting to creep in my chest again. Like it had been there but I wasn't paying attention at ngayon lang nagparamdam.

Napadpad ang mata ko sa bedside table ko kong na saan naroon ang cellphone ko. It had been sitting there for too long. Tumayo ako at naglakad papuntang bedside. I grabbed my phone, pinagmasdan ko ito ng ilang segundo before I dragged my thumb

to its power button.

I bit my lips. I lowered my head at tinapon sa maleta ang cellphone. Ayaw ko. Ayaw ko pa.

"Mag-ingat ka dito tanga ka pa naman," sermon ni Memere kay Paps.

He insisted na maiwan nalang sya dito para asikasuhin ang resort. Inakbayan nya si Memere at hinalikan ang tuktok ng kanyang ulo.

"Iloveyoutoo."

Memere pursed her lips and nudged him. Napangiti nalang kami.

"Oa."

Napailing nalang ako at nauna nang maglakad papasok sa kotse. I enter the car and put on my headphones. I opened my spotify and played a random song.

"You're the perfect melody,

The only harmony I wanna hear

You're my favorite part of me"

"Ay puta."

Agad kong tinanggal ang headphone ko. Wala akong balak maging sad boy ngayon tangina. Iniskip ko nalang ang song at binalik ang headphone ko.

I glanced outside the window and saw my grandparents were still fighting. Napailing

nalang ako habang nangingiti.

"Men, ang corny nila," rinig kong saad ni Sloane ng pumasok sya sa sasakyan.

"Inggit ka?" I smirked at her. Her eyes landed on me, matunog syang ngumisi.

"Asa, mas bata ako sakanila bat naman ako maiinggit." She reclined her body but her eyes lingered outside the window. A broad smile plastered on her face.

I softly rested my back. Sa pamilya namin, sina Memere at Paps lang ang may healthy relationship. I feel like nasa kanila lahat ng biyaya kaya minamalas kami.

We watched as they kissed and embraced each other goodbyes.

"Ayosin mo buhay mo Austine," Paps pointed at me.

"Got it." I saluted.

He nodded. "Good. Mag-ingat kayo."

We all nodded. Nang makapasok na si Memere agad kaming humayo papuntang airport dahil baka mahuli kami sa flight namin.

7 am pa lang naman and 10 am pa ang flight namin.

As the engine roared. Hindi ko mapigilang matahin ang maleta ko sa likod kong nasaan nandon ang cellphone ko. Bumuntong hininga ako at hinayaan nalang na kumalma ang sarili.

I shouldn't overthink things. It's useless.

There's this gnawing feeling that's been squeezing my chest for almost a week ever since I decided to turn off my phone. The uncomfortable feeling continued when we boarded the plane. It keeps me awake, it makes me anxious. My hand trembles each time my heart beats. It was the worst.

The hours that followed felt like torture, I was relentless until our plane landed.

I don't know what to do. I just keep my head down as we walked. I don't know what I'm expecting but I don't wanna face whatever it is.

"Oh, umuulan?" boses ni Sloane.

Napatingala ako sa langit. The once cleared sky turned ashen with dark clouds hiding the burning sun with its heavy dark coated veil that turned the world beneath the sky cloudy.

I held out my hand nang unti-unti nang pumatak ang ulan sa lupa.

I smiled, knowing well that these raindrops are my tears.

Nahihirapan akong umiyak, ayaw kong umiyak.

I don't want to wallow in my agony. I've been neglecting it until the soft cloud inside my head became heavier and heavier as I continue to deny that I'm not ok.

"Umuulan na pero nandyan pa rin sya. Sino ba ang inaantay ng batang yan. Halos araw-araw nandyan lang sya sa labas," napantig ang tenga ko sa sinabi ng body guard ng makadaan ako sakanila.

"Lapitan mo nga, kahapon pa sya dyan hindi pa umaalis. Kawawa naman."

I ignored them and made my way out to the airport. Nakasunod sakin ang dalawa, bitbit ko ang dalawang maleta habang na kay Sloane ang bags. Disney princess si Memere.

"I think mas lalakas pa tong ulan, we better hurr—nice what a jinx." Hindi na natapos ni Memere ang kanyang sasabihin when the heavy rains fall.

I closed my eyes when the harsh wind welcomed me. I breathe in the air para kahit papaano mabawasan ang bigat na nasa dibdib ko.

"Should we call Tito Harry?" I said referring to my grandma's driver.

She nodded and fished out her phone. "I forgot to make a call, I'm sorry." Tumango nalang kami.

She dialed Tito Harry's phone, it took a few rings before he answered his phone.

"Harry, can you pick us up here at the airport?...what? huh? Hold on hindi kita marinig." Bumaling sya saamin at tinuro ang cellphone nya.

We nodded kaya pumasok syang muli sa airport.

"I remembered the myth that I heard from someone..." napabaling ang tingin ko kay Sloane.

Her eyes flickered as she watched each rain drop to the floor.

"...she said that kaya umuulan dahil may isang god daw na umiiyak. He lost his wife and he did all means to find her and when he failed, he just sit at his throne and cried. The rain is his tears, the wind is his longing for his wife." She chuckled and rubbed her arms. "Malungkot ata sya ngayon."

I grinned. "Can't believe na naniniwala kapa sa mga ganyan."

"Myth nga diba! myth! sapakin kita eh." Inambahan nya ako ng suntok, pero bago pa man tumama ang kamao nya sa balikat ko isang sigaw ang pumukaw sa atensyon namin.

"Tho! pumasok ka muna dito! jusko ang lakas ng ulan oh!"

Sloane gasped. My heart hammered in my chest. Dahan-dahan kong lumingon following her line of vision.

