

## 1

**First Time, Too Soon**

**“W**hat are you doing here?”

*Napaigtad si Hera at nabitawan ang librong kukunin sana sa shelf. Napapikit siya, bago huminga nang malalim. She didn't have to turn around, she knew it was him. There was no mistaking that low, lazy, throaty voice. There was no way her heart would be beating this fast if it wasn't him. Still, she had to be sure. “Faust?”*

*“Yeah, Hera.” He sounded bored. Naramdaman niya ang paglapit nito. “Why are you here, alone and not partying with your rich and famous friends?” He spat out the last word.*

*Napalunok siya, napahawak sa gilid ng floor to ceiling bookshelf na umookupa sa isang gilid ng malawak na study cum library ng mga Oliviera, isang maimpluwensyang pamilya ng mga politiko. Ang bunsong Oliviera na si Candace ay isa sa malalapit niyang kaibigan, at siyang alam niyang gumawa ng paraan kaya narito ngayon si Faust.*

*A party was currently in full swing at the garden and pool area. Karamihan ng attendees ay mga popular campus figures. Post graduation party nila ito, pero imbitado rin*

*kahit hindi nila ka-batch, gaya ni Faust na tinatapos ang Masters degree nito sa pareho ding university na pinagtapusan niya.*

*“I’m... I... I saw you leave the pool and... I’m... I’m waiting for you,” Hera stammered, then bit her lip.*

*Naramdaman niyang tila nililibot ng tingin ng lalaki ang library. Parang may hinahanap ito.*

*“Waiting for me?” He sounded incredulous. “Candace? Yeah...”*

*She turned her head. Faust had his phone in his ear and was calling Candace? Oh, my God, baka mabuking na kasabwat niya ang kaibigan. Oh no!*

*Faust met her eyes. He looked at her as if he was disgusted, or angry, or both. “I couldn’t find your stupid sparkler stash. Why would you keep them in the library? Oh yeah? Send someone else to look for it, then... No, I am not leaving, I have to deal with someone first...” Lumakad ito patungo sa kinatatayuan niya. “Someone? Did I say someone? Nope, I meant something...” Pinasadahan siya nito ng tingin mula ulo hanggang paa.*

*Hera felt cold shivers run through her entire nervous system. Dear God. Napatalikod siyang muli.*

*“Ah, Candace, you know me too well...” He chuckled; the sound of it full and resounding, filled the room. “But that’s an idea, Cands. I haven’t f\*cked anyone in a library before.”*

*Napabitaw si Hera sa shelf sa narinig. Umakyat yata lahat ng dugo sa kanyang ulo. Hindi niya alam kung sa excitement iyon, o kaba, o pareho. Hindi niya alam kung ano*

ang gagawin. Her plan stopped at how to get him alone.

She had never been alone with any man... well, not this alone where she knew, and was anticipating something.

Plus, this is Faust Alexander Realondo. The man he wanted and loved for three years now. The man she knew she could never have because it was obvious she never stood a chance. He probably didn't even find her attractive. Parang hindi rin nito nagugustuhan na close friends sila ng nakatatanda nitong kapatid na si Gordon.

And judging from that earlier statement, in his eyes she was probably just one of those social climbing airheads.

But she still wanted him, and if she would not have his heart then, maybe she could have him for just one night before he leaves the country for good.

“So you're waiting for me.”

Napapikit si Hera sa gulat. Tumalon yata talaga ang puso niya, hindi niya alam kung nasaan na iyon. Faust now stood right behind her, his hot breath on her ear, his body almost touching hers.

“I...um, I think...” Hindi niya alam kung ano ang sasabihin. She usually talked a lot, laughed out loud, was funny and witty and the life of the party. Pero umurong yata ang dila niya ngayon.

“You're not leaving, are you? Not backing out from whatever it is you plan to do tonight?” Bumaba ang mga kamay ni Faust sa kanyang mga balakang.

