

Chapter One



“Ate! Alam mo ba na lilipat sa school natin si JFK?!” excited na tili ng nag-iisa kong kapatid na si Ingrid.

I had to roll my eyes. *Sino na naman tong JFK na to?* isip ko habang patuloy na nagba-browse ng available e-books sa isang site.

“JFK? Patay na kaya yun. Ano ka ba,” sagot ko sa kanya habang siya ay halos magka-seizure na sa kilig sa tabi ko. Huminto siya sa kanyang happy dance at namewang na tumabi sa akin.

“Ms. Irina Ysobel Samonte, you don’t know JFK? Hello, Ate naman, taga-saang dimension ka ba?” sagot niya sabay upo sa queen-size kong kama.

“Of course I know who JFK is, Ms. Ingrid Yelen Samonte. He was assassinated November 22, 1963,” I replied. *Bakit may ibang JFK pa ba?* I thought.

“Geez, Ate, you’re such a geek! Nag-aaral ka na ba, eh, wala pa ngang pasukan,” may pagmamaktol niyang sagot.

Oh-oh, I smell a tantrum brewing, better start a tantrum-dodging maneuver. “Fine. Who is this JFK guy who has given you a temporary epileptic attack?” pagtatanong ko habang inikot ko ang silya para humarap sa kanya. As if on cue, tumili siya ulit at niyapos ang magazine na dala-dala.

“Seriously, hindi mo siya kilala, Ate?!”

“Alam mo, redundant ‘yang tanong na ‘yan.”

“Ate Ice! Siya yung star player ng *St. Lorenzo Academy!* Athlete slash model slash hottie!” patiling sagot ni Ingrid. “Ito siya,

o!” Buong pagmamalaki niyang ipinakita ang front page ng magazine na hawak-hawak niya.

“O tapos?” sagot ko. *Dapat ba akong ma-excite dahil may athlete slash model slash hottie na mapapadpad sa school namin?*

“Anong o tapos?” pagtataray na sagot ni Ingrid. “Hindi mo ba alam na ang daming naghahabol na school at babae sa kanya, ang dami niyang offers pero pinili niya ang school natin?! Ano ka ba naman, Ate. As *St. Bernadette Academy’s* student council president ay dapat excited ka!” may halong lecture at kilig niyang sabi.

“Yey...” walang kalatuy-latoy kong sagot. “Enough na ba ‘yan to show my excitement?”

“Gosh, you’re hopeless, Ate!”

“Ingrid, isn’t it enough that I support you in all your boy craziness? Kailangan talaga makikitili at makiki-seizure din ako every time may bago kang prospect?” I tiredly answered her.

“Ate Ice naman, eh, bakit ba ang geeky at boring mo? Kasing-ganda naman kita, although mas maganda ako sayo nang kaun—”

“Debatable,” pabiro kong tugon.

“Mas maganda ako!”

“Sino’ng may sabi?” paseryosong tanong ko sa kanya. Magkahawig kami ni Ingrid sa pisikal na anyo—parehong mahaba ang buhok, may dimples sa magkabilang pisngi, maputi at slender ang build. Pero the likeness ends there, kung ano ang sineryoso ko sa pag-aaral ay iyon namang sineryoso ni Ingrid sa paghahanap ng *true love*.

“Sabi ni Daddy, mas maganda ako!” may pagmamaktol na sagot ni Ingrid. I couldn’t help but laugh.

“Oo na, mas maganda ka.” I replied to pacify her.

“I know,” kikay na sagot niya as she flipped her hair.

“Marami kayang nagsasabing ako daw ang younger version ni Sandara Park.”

“Sige, ikaw na ang younger version ni Sandara Park, good luck sa paghahanap mo ng G-Dragon,” I replied with a wink as I swiveled my computer chair to face my desk.

“Kelan ka pa naging Appler?”

“Now lang,” pabirong sagot ko. “Nabasa ko lang *FB* wall mo, di ko nga kilala si G-Dragon.”

“H’wag mo na siyang kilalanin, Ate, kasi akin lang siya!” tili ni Ingrid.