Through the blurry veil of the rain. I saw someone standing from a distance. Drenched. Pale. Like a ghost carved out of the past I fought to bury.

I tried to swallow the lump in my throat, my breath hitched. His eyes, though far away locked on mine. He tilted his head to see me. His eyes melancholy and unblinkingly search my face.

Unti-unti nyang binaybay ang distansyang namamagitan sa amin. I took a step backward ready to run away but Sloane, held my back and shook his head.

"Talk." She mouthed.

I begged her with my eyes but she just shook her head again.

I told myself I'd never look back.

I told myself I'd moved on.

But in that one look, all the lies I clung to dissolved.

"S-Sloane please..."

She smiled softly and caressed my back.

"It's ok, it's ok." She hushed.

She eyed me and nodded before leaving me here. His stares burned my skin.

"B-bat ngayon kalang?" his voice broke.

He took a step closer to me. When our eyes meet, he smiled softly. Napakagat ako sa labi ko ng makitang ang lalim na ng mga mata nya. Pagod, sakit, pangungulila, paghihirap. His once composed self was now gone.

"Anong ginagawa mo dito?" I said through gritted teeth.

Sensing my anger he took a step back.

"H-hinihintay kita. Wala akong kakayanang sundan ka sa Costa Rica k-kaya naghihintay ako araw-araw dito. N-nagbabasakaling makita ka pagdating mo..." he uttered in a low, painful voice. He lowered his head. "Ang tanga ko...napaka tanga ko."

I balled my fist. "Umalis kana. Tangina. Ayaw kitang makita." Madiing bangit ko sa bawat salita.

He persistently shook his head. "Please let me explain everything. A-ayaw ko ng ganito pagod na ako, baby. Please pakinggan mo ako..." he pleaded. Balak nyang kunin ang kamay ko but I retreated. Pain, crossed his face.

"Pagod?!!" I let out a bitter laugh. "Tangina, sino ang pinatawa mo? Kong may pagod

man saating dalawa, AKO yun!" I emphasized the word 'ako.'

He approached me but I step backwards. Napakagat sya sa labi nya at nagmamakaawa akong tinignan.

"K-kahit wag mo na akong patawarin, just hear me out please. Baby, please..." his voice quivered. Unti-unting pumatak ang luha nya.

The ache in my chest swelled louder than the rain hammering the rooftops. It was relentless. Raw. Thunderous.

"I don't wanna hear another nonsense from you, Knox. Umalis kana. I don't need your fucking explanation. I don't need you. I fucking hate you for making me feel like this." Galit kong saad at pahagya syany tinalikuran.

Akmang hahakbang na sana ako papalayo when his cold and trembling hand caught my wrist. My eyes widen when he hugged my waist, kneeling.

"P-parang awa mo na. Pakinggan mo ako. H-hindi ko kaya..." napakagat ako sa labi ko ng marinig ko syang humikbi.

I swallowed the lump in my throat and looked away. "U-umuwi kana, don't make things harder for the both of us."

He shook his head once again. "P-please talk to me..." basag na basag ang boses nya kaya unti-unti nang namumuo ang luha sa mata ko.

"After all this time ngayon pa talaga? Wala kang ibang ginawa kundi pagtulakan ako papalayo saying you hated me.

Pinamukha mo saakin na si Zyran lang ang pwedeng pumasok sa puso mo habang

nagmamakaawa akong tignan mo ako, pagkatapos non you made me believe n-na unti-unti ko nang naakyat ang pader mo.

Only for you to push me away again...g-ganon ba ako insignificant sayo?

" I questioned him through a breaking voice.

Nanahimik sya kaya mas lalo akong napatawa ng pagak. Putangina.

"Sya pa rin pala talaga?" nanghihina kong sambit. Pagak akong napangiti at hinayaang kumawala ang luhanang kanina ko pa pinipiligan.

"After everything we've done, sya pa rin pala ang nasa isip mo? ang hirap mo namang intindihin...napaka hirap. You restore the painting for what reason? Dahil nagguilty ka? o dahil trip mo lang paglaruan ako? you knew damn well how to ruin me again and again. Ang gago mo, napaka gago mo."

Umiling sya habang yakap-yakap pa rin ang beywang ko.

"Austine, saksi ang...l-langit kong gaano kahirap saakin sa tuwing tinutulak kita papalayo. Nasasaktan kita pero mas nasasaktan ako dahil ako ang dahilan ng mga luha mo...hindi mo alam kong gaano kabigat saakin sa tuwing nakikita kong umiiyak ka dahil saakin."

Nanghihina syang tumayo at naluluha akong hinarap. He smiled weakly, he wanted to reach me but he retreated his hand.

"You're not climbing any walls, Austine, because there wasn't even a wall to begin with.

You're like swimming in an ocean, filled with relentless waves of anxiety and self

doubt.

Nakakatawa, the fact that I'm anchored in the middle of it all silently praying na sana matagpuan mo ako and bring me back to the shore.

.. it was ironic. " He lowered his head, voice ragged and hurt.

I bit my lips, I wanted to look away but his tears made it impossible for me to avert my gaze.

"...pero deep down I knew I had nothing to offer.

No lifeboat, no life jacket, no map, not even a steady hand to hold you.

Kaya, I did the only thing I knew that's best for you: I stretch my ocean, I made the tides stronger, the currents colder, the wind harsher-deliberately pushing you farther and farther away from me.

Dahil alam kong you deserve someone else.

..at hindi ako yun...takot ako...natakot ako. " Hikbi nya.

I felt the ache bloom all over again, like a wound that never really healed opened up again.

"I am not worth risking for?" I whispered, voice cracking as my heart already did.