Manipis lang ang itim na t-shirt na suot niya, kaya damang-dama niya ang init ng mga kamay ng lalaki sa

*kanyang balat.*

*“I’m not leaving,” mahinang sabi niya sa pilit pinapatatag na boses. She hated it that her excitement was consuming her, making her seem nervous and even scared. She was not scared. She wanted this.*

*“I’ve locked the door.” Nagsalita si Faust sa tapat ng kanang tainga niya. “But I’m afraid I can’t afford you, Hera. I can’t possibly give you anything. My dad has money, but he’s too old for you. My brother would probably get everything, but you already have him by the balls. Are you not content with good old Gordy, hmm?” Sumilid ang mga kamay ng lalaki sa ilalim ng shirt niya, nakalapat ang mga daliri sa nanlalamig niyang balat. Electricity shot through her.*

*Pero hindi iyon sapat para hindi mag-register sa kanya ang sinabi nito. “I am not after anything, you jerk,” she said, but without conviction.*

*His fingers traced the skin under her bra.*

*“Then, what do you need from me? Why were you waiting for me?” Bumaba ang mga labi ni Faust sa kanyang leeg. He breathed on it before he sucked, right there on the pulse.*

*Muli siyang napakapit sa shelf. “Y-you.”*

*Napahinto ito. “Me.” He seemed to contemplate that for a few seconds before he bit on her skin. “Do you...” his tongue darted out to taste her, “by any chance...” he gently suckled, “like me, Hera?” He bit again, as a hand undid the hook of her bra and another cupped her breast.*

*“Maybe...” she breathed, heady with the sensations,*

“more than like you...” She gasped as a finger circled a nipple.

“Hmm...” He blew on the part of her neck he just feasted on, making her grip the shelf tighter. “You want me then.”  
Sinimulan nitong itaas ang kanyang t-shirt. “Is that right?”

“Yes... Oh God, yes.” That was an answer for both his question and how he pinched her nipple. She shifted so she could turn around. But Faust wedged a leg between her thighs to keep her in place.

“Not yet.” Patuloy nitong hinila ang kamiseta niya, at napilitan siyang bumitaw sa shelf para maitaas ang mga braso at maialis nito ang suot niya. “Are you drunk, Hera?”

“No... I had a glass of wine,” she croaked. Nagawa na rin ni Faust na alisin ang kanyang bra. Hindi niya alam kung paano iyon nagawa ng lalaki.

“Me, too. Can’t drink and drive.” His hands were back to feeling her breasts, caressing and kneading, pinching and squeezing, as his lips and tongue and teeth continued their assault on her neck and shoulder. “You smell good.”

“Are you...” Suminghap si Hera. “Are you high?”

He paused, his mouth on her shoulder and his hand fumbling for the top button of her jeans. “So, you’re one of them.”

“Not.. r-really.” Her breathing was becoming labored, and her knuckles have turned white. “B-but... you would have to be high to be doing this know...” Naramdaman niya ang pamamasa ng mga mata. “Especially because you know it’s me.”

Tuluyang huminto si Faust sa ginagawa. Naramdaman

*din niya ang paglayo ng katawan nito bagaman nanatili ang mga kamay sa kanyang baywang. Sa isang saglit, nagawa nitong iikot siya paharap dito. She yelped as her hands slid harshly away from its steady grip, and nearly held her breath once she met those incredible eyes, that now darkened with arousal.*

*“Look at me, Hera.” His voice was low, steady, with a hint of irritation. “Do I f\*cking look high to you?” Binitawan nito ang baywang niya pagkatapos ay itinaas ang suot na grey shirt para mahubad iyon. Pagkatapos ay hinuli ng binata ang kamay niya at inilapat iyon sa kaliwang dibdib nito.*

*“Does it feel like I’m about to pass out?” Mabilis ang tibok ng puso ng lalaki, pero hindi gaya ng sa kanya na parang may sasabog nang ugat.*

