

Prologue

The familiar feeling of emptiness flooded his body. Walang buhay ang mga mata ni Baron na nakatunghay sa kabaong kung saan nakahimlay ang mga labi ng ate niya.

Ganito rin ang pakiramdam niya noong iwan siya ng kabit na ina sa mansion ng tunay niyang ama.

He felt the coldness of his father toward him. He felt the hatred of his father's wife. He saw disappointment in his grandparents' faces. He was unloved and unwanted, it was a no brainer.

For a six-year-old child, it was all too much to take. When he was still living with his mother, he was

treated like shit. And when he lived with his father, there was no difference at all. Hindi nakakapagtaka na maging mailap siya sa mga tao. He wouldn't talk to anyone, nor be in the same room as them. Lalabas lang siya para kumain at babalik sa kwarto niya para magkulong. He even thought back then that his existence was a big bad joke.

But one day, a girl with the same dark brown eyes as his went inside his room and forced him to leave the house and drink up some sunshine. Wala siyang nagawa kundi ang sumama sa batang babae dahil ayaw nitong pakawalan ang kamay niya.

Truth be told, Baron found the girl irritating he wanted to hurt her. Pero nang sabihin nitong ito ang ate niya, na ipagtatanggol siya nito sa kasamaan ay napamaang na lang siya. Dahil sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon, may taong gustong magprotekta sa kanya. Her older sister's wide smile made him cry, not because of sadness, but because of happiness.

Pagak siyang napatawa. Ang mga ngiting iyon ng kapatid ay hindi na niya makikita pa. Those good old times would now be just a mere memory.

Napalingon siya nang may marinig na nag-uusap sa bandang likuran niya. Baron's jaw clenched as he stared at the cause of his Ate Elisa's death: Karlos. Ang kaibigan niya at boyfriend ng ate niya.

Tumayo siya at mabibigat ang mga paang nilapitan ang lalaki at ang ama niya na kausap nito. "You're not welcome here. Get out." His voice was hard and deadly.

"Baron!" saway sa kanya ng ama.

"Tito, could you please give us a minute? Mag-uusap lang po kami," pakiusap ni Karlos sa tatay niya. His father didn't look convinced but he nodded and left the room.

"If you want to explain what happened, then let me tell you that you're just wasting your time."

"Please, Baron, listen to me. I didn't want it to happen. I-I'm so sorry." Karlos sounded so pathetically contrite he wanted to vomit.

"So, you want me to forgive you? Gano'n na lang ba, Karlos?" mapang-uyam niyang tanong.

Iniling-iling nito ang ulong may benda saka nagmamakaawang muling tumingin sa kanya. "I know

it was partly my fault, at nasasaktan din ako ngayon, Baron. You know how much I love Elisa. You know I wouldn't ask for this to happen."

"You wouldn't ask for this to happen?" maanghang na ulit niya sa sinabi nito. "It was the middle of the f*cking night, yet you asked her to go out riding in your stupid car. You asked her to leave even if it was already late. Clearly, you asked for this to happen! You are the reason why my sister is lying there!"

"It was our anniversary! I invited her out because I prepared a surprise for her!" Nakakuyom ang kaliwang kamay nito at sigurado siyang ganoon din ang gagawin ng kanan kung hindi lang naka-sling iyon.

"Yeah, at dahil sa surprise mo, namatay ang kapatid ko." He saw the look of hurt in his friend's eyes pero kulang pa ang sakit na iyon. He wanted to beat the shit out of Karlos and kill him with his bare hands, but that would be too easy.

"I didn't know that a drunk driver would appear and hit us! Kung alam ko lang... K-kung alam ko lang..." Karlos' eyes reddened with pain.

Nagtagis ang bagang niya at tinalikuran ito.

“Leave,” utos niya sa lalaki.

“Baron...”

“Just f*cking leave!” he hissed. “Umalis ka na at ’wag na ’wag ka nang magpapakita sa akin,” he said in a serious tone.

“Baron?” Mabilis siyang napalingon sa pinanggalingan ng boses. Nakatayo si Danyka sa tabi ni Karlos habang nag-aalalang nagpalipat-lipat ang tingin sa kanila. “Why would you say that to my brother?”

Mariing naglapat ang mga labi niya.

“Because his idea of a pleasant surprise is a bad joke.” Iyon lang at bumalik na siya sa kinauupuan kanina. Hindi na niya nilingon pang muli ang dalawa at hindi na niya nakitang nanlaki sa pagkabigla ang mga mata ni Danyka. Narinig na lang niya ang mahinang pagpapaalam ng dalawa sa kanyang ama.

Once again, Baron was confined in his own lonely world. Isinumpa yata siya at pilit na ipinagkakait sa kanya ang kaligayahan.

Masakit mawalan ng kapatid na siyang tumulong

sa kanyang makawala sa madilim niyang mundo.

Masakit mawalan ng kaibigan na tinuring na rin niyang kapamilya. Masakit mawalan ng unang babaeng natutuhan na niyang mahal.

In just a snap, nawala ang mga tao na nagbibigay kulay sa mundo niya.