“Sige, sayo na,” sagot ko habang tinuloy ang pagba-browse.

“Ate Ice naman, eh! Tingnan mo muna si JFK!” may pag-uungot niyang sabi habang binandera sa mukha ko ang cover ng magazine na hawak niya. “Ang guwapo at hot niya, di ba, bagay sa kanya ang nickname niya!”

“Okay,” sagot ko, di naman talaga pansin kasi wala pa yatang two seconds iyong pagsulyap ko dun sa magazine. “At kelan mo naman hiningi ‘yung opinyon ko tungkol dyan sa mga boys na fina-fan girl mo?”

“Ate naman, eh, aminin mo munang guwapo siya kasi!” pagdidiin ni Ingrid.

“Oo na, guwapo na siya,” pagsang-ayon ko. I seriously want the conversation to end.

“Yey! Ayan! Mommy! May nahanap na akong magiging boyfriend ni Ate!” sigaw niya bago patakbong lumabas ng kuwarto.

Boyfriend?

What boyfriend? Nag-hang yata ang utak ko sa salitang boyfriend. Dami ko pang pangarap sa buhay ‘no, aanhin ko naman ang lalaki?



“Where are you guys seated?” tanong ko sa phone habang hinahanap ang mga kaibigan ko. Sabado, two days before classes would start at naisipan naming magbabarkada na magkita.

“Ice!” Narinig ko ang boses ni Celine. “Over here!”

“Hey, girls!” Masaya kong sambit nang makalapit sa mesang kinauupuan nila.

“Itanong mo kay Ice, Maia. Itanong mo!” diin ni Celine na bestfriend ko mula Grade 2.

“Ang alin?” nalilitong tanong ko. “Is Liz coming?” dagdag ko, referring to our other barkada, Elizabeth.

“Girl, you wouldn’t believe this,” pa-suspense na bulong ni Maia.

“Believe what?” I asked quirking an eyebrow at Celine.

“Si Liz may boyfriend na,” sagot ni Celine at tumingin nang masama sa kanya si Maia.

“Ano ka ba, ako dapat ang nagsabi!” naasar na sambit nito.

“Wait. What? Kelan lang ‘yan? We got together last week wala naman siyang nasabi or clue man lang na nagka-color ang lovelife niya,” sabi ko at tumango-tango sina Maia at Celine.

“I was surprised too, biglaan nga. I learned about it yesterday kasi nagkita kami ni Therese sa skating rink kahapon. I was with my baby brothers at n’ung tinanong ko kung nasaan ate niya, she said kasama daw ng boyfriend,” pagkukuwento ni Celine.

“I don’t know if I should feel slighted ha,” dugtong ni Maia. “Ano ‘yun wala siyang balak sabihin sa atin?”

“Girls, ano ba naman kayo. Let’s let Liz be. Dun siya masaya, we should support her,” sabi ko.

“Wow, si Peace-To-All-Mankind, humirit na naman,” Celine sarcastically replied.

“It’s pointless to get mad at her because she got herself a

boyfriend and we're all single *by choice*," I joked.

"Pero, she should have told us," Maia insisted.

"She will tell us in her own time, kailangan ba nating ma-stress dyan sa lovelife ng friend natin? Besides, two days na lang pasukan na! Aren't you excited?" tanong ko sa kanila.

"Ice, ikaw lang ang kilala kong walang crush sa school, walang boyfriend pero excited magpasukan."

"Anong walang crush, paano si Biendavid Morellos?" nakangiting tukso ni Maia.

"Dave is my friend," I replied noncommittally.

"My gosh you're boring," Maia replied before taking a sip from her chocolate chip smoothie.

"Alam mo naman tong si Ice, Maia, may relasyon sila ng mga libro sa library. Mutual understanding kumbaga," pagbibiro ni Celine.

"Har har," sabi ko pero nakitawa na rin ako sa kanila.

"Wait! Nakalimutan ko na tuloy 'yung hot news ko sayo!" Maia exclaimed. "Di mo ba alam—"

"Si JFK Zamora lilipat sa school natin," dugtong ni Celine.