Agad syang umiling at hinawakan ang kamay ko. He brought my hands to his forehead.

"I would risk my whole life to have you, Austine. S-sadyang natakot ako, takot na

takot ako..."

Nanggagalaita ko syang tinulak papalayo saakin. I clenched my fist, I stopped myself from punching him.

"Takot? putangina! please, umalis kana Knox. Ayaw na kitang makita."

Hearing my words nanlaki ang kanyang mata at dali-daling hinablot ang kamay ko. His cold hand sent shivers down my spine. I tried to yank it off but he held it firmly, animoy takot na mawala ako once he let go of my head.

"No...no, no, no please...hayaan mo muna akong mag explain..." he begged.

I shook my head.

"I've heard enough, Knox." Sapilitan kong kinuha ang kamay nya sa kamay ko.

"A-Austine..." he achingly called my name. "P-pwede bang kahit ngayon lang pakinggan mo ako? Parang-awa mo na. H-hindi ko na kaya..." he broke down. He kneeled in front of me and begged me to listen to him.

"Mawala na ang lahat wag lang ikaw, Austine.

K-kakayanin ko ang lahat-lahat basta wag mo lang akong iwan.

Kakayanin kong magpaalila sakanila as long as you remained unharm.

I can take hundreds of slashing as long as you remained unbleed.

K-kakayanin ko ang lahat lahat dahil alam kong nasa tabi pa rin kita after all those painful experiences . . .

...mahirap. Nahihirapan na akong magpanggap.

Nahihirapan na ako sa lahat ng bagay. Hirap na hirap na ako.

Pero, sa tuwing nakikita kita—nasa tabi kita I feel a sense of peace, the kind of feeling na pakiramdam ko walang kamay na nakapulupot sa leeg ko.

It was so peaceful to the point na nakakatakot. " He finally confesses.

Isang hikbi ang kumawala sa bibig ko at nanghihinang humakbang papalayo. But each step my heart felt heavier kaya mas pinili ko nalang tumigil.

"Kaya ba mas pinili mong maging duwag?" I chuckled but it only came out croaked.

"Oo." Pag-amin nya. "I kept pretending like I didn't care, because caring meant vulnerability. I can't afford to be weak." Mahina nyang saad.

Matunog anong ngumisi, magsasalita na sana ako ng boses sya ulit.

"I can't be weak because I can't protect you if that happens.

I've been a prisoner dahil sa kasalanan ng tatay natin.

I wanted you since the first day you threw those rocks at me.

I wanted me since the very first day you smiled at me.

I wanted you for as long as I can remember.

I fucking wanted you every seconds of my life. " He uttered weakly.

Nanlaki ang mata ko. Nagugulohan syang tinignan.

"W-what do you mean?"

He looked up, met my eyes and smiled. A smile that didn't reach his eyes, and just then I noticed the suffering he'd endured. The pain that often goes unnoticed because of his cold and unreadable eyes.

"I never liked Zyran..." His voice cracked-barely louder than the rain still echoing in the distance. "Not once. Not even for a second. And I never... never had feelings for him."

I blinked. My breath caught in my throat as he took a shaky step forward.

"When you misunderstood that I had feelings for him, I used that as a means to push you away-to hurt you. Dahil, alam kong mas masasaktan ka sa mga malalaman mo pagkasama mo ako. Pag pinili mo ako."

He paused, pain flickering behind his eyes like a dying flame trying to survive the harsh wind. With his trembling hands-fingers ice cold from fear, from the rain, from regret -he cupped my face

"When I woke up and found out that you were gone, I panicked..."mas lalong nanginginig ang kanyang kamay.

"Nag panic ako..." his voice broke completely.

"...Nagmakaawa ako kina Rayne at Rafael o kahit sino mang malapit sayo.

I begged them to just know where you were.

Kahit na anong paraan... kahit masaktan ulit.

.. I just needed to see you. P-pero wala akong ibang magawa kundi ang hintayin ka dahil wala akong kakayahang sundan ka sa ibang bansa. "

He looked at me then-eyes swollen with everything he'd never said.

"I thought pushing you away would protect you from the mess I was. But all I did was ruin the only thing that ever felt like home."

"...but he made me do it. He fucking force me to stay away from you." He said regretfully.

I was about to open my mouth when Memere's voice rang. Nanglalaki ang mata nya habang nakatingin saaming dalawa ni Knox.

"Ito na nga ba ang sinasabi ko eh. Nagkamali nanaman silang dalawa."

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

"Bigyan mo ng towel ang bata, Menerva." Utos ni Memere ng makapasok kami sa bahay nya. Agad namang tumango si Nanay Menerva.

We brought Knox along, I wanted to hear so much from him. I want him to explain his side. I want the storm inside of my head to settle.

The whole ride he was looking at me. It made me uncomfortable. Para syang magnanakaw na naghihintay ng tamang oras para sumalakay. I acted like he wasn't there, like I didn't know that he's been trying to grab my hand or how tears streamed down his face every time I ignored him.

"All I knew is that you are acquaintances, but I didn't know na iba pala ang namamagitan sainyong dalawa," she sat at the single sofa when we reached the living room. She leaned, crossed her legs and raised us an eyebrow.

Umikot si Sloane sa likod ni Memere at ginaya sya kaya halos maitaas ko ang kilay ko.

"Kaya nga." She said

I bit my lips and lowered my head. I...I don't know what to say. I don't know how to explain what she saw at the airport.

"I like your grandson, Se?orita."

Agad na pumikit ang ulo ko sa direksyon ni Knox. My eyes widened but his gaze remained focused on Memere. He said it with nothing but the yearning in his eyes,

the years of silent suffering finally broke free. Memere eyed him, I was speechless. How come?