*Umiling siya. “N-no.” Damn, Faust! Why so hot? Sa kabila ng kaba ay hindi pa rin nakaligtas kay Hera ang tanawing nasa harap. His broad shoulders and toned arms were to die for, his torso was well defined, his muscles rippled with each breath. His skin was almost golden, illuminated by the pale corner lights. The veins in his arms seemed to throb as he held her hand, that he now slid gently down his body until they rested on his groin. Her eyes slipped shut.*

*He was definitely hard now, and hot, and throbbing.*

*“I haven’t been laid in several weeks, Hera. And I am not about to pass up an opportunity now.” He stepped closer, closing the space between them, his hand still holding her hand as he moved it to rest on his shoulder. He pulled her*

closer, then, lifted her by the hips and deposited her on the nearby table.

*“Pero gusto kong makasiguro na gusto mo rin ito at may oras ka pa para lumayo.”* His gaze was intent, his lips in a tight, curling smile as he began to unbutton his jeans.

*Hindi niya alam kung saan ibabaling ang mga mata. Para siyang name-mesmerize ng mapanuksong tingin at ngiti ng kaharap, pero hindi rin niya halos mabitawan ng tingin ang naggagalawang mga ugat sa braso nito habang mabagal na naghuhubad.*

*Faust kicked off his shoes, pulled his pants down until he was only clad in black silk boxers. All the while, he never took his eyes off her, and she felt her insides twist, as heat gathered in the pit of her stomach, moving down, igniting her flesh.*

*Huminga siya nang malalim, bago yumuko at inabot ang sneakers niya.*

*“Let me.” Faust covered her hand and began to pull at the shoelaces. He must be an expert in removing clothes because in fifteen seconds flat, he had managed to remove her shoes and socks and pull down her jeans. “Last chance to say no, Hera.” He growled as he stepped between her legs, then gripped and spread her wider.*

*She groaned as her almost bare skin rubbed the surface of the table, her inner thighs brushed against his hardness through the silken fabrics of what they still had on. Faust moved a hand up her hips, her waist, to her sides as he leaned in.*

*Sinalubong lang ni Hera ang tingin ng lalaki, pilit*

*iniipon ang natitira pang tapang dahil may kailangan siyang patunayan. He, like the others, thought she was just this needy, fame-hungry nobody who would do anything to become popular, to get in the right circles, to gain more connections.*

*Hindi siya galing sa pamilya ng mga politiko, business tycoons, haciendero, o ranch owners. Hindi rin sila ganoon kayaman at lalong hindi sila sikat. Pero walang karapatan ang mga kagaya ng lalaking ito na isiping may motibo siya sa pakikipaglapit niya sa mga taong iniisip nitong hindi karapat-dapat sa kanya.*

Out of my league, Faust? Am I just everybody's side whore? One who uses her body to gain favors? F\*ck you, Faust. I don't even know why I still allowed myself to feel this way about you but f\*ck you... wait, I'm about to do that now.

*“What are you waiting for, Faust?” naghahamong untag niya. Ipinaikot niya ang mga kamay sa leeg nito at inilapit ang mukha. “Or are you the one who's scared now?” A hand quickly slid to the skin above his boxers.*

*His eyes narrowed, then caught her lower lip in his. The tip of his tongue moved over it, eliciting another gasp from her. “I can taste your fear, Hera,” he taunted as he let go of her lip.*

*She opened her mouth to speak, but instead of words, a low moan escaped from her throat as she felt his hand cup her center. His fingers parted the fabric aside, to move over her slick folds.*

*“F\*ck, you’re so tight,” he whispered as he nipped her lower lip again. “And so... so wet.”*

*Her only response was another moan and a whimper as she felt the pad of his finger move over the center of her pleasure in faster strokes. “Faust!” Dumerecho sa likod nito ang kanyang mga kamay. “What are you.. ooh.”*