"Ano ka ba naman, Celine! Ang KJ mo, wala man lang sense of suspense!" may halong inis na reklamo ni Maia.

"Suspense? As in gagawan mo ng suspense? Di mo ba alam na si Ice 'yang kausap mo, malamang di niya alam kung sino si JFK Zamora kaya masasayang lang effort mo."

"Di ba siya ang basketball star slash model slash hottie ng St. Lorenzo's?" Sabat ko.

"Huh?" tanong ni Celine.

"Oh, my goodness, bakit mo alam? Fan girl ka rin ba niya?" excited na tanong ni Maia.

"Duh. Mukha ba akong fan girl? At bakit *rin*, ibig sabihin fan girl ka niya?" sabi ko. "Alam ko 'yung pag-transfer niya sa school

because of Ingrid.”

“Oo nga pala, malamang alam ni Ingrid at kilala niya si JFK,” tumatangong sabi ni Maia.

“Seriously, JFK name niya? Sobrang idol naman ng Mommy niya masyado ‘yung dating presidente ng US,” natatawa kong sabi.

“Ito ang scoop, his Mom was reading *JFK*, the president’s biography while she was pregnant with him kaya tuloy JFK name niya,” Maia proudly volunteered the information.

“And you know this because...?” Celine asked.

“Fan girl nga daw siya, ano ka ba?” I laughingly replied.

“Unless may sariling *Wiki* page ‘yang si JFK na ‘yan paano naman niya malalaman ‘yung info na ‘yun? Ni-research mo talaga, Maia?” tanong ni Celine. “Wow, sis, that’s desperate.”

“So what kung ni-research ko?”

“Tama na nga ‘yan, mag-aaway pa kayo dahil sa isang lalaking di naman kayo kilala,” sabi ko.

“Excuse me pero friend ko siya sa *Facebook* kaya magkakilala kami,” may pag-irap na sabi ni Maia.

“Friend mo siya sa *Facebook*? Malay mo ba kung poser account lang ‘yun!” Celine asked.

“I’m sure totoong account niya ‘yun!” sagot ni Maia kay Celine.

“At paano mo naman nalaman?”

“Celine, stop annoying Maia. Seriously, girls,” natatawa kong sabi.

Kapag si Maia at Celine ang magkasama di maiwasan ang mga ganitong klaseng banTERS. Nagsimula ‘yan n’ung nasa Grade 5 kami dahil ‘yung crush ni Celine ay crush din ni Maia at sa tingin ko although lumipas na ‘yung stage na ‘yun, di pa rin mawala sa kanila ‘yung pagiging competitive sa isa’t-isa.

“I’m thirsty, I’ll buy bottled water,” sabi ko sa dalawa sabay tayo. “Do you girls want anything?”

“Napaka-health freak mo, water lang? Di man lang smoothie or juice or soda or iced coffee?” Maia inquired.

“Okay na ako dito sa frappe ko,” Celine said.

“Alam n’yo bang those drinks you mentioned ay puro sugar lang? Di sana kumain na lang ako ng asukal,” sagot ko.

“Dapat nga siguro kumain ka ng sugar para maging sweet ka naman kahit papano,” narinig kong sabi ni Celine habang papalayo ako sa mesa namin.

“Whatever,” sabi ko sabay dila sa direksyon nila.

“Good morning, Ma’am, may I take your order please,” sabi ng nagbabantay sa counter.

“Just bottled water,” I replied smiling at her.

“Ma’am, sorry but we currently don’t have bottled water, wala po kasing delivery. If you want po we have filtered water available, ‘yun po ang tubig na ginagamit namin with our drinks and ‘yun din po ang tubig na iniinom namin so be assured na malinis po ‘yun,” nakangiting sabi niya.

“Okay,” sabi ko nang biglang nag-vibrate ang phone ko.

“Ingrid, what is it?” tanong ko habang nagsi-signal ng wait lang sa babaeng may dala ng tubig ko. Ngumiti siya at nilapag ang tubig sa tabi ng counter bago tinakpan ng tissue. “*Thank you,*” I mouthed at her.

“Ate! Do not forget to buy the new CD I told you about last night, ha!”