He eyed me for a second, a soft subtle smile escaped his lips. Agad akong nag-iwas ng tingin.

"I see. Hindi ka pa rin nagbabago," she stood up, timing naman na dumating si Nanay Menerva dala-dala ang towel na para kay Knox. She was about to hand it to him when Memere grabbed it first and approached Knox.

"Both you and your father are the same." She uttered melancholy. Pinulupot nya ang towel sa ulo ni Knox, and patted his shoulder. "I'm sorry that you had to live in isolation just because of what they've done."

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko.

"Who?" I asked. Napabaling silang dalawa saakin. Sinalubong ko ang mata ni Knox but he averted his gaze to his finger. I clicked my tongue and threw my head back. I eyed Memere but she shook her head.

"It's not my story to tell," she shrugged.

My head whipped back sa lalaking halos ayaw nang salubongin ang mata ko. "What the fuck is wrong really?" I asked impatiently. "Bat parang may alam kayo na hindi ko alam?"

Pabalik-balik ang tingin ko sa kanilang dalawa. What the fuck is wrong with them? Pakiramdam ko para akong bata na walang kamuwang-muwang sa nangyayari sa paligid ko.

"Fuck!" naibulalas ko nalang nang walang ni isa ang sumagot saakin.

Nilapitan ko si Knox, he took a step backwards, but I stopped him from taking another step by grabbing his collar.

"You. Upstairs. Let's fucking talk. You better tell me everything or else this is the last time you will ever see me, got it?" Matigas kong anas sakanya. Hearing what I said, his eyes widened at dali-daling tumango.

"I promise, wag ka lang umalis." He whispered barely above a murmur.

I watched how a drop of rainwater cascaded from his hair down nose until it reached his pale lips. Bumuntong hininga ako at tumalikod. He followed me immediately; I looked past my shoulder and saw him intently watching my every move kaya napaiwas ako ng tingin.

"Baby..."

I tsked. "Stop calling me baby if you don't even mean it." Naiinis kong singhal sakanya.

He pursed his lips feeling hurt and lowered his head.

"I-I waited for you Austine, bat bigla kang umalis?" mahina nyang saad.

I clicked my tongue and grabbed his collar harshly. Nanliliksi ang mga mata kong nakasalubong sa mata nya. He flinched.

"Why are you asking me that?! Putangina Knox! ikaw ang dahilan kong b-bakit paulit-ulit akong nasasaktan tapos may gana ka pang tanongin ako nyan?" My eyes flickered with anger, mas lalong humigpit ang pagkakahawak ko sa kwelyo nya.

This lips trembled, bumagsak ang mata nya at dahan-dahang hinaplos ang kamao ko.

"I'll explain everything... I promised. This time I was done hiding..." he looked at me deep in the eyes. " I'm done pretending."

Saglitang lumaki ang mata ko. Pabalang kong binitawan ang kwelyo nya. His head was turned to the side. I heard his deep sigh and slowly turned his head towards me.

"That time when I woke up in the middle of the night and found your room empty my heart ultimately stopped, Austine.

I couldn't begin to fathom the possibilities that you left me.

..." Simula nya at unti-unti akong nilapitan.

"For days, I couldn't sleep. Your presence haunts me and it made me miserable knowing even your shadow was nowhere to be see-"

I cut him off. "So you just like the idea of me being there for you?" Sarkastiko kong saad.

Agad syang umiling at kinagat muli ang kanyang labi.

"I like the idea of you, Austine. I like the idea of embracing you, loving you and keeping you safe," he said lovingly yet achingly.

I furrowed my brows to suppress my tears. "T-then why did you hurt me?"

Finally, Finally natanong ko na. He looked at me deep in the eye, a surge of emotions resurfaced. I took a step forward and watched how he struggled to find yours to answer my question. If it wasn't intentional then I wanted to know what his reason was.

"Answer me, Knox..." I calmly uttered yet somehow harshly.

He looked at me first before reaching for his pocket. And with a trembling hand, he handed me a photograph. An old photograph. He swallowed and urged me to get it in his hands. Binitawan ko sya and I grabbed the photo in his hand with a furrowed brow.

"What the fuck is this?" I whispered and flipped the photo to see it.

As soon as my eyes landed on the two people in the photograph, I froze. Nanlaki ang mata ko habang hindi makapaniwalang nakatingin sa laman ng larawan. It was a man who looked exactly like Knox, the only difference was their eyes, and beside him was a boy who somehow looks like me.

The photo was taken at the flower field, with both of them facing each other. Isang bugkos ng rosas ang namamagitan sakanilang dalawa, parehas silang nakahawak dito habang nakangiti sa isa't-isa. They looked so young and...in love.

"It was our dad's." He began. Mas lalong lumalim ang kunot sa noo ko dahil sa sinabi nya.

"I-it can't be..." I whispered. Kamuntikan nang bumigay ang paa ko buti nalang nakahawak ako agad sa pader.

Him and who? Knox's father? How come? what the fuck?

I was shaken to my core by the revelation. It wasn't just shock-it was as if the ground beneath me had split open, and everything I thought I knew came crashing down.

I eyed him as if denying what I just heard and saw, nalukot na rin ang larawan sa kamay ko. He nodded his head and just like that, my mouth gaped open.

Unti-unti syang lumapit saakin. "My father's bitterness drives him to project his pain onto me.

I once saw you at the shore, you looked heavenly yet somehow the tears had dried up to your face, nong mga panahong yun I thought to myself that 'ah, this boy is pretty.

Ever since that day, I never did once stop coming to the same place just to see you.

..." he trailed off and he finally held my hand softly.

