

PROLOGUE

Brent Julian Gomez was woken up by incessant buzzing of his cellphone. The thirty-two-year-old heir of *Gomez Conglomerate* turned on his side and reached for the source of the sound, pero isang malambot na bagay ang nahawakan niya. Bahagya niyang iminulat ang isang mata para silipin kung ano iyon—dibdib pala ng babaeng katabi niya. The woman was Rebecca Montemayor, anak ng isang hotel magnate na isa sa mga kliyente ng *Gomez Corporation*, isa sa mga higanteng conglomerates sa Pilipinas.

The woman, like him, was sprawled naked on the bed, isang puting kumot lamang na nakatabing sa baywang nito, her long gorgeous hair was messy from their wild and sensual romp last night.

His sleepy body stirred a little pagkaalala sa nangyari nang nakaraang gabi at napangisi siya. The woman was hot in bed, just the way he wanted his women—experienced, wild, without inhibitions and of course, mayaman. Mahalagang requirement iyon, money and power always came first in his priority list. Strict siya sa requirement na iyon kahit sa mga pampalipas-oras lang.

Gumalaw ang babae at sumiksik sa kanya, rubbing her naked body to his form. Naturally, his lower body stirred further, pero hindi niya iyon pinansin. Iginala niya ang tingin sa silid para hanapin ang pantalon kung nasaan ang kanyang phone. Nakita

niya iyon sa paanan ng kama, tinanggal niya ang palupot ng braso ni Rebecca sa kanyang baywang saka tumayo para kunin ang phone.

It was Lorenzo Orteza, ang abogado ng tatay niya. He flipped his phone open and answered the call.

“I’ve been calling you for an hour now, nasaan ka ba?” bungad ng abogado.

He frowned, sinipat niya ang oras sa night stand, alas cinco pa lang ng madaling-araw. Umupo siya sa gilid ng kama. “Bakit, ano’ng problema? May magandang balita ka ba? Has my father died already?” kaswal niyang tanong.

Narinig niya ang paghugot ng hangin ng lalaki. “How could you say that to your own father? What kind of son are you?”

“The kind of son he raised,” sagot niya habang naghihikab at nag-uunat nang kaunti. “You know my father, I’m sure he’s proud of me. Anyway, why are you calling at this ungodly hour in the morning?” Sa likuran niya, naramdaman niya ang paggalaw ni Rebecca sa kama.

“Hey,” narinig niyang anas nito. Umupo ito at niyakap siya mula sa likuran. He smiled lazily at the woman and hungrily kissed her mouth.

Muli, narinig niyang humigit ng hangin ang kausap. “Your father’s in a critical condition last night, tumaas ang blood pressure

niya at sugar level kagabi, nag-fifty-fifty siya kanina.” Kinagat niya ang pang-ibabang labi ng babae at saka giniya ito paupo sa kandungan niya. The woman smiled wickedly and straddled him.

“Oh. So he’s okay now? That’s a shame,” aniya habang hinahalikan ang leeg ng kaniig, his other hand busy massaging her breast, making the woman moan wantonly in his ear. “Akala ko pa naman ako na ang Chairman ngayon ng *Gomez Corp.*,” he drawled. He motioned Rebecca to get the pack of condom on the night stand; malalim ang paghinga at malamlam ang mga mata, sinunod siya nito. After putting it on his arousal, she raised her hips and lowered herself to him. Lalo siyang nag-init sa ginawa nito.

“Well, I think I have bad news for you,” ani Lorenzo pagkaraan. Pero halos hindi niya napansin, the woman pressed her naked breast to his chest, wrapped her arms around his neck and started riding him fast and hard.

“Oh, yeah?” he said roughly as his free hand gripped Rebecca’s behind to support her pumping hips.

“Yes,” sagot ng abogado. “Kung namatay ngayon ang tatay mo, you would have lost everything.” Sa kabila ng ginagawa, natigilan siya sa narinig. “You see, pinamana niya ang kalahati ng lahat ng pera niya sa bangko, pati na rin ang kalahati ng shares ng stocks sa *Gomez Corp.* sa isang babae. So you should be happy he’s still alive—”

“He did what!” bulalas niya.