*Her eyes slipped shut as she waited. But instead, she felt a hand cup her head, and Faust letting out another expletive as he gripped her thigh. “Damn it, Hera. You haven’t done this before, haven’t you?”*

*“I... I... d-doezzit mwaterrrr? Huh?”*

*“Hera! Isang oras nang nag-iingay ang alarm mo, gumising ka nga!”*

*May tumatapik sa pisngi niya, sa leeg, sa braso, hanggang sa may humila na rin sa kanyang kumot.*

*“Mag-a-alas siete na, Hera Eloise, ano ba!” iritado nang sabi ng kung sinong gumigising sa kanya, bago may humila sa buhok niya.*

*“Ouch!” Napadilat ang dalaga at ang nanlalaking mga mata ni Callie ang unang nakita. “Bakit ba?”*

*“Anong bakit? Alas ocho po ang meeting mo with the big bosses. Baka gusto mo nang mag-ayos?” nakapamaywang na asik nito, bago kinuha ang cellphone niyang nagwawala na naman ang alarm.*

*“Oh, my God!” Agad na napabangon si Hera, at agad ding napangiwi nang maramdamang tila may bumibiyak sa ulo niya.*

*“Gaga ka, anong oras ba kayo natapos kagabi?”*

“Hindi ko na maalala. Past two na siguro?” Bisita niya nang nakaraang gabi ang dalawang bandmates niya at ang girlfriends ng mga ito. Matapos ang rehearsals ay nauna nang umakyat si Callie, ang pinsan at best friend niya, na nagsisilbi ring business manager simula nang maging contract artist siya ng *Synergy*, isa sa pinakamalaking record labels sa Asya.

“Okay, sige. Maligo ka na. Cereal drink lang ang ipapahanda ko kay Badong. You can have it on the way, bilisan mo!” Pinandilatan siya nito ulit. “We need to hurry, Hera! I’m serious.” Then, her lips broke into a naughty smile as she tapped on her *iPad*.

“By the way, since busy kayo kagabi, hindi ko agad nasabi na may konting pagbabago sa details ng meeting. Aside from the five oldies, you will also be seeing...” Tap, slide, tap. “This guy.” Iniharap nito ang screen.

Muntik na siyang matumba uli sa kama. Ni hindi pa siya nakaka-recover sa napanaginipan niya! Hindi niya alam kung bakit matapos ang maraming taon ay napanaginipan niya ang gabing iyon!

Napatanga si Hera sa imaheng nasa screen. It was a candid shot of Faust Alexander, clad in board shorts that rode low on his hips, his hair wet and unkempt, wearing sunglasses and holding a frisbee. Nasa tabing dagat ito, mukhang sun god dahil ang ganda ng pagka-tan.

“Gosh, you’re drooling, Hera!” Napahalakhak si Callie. Binawi na nito ang screen sa paningin niya. “O ayan, gising ka na ha? May motivation ka nang magmadali?”

“W-why are we... am I... Faust?”

Nagkibit-balikat ang pinsan. “I don’t know exactly, but according to Mr. Han’s secretary, it has to do with your performance at the *Asian Music Awards* next month?”

Nagsalubong ang kilay niya. “Don’t tell me we’re performing together?”

Umiling ito. “I don’t think so. Aware naman siguro sila sa away ng mga fans n’yo at kung paanong magkaiba ang genre at image na pino-project ninyo.”

“Image talaga?” She snorted. “Sige na, ilabas mo na ’yung auto. Imi-meet na lang kita sa labas.” Binuksan niya ng closet para mamili ng isusuot.

“Mamaya na ’yan, Hera! Maligo ka muna! Twenty minutes! I swear, Hera, pag wala ka sa ibaba within twenty minutes—”

“Oo na, sige na!” Nagmartsa na siya papunta sa banyo at agad isinara ang pinto niyon.