My heart hammered in my chest as soon as our eyes met. Naalala ko na lagi akong nasa dalampasigan simula nung namatay si mommy and ever since I saw a boy standing from a distance. Watching me.

It was Knox. The boy I almost approached but chose not to and let him watch me.

For a year.

"...My dad found out about my frequent visit at the beach and I told him about you. You were famous at our place since childhood, kaya talagang kilala kita..." he chuckled and I remained silent.

"... he found out who you are. He forbade me from repeating what he sees as a 'mistake' and that is falling in love with you. " He breathed. Slowly... his tears broke free.

Napakagat ako sa labi ko at nanginginig na inabot ang kanyang pisngi upang punasan ang kanyang luha.

"Ayaw ko...ayaw kong tumigil non," he grabbed my hand and nudge his face towards it. "B-but he threatened me. He threatened me Baby, he said he'll do anything in his

power to make you suffer if I don't stop." Humikbi sya kaya mas lalong sumikip ang dibdib ko.

"I don't want that. Ayaw ko non, Austine.

A-Alam kong nahihirapan kana non kaya ayaw kong dumagdag.

So I left. For years I kept my distance but sometimes I couldn't help but wanting to see you.

..My father was furious because after all those years my feelings for you remained.

That's the main reason kong bakit nandon ako sa paaralang yun, he locked me up," he looked up and cupped my face.

"Baby, please believe me. I have loved you since the very beginning. God knows how happy I was when I saw you that day." He desperately searched my face for an answer whether I believed him or not. Seeing me not reacting, his shoulder loosened.

"Y-you don't believe me?" nanghihina nyang saad.

Humugot ako ng malalim na hininga. "Yun na yun lahat?"

"Huh?"

"I said kong yun na yun lahat?" I repeated. He bit his lip and fiddled with his fingers.

Marahan nyang sinalubong ang mata ko, he smiled weakly. "Despite the happiness I felt that day, your dad warned me to stay away from you dahil nandidiri sya sa tuwing nakikita nya ako. Ayaw nyang makilala mo ako at malaman kung ano mang sikretong tinatago nya..." he lowered his head.

And I just stood there, frozen. My dad? his dad? But what shocked me the most is the fact that he loves me first, he yearns for me first. My affection isn't rejected, it was suppressed by those people who view his affection as wrong.

I didn't realize until now that he carries the world on his shoulders and it's taking a toll on him. I didn't realize na mas masakit pala ang pinagdadaanan nya. I was blind-more like we were held captive by our father's past.

He's afraid. He's suffering-so am I. It wasn't our fault, nor it's his fault. None of us is at fault. We were chained by our father's painful experiences. I wasn't aware to any of it kaya tanging nararamdaman ko lang ang inaalala ko.

We are the same, we yearn for that little thing called love only for it to break us apart.

Tuloyan nang bumigay ang mga binti ko at napaluhod nalang ako. Nanginginig pa rin ang kalamnan ko dahil sa nalaman ko.

"B-bakit sila naghiwalay?" I tried to sound calm but my voice cracked.

Pinigilan nya ang kanyang hikbi at lumuhod din sa harap ko. Maingat nya akong niyakap, I did not resist. Hinayaan ko nalang sya.

There's a moment of silence between us, his chest rising and falling, probably contemplating whether to say it or not but I just nudge him and he heaves a sharp breath.

"He got your mom pregnant. And when dad found out, the issue escalated and hindi nagtagal he got my mom pregnant just because he wanted to take revenge on your dad. He forced me to be better at everything-"

Tinakpan ko ang bibig nya ng palad ko, I heard enough.

Mariin kong naipikit ang mga mata ko. I bit my lips so hard that it started to bled. Putangina. Kaya naman pala parang basura ang tingin nya sa amin. He wasn't a good father nor a husband, he's the worst.

Kaya din ba galit ang tatay ni Knox sakin? Was it the very reason why he forbade Knox from freely loving me?

Was it my fault?

Was it?

Isang hikbi ang kumawala sa bibig ko at mahigpit syang niyakap. He stiffen for a moment.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know," I murmured through a broken voice.

Hinigpitan nya ang pagkakayakap nya sakin at hinalikan ang tuktok ng aking ulo.

"W-wala kang kasalanan. Staying away from you is the best thing that I've done because I get to see you shine at what you do.

I get to see you enjoy life without having to carry the past mistake made by our fathers.

And I'm glad I did that, I let my father control me, I let him put the world on my shoulder just so you could live the life that you deserve," he calmly uttered as if all his suffering doesn't matter.

Mahina ko syang itinulak na syang ikinagulat nyang muli. His tears stained face welcomed me. Napakagat ako sa labi ko at inabot ang kwelyo nya.

"Stop making it sound like all your suffering didn't matter. Putangina, you don't have to carry everything alone." Halos nanggagala itong saad. "Wala na akong paki, it doesn't matter if they force you to stay away from me..."

Napatigil ako dahil sa sobrang bilis ng tibok ng puso ko. Hindi dahil sa kung ano mang dahilan kundi dahil sa galit na namumuo sa puso ko.

Parents should never project their own mistakes onto their children, nor let them suffer for the choices they never made. Their children were clueless so why must they carry the weight of a past that isn't theirs.

With an aching heart I cupped Knox's face and gently brushed my lips onto his. Pinagtagpo ko ang noo namin at marahan syang tinignan. I wiped the tears that escaped his eyes and gently kissed his swollen eyes.

"No child deserves to bleed for the wounds that their parents refuse to heal. The past should end with those who lived with it and not echo through the hearts of those who didn't."

We are victims. I was hurting but he was bleeding, that's the difference.