“What’s wrong—hey!” protesta ni Rebecca nang bigla siyang tumayo mula sa kama. Pero hindi na niya ito naririnig, he was already feeling hot for an entirely different reason.

“Ulitin mo nga ang sinabi mo.” Pilit niyang kinontrol ang boses. “My bastard father did what?” he hissed over the phone. Gaya niya, praktikal na tao si Lorenzo, they were not the type to joke around. Masyadong mahalaga ang bawat oras sa kanila para gugulin sa mga walang kuwentang biro.

Muli, humugot ito ng hangin. “I’m only telling you this because we’ve been friends since God knows when. Your father made a new will last night, pinapamana niya ang kalahati ng lahat ng pera niya at shares sa *Gomez Corp.* kay Laura Olivia Villanueva. It’s a long story and if you want to get your inheritance back, get your ass here and talk to your father.”

“Hey, Brent, what’s wrong?” Pumulupot ulit ang babae sa kanya pero muli, hindi na niya ito napansin.

“Sige, pupunta na ’ko. Salamat. I owe you one. If you ever get in a tight fix with money or with anything that needed power, call me.”

Bumuntong-hininga ang kausap. “It’s not always about money and power, Brent. I’m doing this because you’re my friend.”

“Well, you better change that.” Seryoso ang tono niya. “You

wouldn't need me if I don't have money and power, and I wouldn't need you either if I have no use for you. If you need to stab me to get in the graces of someone more powerful, I wouldn't mind. I'd do the same. No hard feelings, that's reality."

"Oo, siges na, Mr.-Money-And-Power-Make-The-World-Go-'Round, pumunta ka na lang dito."

"I'm serious. I'm offering you a golden advice, take that from someone who had earned billions—"

"Oo na! Oo na! Taong 'to, pumunta ka na rito."

Despite himself, he couldn't help but smile a little. "Siges na, pupunta na 'ko." Pinutol na niya ang tawag.

"Brent, bakit—"

"I need to go." Mabilis niyang hinagilap ang mga damit at nagbihis.

"Bakit? Ano'ng nangyari?"

"Company problems," he said tersely.

Hindi man lang niya ito binigyan kahit halik sa noo, dumerecho na siya sa pinto pagkatapos magbihis.

"Sandali. Kailan ulit tayo magkikita? You didn't even get my number!" maktol ng dalaga.

Huminto siya sa pinto at nilingon ito. Maganda talaga ang

babae, mestiza, matangkad at maganda ang katawan. “Why? Do you want to see me again, Rebecca?” kaswal niyang tanong.

She frowned na para bang, napaka-obvious naman ng sagot. “Well...” usal nito.

“Did your father send you to do this?”

Pinamulahan ito ng mukha.

Tumaas ang isang sulok ng labi ni Brent. “Don’t worry, no offense taken. I know your father needed financial help badly. I supposed he was hoping you could get favors from me after sleeping with me.”

Lalong pinamulahan ang babae; iniwas nito ang tingin. “I... it’s not like that...” she stuttered.

He raised an arrogant brow. “Really? I don’t believe that. Anyway, hindi ka naman dapat mahiya, walang masama doon. It’s all right, I had a great time. Isa pa, promising ang bagong business ventures ng daddy mo, may mga maling desisyon lang talaga noong nakaraan. I’d help him. I’m sure investing in your father’s company would prove beneficial. Iyon lang naman ang kailangan mo, di ba?” Kaswal pa rin ang tono niya. “So there’s no need for us to see each other anymore. We’re already done here.” Tila nagulat ito nang akmang bubuksan na niya ang pinto.

“Brent, sandali!” Mabilis itong tumayo mula sa kama at tumakbo sa kanya. Niyakap siya nito. “Why can’t we see each

other again? Don't you want me?"