“Yes, it’s on my list,” sabi ko. “Is that the only reason why you called?”

“Yep. Ay, wait pala! Buy me anything sweet from Parvati’s! Thanks, Ate.”

“Okay. See you later. ‘Bye.” I was about to pocket my phone

when I saw a guy moved to the counter. Matangkad siya, I think he's almost a foot taller than me and considering na 5'5" na height ko. *Guwapo*. Naisip ko when I saw his profile. Di man ako mahilig sa lalaki pero nakaka-appreciate ako ng kaguwapuhan. I hid a smile.

"Hi, beautiful," sabi n'ung lalaki sa girl na nasa counter. "Water please," dugtong niya, lumingon siya kung saan ako nakatayo at ngumiti.

What the hell. Para akong nasilaw. *What in the world was that?* I asked myself when I felt myself blush. *Ngiti lang 'yun, Ice, mukha kang tanga!* I silently chastised myself.

"Do you want my autograph?" tanong niya. I must have been gawking at him like some hungry vulture.

"*Do you want my autograph?*" What he said echoed in my head and stayed there. It took me about two seconds to process it all.

Wait. Whattt? Ang kapal!

"No," sabi ko. *Heller, ikaw na guwapo, kuya, kailangan autograph talaga?*

"Oh, come on, I caught you staring at me. Don't go shy on me now," presko niyang sabi at 'yung liwanag na nakita ko sa ngiti niya kanina ay napalitan ng paninilim ng paningin. *Buwisit*.

"You are so full of yourself it's a wonder you're not overflowing," I sarcastically replied.

"Whoaaa, baby. Chill," he laughingly replied as he touched my cheek. *Ewww*.

"Whatever." Tinampal ko ang kamay niya and he laughed. For the first time ay nawalan ako ng sasabihin. I'm a debater pero 'yung kakapalan ng mukha ng lalaking ito ay sobra to the point na namatay na yata ang kalahati ng brain cells ko. I moved forward sabay kuha sa baso ng tubig na dala ng babae kanina para sa akin.

“Whoaaa, baby, that’s mine,” sabi ni Mr. Thickskin grabbing the paper cup from my hand.

“No. This cup of water is mine,” I replied stubbornly as I grabbed the paper cup back. Some of the water sloshed onto my blouse and I opened my mouth in disbelief.

I’m going to kill this jerk!

“Why don’t I just give you my autograph and you give me the cup of water?” he asked with a smirk. *Grabe, di man lang napansin ng damuhong ito na nabasa ako!* “I’ve never met someone who’s so desperate for my autograph that she had to grab my glass of water,” he said with a wink and all my Emotional Quotient just evaporated.

Ang kapal. Ang kapal! Ang KAPAL!

“Sure,” I said with the sweetest smile I could muster. “Here,” sabi ko sabay saboy ng tubig sa mukha niya. I heard someone gasp and a few people were whispering behind me. Para akong na-transport sa twilight zone as I looked at the guy’s dripping front and my hand still holding the now empty paper cup.

“OH MY GOSH!” narinig kong sabi ni Maia. I felt someone take the cup off my hand at ‘yung isang waiter ay dali-daling pinupunasan ang basang mukha at t-shirt ng lalaki.

“Ice!” It was Celine’s voice as she pulled me towards the door and away from the guy and the crowd. “Are you okay?” nagmamadali niyang sabi. “Where are you parked?” tanong niya pero di ako makasagot.

I didn’t know what came over me. I pride myself for always being calm and I just doused someone with water. In public at that.

“Shit,” I whispered as Celine grabbed my phone. She dialed a number.

“Manong Ben, nandito po kami sa may entrance, puntahan mo kami dito,” narinig kong sabi niya. She apparently called my driver.

“I should apologize,” sabi ko sabay lakad pabalik sa coffee shop.

“What came over you ba? Hindi mo ba kilala kung sino ‘yun?” Maia asked in disbelief.

“Kilala mo ba siya?” I absentmindedly asked, I still couldn’t believe what I just did.

“Ano ka ba! That was JFK Zamora!”

WHAT?