"Let's defy them. I want us unchained from their past mistakes and live the life we want to live," I whisper na syang ikinatango nya.

With trembling lips and hands, he gently cupped my face. "Y-yes please."

He buried his face on my neck at don umiyak ulit. Umupo ako sa sahig and hugged him tightly as he released all his pent up emotions. Tumingala ako para pigilan ang luha ng nagbabadyang kumawala muli.

He loved me too much kaya nya nagawang saluhin ang lahat na para bang wala lang

sa kanya. Kong sana alam ko lang, hindi ko sana hinayaang magdusa din sya. I'd do anything to save him, to let him breathe, and to let him live freely and calmly.

Kumalas sya sa pagkakayakap sa akin at pinahiran ang sariling luha. His hands lingered for a moment, as if afraid to let go completely. His eyes shimmered with emotions he finally let go, but most of all, a joy he could no longer hide.

He cupped my face, thumb brushing softly over my cheek, he leaned in to place a kiss on my forehead, it was warm, reassuring, full of love that words had failed to say for so long.

"I'm sorry...for all the hurt I caused you," he whispered, voice trembling like his hands.

I shook my head slowly, placing my hands over his. "You didn't mean to hurt me," I said softly. "You hurt me because you had too, you had no other choice."

He looked at me-really looked in my eyes and let his heart speak freely without fear.

Pinagtagpo nya ang noo namin ulit, we smiled at each other and with a voice full of tenderness he said, "In every hue of yesterday and tomorrow, I will always love you through crosswinds and current and in every storms in between.

Because it's always been you, Austine. Always have been, always will be. "

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 3:06 am*

“Bakit ka umalis?” he asked as he nuzzled his face on my stomach. Humigpit ang pakakayakap nya sa beywang ko kaya napabuntong hininga nalang ako.

“Tumalikod ka nga muna,” I urged him but he wouldn't budge. Nakaupo siya ngayon sa pagitan ng hita ko, kakatapos nya lang maligo and I'm trying to dry his hair.

“Bakit nga muna kasi?” maktol nya na parang bata. He looked up and pursue his lips and bat his eyelashes. I furrowed my brows, aba?

Napabuntong hininga ulit ako at nag iwas ng tingn.

“I got jealous,” mahinang pag-amin ko. Minata ko sya at nakitang malalim ang tingin niya sakín habang nakangiti.

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko at binato ang towel sa mukha nya na syang ikinahalakhak nya.

“Tanginang yan, nagseselos na nga yung tao tas tatawanan mo pa!” inis kong singhal sa kanya.

He kissed my stomach giddly, “You're so cute baby. So much so that I wanted to eat you,” napitlag ako dahil bahagya nyang kinagat ang tagiliran ko.

“The fuck!” Singhal kong muli at pilit syang tinutulak papalayo, though there's no strength to it kaya napaiwas nalang ako ng tingin.

Pinasok nya ang kanyang ulo sa loob ng T-shirt ko kaya napasinghap ako when his

warm breath touched my skin. I groan and threw my head back. Humugot akong malalim na hininga bago sya sipain palabas sa T-shirt ko.

“What was that?” reklamo nya when he hit the ground. Bahagya akong napairap.

“My affection for you?” I said coolly. He purse his lips again and sat beside me. Niyakap nya ang beywang ko at binaon ang kanyang mukha sa leeg ko.

“Then tell me why you got jealous...hmm” he inhaled kaya napapikit ako.

“I-I heard a rumor saying na si...si ano daw...ano si...fuck!” frustrated kong saad.

I just can't admit that I flew all the way to Costa Rica because of some rumor I heard about them. It was hard for me to say it since I already knew that he never liked Zyran. It would be easy if it was then, pero ngayon? damn.

“Hmm? What baby?” he cooed.

“Si Zyran daw wallpaper mo tas nong nakita ko kayo sa canteen, napakaganda ng ngiti mo kaya I figured that sya pa rin pala talaga ang gusto mo despite all the things that happened to us...” mahina kong saad, enough for him to hear me.

I closed my eyes tightly waiting for his laughter.

But seconds later he let go of me kaya napamulat ako.

I saw him walking to the restroom kaya nagtataka ko syang sinundan.

I leaned against the door frame and watched his back.

He rummaged through his wet pants and took out a phone wrapped in a plastic bag. Nanlaki ang mata ko dahil sa nakita.

Did he do that kasi alam nyang mababasa sya? Huminga ako ng malalim para pigilan ang tawa ko. He looked so worn out that time pero nagawa nya pang ibalot ang cellphone nya sa plastic.

I held my breath when he turned around to see me. “Buti naman at hindi pinasok ng tubig,” he murmur. Maluha-luha akong umiwas ng tingin. Fuck! tawang-tawa ako dahil sa plastic.

I clear my throat when he walk towards me, umayos din ako ng tayo. He gently smiled at me at hinapit ang beywang ko. Tinapon nya ang plastic sa basurahan kaya napaiwas ulit ako ng tingin.

“Let's sit. I want to clear things up. It's bothering me,” inalalayan nya akong umupo kaya napataas ang isang kilay ko. May sakit?

He sat beside me and opened his phone, as soon as the light spread my eyes instinctively widened.

He chuckled and rested his head on my shoulder. “You looked good.” He praised and glanced at me.

It was a photo of mine sitting by the cafeteria window in my uniform—a drink cradle in my hands, smiling softly. The sunlight spilled through the glass window casting golden hue on my face and skin as the photo was captured from a distance.

“It’s always been you, dummy.” He handed me his phone. He kissed the side of my head. “You don’t need to worry about me falling out of love because I've been praying for his day to come for years, baby,” he whispered sincerely.