"Oh, I want you," aniya habang pinapasadahan ng tingin ang buo nitong katawan. Nakita niyang lumalim ang paghinga nito sa ginawa niya. He smiled, reached her waist and pressed her hips to his arousal. Napasinghap ito at napayakap nang mas mariin sa kanya. Nilapit niya ang bibig sa tainga nito. "Pero hindi ako nagsasayang ng oras sa mga bagay na wala akong mapapala."

"Brent..." she moaned.

Tumaas ang isang sulok ng labi niya. "I could get this pleasure from anyone," usal niya. "I only bedded you because I needed something from you, and I'm sure your intention wasn't so far from that either. So spare me the theatrics, Rebecca. I think you're level-headed enough to know that the Montemayors are hardly equals to the Gomezes, you should already feel honored that I'll be helping your family. Don't ask for something that's beyond your league." Binitawan na niya ito.

"What...?" Tila hindi nito narinig ang mga sinabi niya.

Malamig niya itong tinitigan. "We're finished here, Rebecca. I'm sorry to burst your bubble but I'm afraid your pedigree and family's balance sheet do not meet the requirements to become my regular bed partner. I'd contact your dad this weekend to start some business plans." Tuluyan na siyang lumabas ng kuwarto at dumerecho na sa elevator bago pa siya nito habulin muli. He dialed a phone number on his cell phone.

“Aaron,” bungad niya sa kanyang assistant.

“The feasibility report is due next Monday, there’s a three million discrepancy in the new project, the freaking investors—”

“Aaron, ano ba? Nanaginip ka pa ba?” putol niya sa kausap.

“Huh? Sino ’to?” Groggy ang boses ng kausap.

He rolled his eyes. Pinindot niya ang button ng elevator at hinintay iyon magbukas. “Wala kang love life, galit sa ’yo ang mga kamag-anak mo at wala ka ring kaibigan. Sa tingin mo ba may iba pang tatawag sa ’yo sa ganitong oras ng umaga?”

“Ugh, the devil incarnate...”

He couldn’t help smiling wickedly. “Yes, I’m the devil incarnate. Ano, gising ka na ba?”

“Yes, Master... what do you need?” sarkastikong tanong ng kausap.

Bumukas ang elevator at pumasok siya sa loob. Pinindot niya ang button para sa basement. “Get all the details about a woman named Laura Olivia Villanueva. Kailangan ko ’yon bago magtanghali ngayong araw, or else, maghanap ka na ng ibang trabaho mo bukas.”

“Threats, threats,” angil nito. “Akala mo ba tatakbo ang opisina mo nang wala ako? Hah! Eh, kahit pati condoms mo, ako pinabibili mo!”

He chuckled. “Yeah, yeah. Sige na, tumayo ka na at gawin mo na ang pinapagawa ko. Else, mawawalan ka talaga ng trabaho, I doubt the new CEO would want to have my former assistant in the company.”

Tila roon naman tuluyang nagising ang kausap. “What do you mean?” usisa nito.

Humigit siya nang hangin at inulit ang sinabi sa kanya ni Lorenzo.

“What? Why? Sino ’yon?” tanong nito pagkatapos.

“I think it’s safe to say that that’s your job. Binabayaran kita para sagutin ang mga tanong ko, di ba? Now, get your lazy ass working. I need everything you can dig about Laura Olivia Villanueva A.S.A.P.”

Narinig niyang umungol ulit ang kausap, sigurado rin siyang sinasabunutan nito ang sariling buhok. “Fine. You’ll have it before mid-noon today,” grumbled nito.

“Good. I need to know everything. This girl would be sorry for messing with me.”

“Oh, the theatrics.”

“Yeah, I’ll make it so theatrical she would be crying till the next millennium,” tugon niya sa seryosong tinig.

Hindi na nakipagtalo pa ang kausap, kilala kasi nito ang

tono niyang iyon.

Napabuntong-hininga si Aaron Lopez. “This is going to be messy,” usal pa nito.

“You bet.” Iyon lang at pinutol na niya ang tawag.