I closed my eyes for a second, I could feel the warmth from his words creeping in my chest. I snake my arms around his shoulder and buried my head in his neck.

His lavender scent filled my nose as soon as I inhaled. I chuckle, ang laking tao tas lavender ang body wash.

Nanay Menerva bought the wrong body wash, Memere already has a ton of body wash and Sloane refused to wear such feminine scent kaya sa akin napunta to.

“How about you? I heard na you have a lot of ex girlfriends. Tas sobrang close pa kayo ni Abi, so close na pwede na kayong mag halikan sa tuwing magkasama kayo,” he taunted kaya halos manigas ang katawan ko.

I laugh nervously. “Wala naman akong iniyakan sa kanila, ikaw pa lang tsaka wag kang mag-alala kay Abi, tomboy yun,” I said sweetly. He eyed me suspiciously.

“Tomboy sus...”

“Trust me Knox, ikaw lang talaga ang mahal ko.” I explained. I saw how he stifled a smile and looked away.

“Mas marami ka palang experience,” parang nagtatampo nyang saad. Mahina akong napatawa, oh god, how I dreamed of seeing his side of him.

I cupped his face, “Wag kang mema dyan, ikaw first kiss ko tangina.”

Nanlaki ang mata nya at unti-unting gumuhit ang malaking ngiti sa labi nya. “Talaga?!” his eyes sparkled kaya napangiti ako.

“Yes. Talagang-talaga,” I chuckled.

I may have a lot of girlfriend back then but I never touched nor kissed them. It felt so wrong to touch a woman if your feelings and intention with her is not genuine enough. I wasn't genuine so I never touched them. I respect them, that's all there is to it.

“Really?” He bit his lips and pulled my collar.

Tumango ako,”Really.”

We smiled, and with that we shared a soft and tender kiss, a kiss so tender that a tear escaped my eyes. This one is far warmer from the ones he had before. Pure intention, genuine and passionate. My chest clenched, not because I was hurting but because I'm so happy right now.

“Nasan wallet mo? pupunta tayong mall tas wala ka man lang dalang pera? ayos ka ah, akala mo ililibre kita? no way!” ang oa na si Sloane.

I shrugged my shoulder at sumandal sa hood ng sasakyan. It is the next day and Knox just got back from their house. Pinauwi sya ni Memere para kumuha ng mga gamit nya, sasamahan ko sana pero nakatulog agad ako.

“I got mine, don't worry,” I said. Tinaasan nya ako ng kilay.

“Asan?”

I pointed at our door entrance, her eyebrows arched again. She was about to open her mouth but Knox walked out from the door, fixing his shirt.

“Boyfriend.” I shrugged my shoulders.

Her mouth gaped open and I just smirked.

“Told you I got my wallet,” I winked at her.

Madaming pera si Knox, the only reason kung bakit hindi niya ako nasundan sa Costa Rica is because wala syang passport. I laughed mentally, tangina talaga.

Knox looked up, agaran syang napangiti ng makita ako. I put both of my hands inside of my pocket and walk towards him.

“Baby, how do I look?” bati nya at agad na hinapit ang beywang ko ng makalapit ako sakanya.

Pinasadahan ko ng tingin ang mukha nya haggang sa bumaba ang tingin ko sa kwelyo ng polo nya.

“Parang bata,” I murmured and fixed his collar.

“I didn't fix that intentionally so that I could see you do that,” he whispered and grinned. Mahina akong napatawa at tinapik ang balikat nya.

“Nice move buddy,” I laughed.

“Buddy and not baby?” kunot noong tanong nya, I pursed my lips and tapped his shoulders again.

“Tara na naghihintay na si Sloane sa atin,” Tinulak ko sya papalayo at nauna nang naglakad papuntang kotse.

“Ang daya,” he whispered enough for me to hear kaya napangiti ako.

“Wow, salamat at natapos na din ang lambingan nyo ano. PDA masyado, oh edi kayo na may lablayp! kainis,” maktol nito at naunang pumasok sa kotse.

Umikot ako sa passenger seat at don umupo. Pagpasok ni Knox, agad kong binigay sa kanya ang susi ng sasakyan.

He looked at me and grabbed my hand instead at pinatakan yun ng halik na syang ikinatikhim ko. He chuckled and grabbed the key.

“Wow ulit, pinapamukha nyo talaga na single ako no?” reaction ni Sloane.

“I think you should explore the bar more often, malay mo nandonn ang para sayo,” ani Knox habang nagmamaneho.

Umirap si Sloane, “Buti sana kong nandon sya eh.”

Knox glanced at her through the rear-view mirror. “Nandon yun, just trust me.”

Nagkasalubong ang kilay ko, kelan pa naging close ang dalawang to?

“Feel ko talaga I should stopped introducing my girlfriends to Austine, sya lagi ang habol kay nakikipagbreak sa akin eh, paano ba naman napaka gwapo ang daming naghahabol. Tapos alam mo ba one time he called a random girl, baby, ayon halos ilang buwan naghabol sakanya. Pogi no,” agad na nanlaki ang mata ko dahil sa sinabi sya.

Kabado kong minata si Knox, he looked at me for a second before averting his gaze in front.

“Don't get the wrong idea ok? Wala akong pinatulan ni isa sa kanila,” marahan kong paliwanag at inabot ang kamay nya.

God, kinakabahan na ako dito. I don't want him to get the wrong idea. Ang bantot na nga ng mga nakaraan ko tas dumagdag pa to si Sloane. I side-eyed her and throw dagger looks on her. She glanced away kaya halos mamura ko na sya.

Mukhang manunuyo pa ako habang gumagala kami ah. Salamat Sloane.

“Knox...”I called his name softly pero hindi man lang ako pinansin. I groaned and slump back on my seat.

I tried talking to him but he would just smile weakly and not respond at all. Aigoo. Buong byahe tahimik lang kaming tatlo, halos marinig na nila ang kabog ng dibdib ko. Sensing my frustration Sloane texted me.

Bro, sorry T\_T

May araw ka din sa akin tamo.

Dumating na kami sa mall at agad na lumabas si Knox ng mapark na ang sasakyan. Agad ko syang hinabol.

“Amm...alis na muna ako hehe,” Si Sloane at tumakbo papalayo.

When I fucking catch you Sloane!

“Knox, talk to me...”I coaxed and grabbed his wrist gently. He scoffed. “Let me explain ok—”

“It's easy for you to call other people baby, tas pag ako hindi mo matawag,” maktol nya.

I blinked twice. Huh? Akala ko pa naman iniisip nya na sobrang babaero ko na at mandiri sya.

“Huh?”

Nagtatampo syang humarap sa akin. “Are you ashamed to call me baby? tas pag sa iba ok lang? kinakahiya mo ba ako?” he lowered his head.

Oh my god.

Hinapit ko ang beywang nya at pinatakan ng halik ang labi nya. “I wouldn't kiss you

so openly kong kinakahiya kita...” he licked his lips, a small smile tugging the corner of his lips.

“Then why won't you call me baby?”

I scratched my nape and lower my head. “Kinikilig kasi ako...baka tumalon ako pag lumabas yang salitang yan sa bibig ko. That would be uncool and I don't want you to see that.” Mahina kong saad, tanginang buhay to.

Ramdam ko na umiinit na ang pisngi ko dahil sa sobrang hiya.

“Hmm...then call me baby, I want to see that uncool side of yours,” inangat nya ang ulo ko. He smiled, namumula na rin ang kanyang tenga at leeg.

I swallow the lump in my throat, never in my life I feel so shy calling someone baby. This isn't me. Back then the word flows naturally pero ngayon? in front of him? gosh.

“Go on, I'm waiting.” He urged while grinning from ear to ear. Do you enjoy torturing me that much huh?

I wet my lips at mas lalong nilapit ang katawan nya sa akin. I buried my head in the crook of his neck and inhaled sharply. “Baby...I love you.”

I heard him chuckling and hugged me tightly. “If my soul had a favorite place, it would be wherever you are, I love you too...really.”

Last night, in the middle of the rainy season, on July 25, we finally shattered the rusted chains forged by our parents' past. We chose the freedom to love each other over the echoes of inherited pain.

I smiled. So this is how it felt to be loved? It was warm and comforting, like a breeze after the storm.

“You're not my type back then really,” I said, chuckling.

“Not yet?” he teased.

“Yeah, not yet.”

It's true that the first time I saw him I was piqued by his indifference demeanor. That's the main reason why I approached him. His not my type, I don't like cold people but as day goes by unti-unti ko na syang natitipohan.

Ang weird, and it's ok.

After our suyoan season, pumasok na kami sa mall at naglibot-libot. We didn't see Sloane, hinayaan nalang namin dahil malaki na sya kaya nya na ang sarili nya.

“Couple shirt?” I asked when he suggested na bumili kami ng shirt.

“Yeah.” He replied as he licked his ice cream.

Tumayo ako at inilahad ang kamay ko sa harapan nya, he grabbed it happily at sabay kaming nagtungo sa store para bumili ng damit.

Marami siyang binili na couple shirt para sa aming dalawa, napatawa nalang ako dahil nag eenjoy syang mamili.

“Excuse me,” Napatingin ako sa likuran ko ng may kumalabit sa akin. I saw a girl looking at Knox with those eyes that are every familiar to me. Admiration.

“Yes?”

Humarap sya sakín saglit at binalik ang tingin kay Knox na namimili ng damit. I blocked her view, ngumiti lang ako sa kanya ng tumingin sya sakín.

“Pwede ko ba mahingi name ng friend mo? He's totally my type,” she uttered dreamily, she scoot a bit para masulyapan si Knox na syang hinarangan ko ulit.

She furrowed her brows, “Pwedeng tumabi ka muna?”

I smiled sweetly. “You want his name?” dali-dali syang tumango at hinawakan ang laylayan ng damit ko.

“Yes please,” she clasped her hands together and bowed her head a little.

“Hmm...baby, someone wants to know your name here. She seems interested in you,” I grabbed the attention of Knox. He stopped for a moment and looked in my direction.

“B-baby?” nauutal-utal nyang saad. I looked down on her and smirked.

“Yeah, my boyfriend is such a catch don't you think so?” Pagmamayabang ko, nanlaki lalo ang mata nya at pabalik-balik ang tingin sa aming dalawa ni Knox.

Lumapit si Knox saakin at hinapit ang beywang ko. “I'm sorry miss I'm not interested, mind if you go away? I don't want my boyfriend here to overthink things,” he then kissed the side of my head.

“Boyfriend?!” halos pasinghal nyang saad. Tumango lang kami kaya mas lalong lumaki ang mata nya. “Omg I'm so sorry!” she apologize before running away.

Natawa nalang ako habang pinagmamasdan ang tumatakbo nyang pigura. “What a show, pogi masyado eh,” Pinasadahan ko sya ng tingin, from head to toe.

He's wearing a crisp white polo tucked into tailored cream trousers and clean white Nike sneakers. It's giving effortlessly refined, and timeless vibes.

Pero may kulang. Relo.

Tinanggal ko ang relo ko, I grabbed his wrist and slipped my watch. He looked at me, confused kaya ngumiti lang ako.

“To complete the look,” I wink at him.