

# Chapter One



Time flies.

Pinagmasdan ni Scott ang pagtama ng ilaw sa gintong likido sa kanyang baso. Sa likod niya ay pumapailanlang ang boses ni Rihanna sa mataong dance floor. The club vibrated with music and energy, the bodies surrounding him radiating sensual heat.

Simone didn't like bars, he thought to himself. Masyado raw mainit, masyadong maingay. She had always been the conservative type. The opera and *Broadway* type. And now he supposed she was where she always wanted to be.

Nilagok niya ang laman ng baso.

"Another round, Sir?" tanong ni Rico mula sa ingay ng club.

Tumango siya.

"May nagsuntukan dito, Sir, kahapon. Nasabi na sa inyo ni Sir Paul?"

Bumaling sandali ang tingin niya sa mga bouncers sa may gilid ng bar. Nakaitim na T-shirt ang mga ito na may logo ng *La Vida*.

"Yes, naayos na. The lawyers took care of it. We have good security here."

"Oo nga, Sir. Mabuti malalaki 'yung mga

bouncer natin.”

Nilagok niya ang ibinigay nitong brandy. Tumalikod siya sa bar at hinarap ang dance floor ng pagmamay-ari niyang exclusive club.

Bodies gyrated to the pounding music, colors flashing in sharp bright lights. Energy, heat, sensuality. Ilang beses na ring nakasama niya rito si Simone noon, pero hindi niya ito ma-imagine sa lugar na ito ngayon. Two months na ang nakakalipas mula nang umalis ito. Parang kahapon lang iyon.

He stared at the sea of bodies moving to the primal rhythm. They could have been summoning the goddess of madness, dancing in an ancient offering of sensual energy and raw sexual heat. Halos kilalang mga mukha ang lahat ng nakita ni Scott. Models, actors, socialites and powerful businessmen.

Simone never felt at ease here, he thought to himself. She never truly did feel at ease in his world. In a way, it was a bit ironic, for she chose the rich and the famous path as well. Singing in *Broadway* musicals and plays, she would never be able to avoid fame, and the limelight. Yet she wanted the more quiet, the more subdued lifestyle. She just wanted to sing and to act and to live her dreams.

Tipid siyang ngumiti at umiling sa sarili.

There's nothing he could do about that.

He swallowed more brandy as hedonism raged around him.

Hindi kagaya ng tatay niya, naniniwala siyang dapat hayaan ang tao na habulin ang mga pangarap nila. Hindi exception ang mga babae. Women should not be restricted to domestic duties and responsibilities. Like men, they should be free to live their lives the way they wanted. And Simone had always wanted to sing in Broadway. Sa pitong taon na kilala niya ito at sa limang taon na naging karelasyon niya ito, alam niyang iyon ang pinakapangarap ng dalaga.

And now she was living it.

Nilagok niya ang natitirang alak sa kanyang baso.

A movement in the middle of the dance floor caught his eyes.

He stilled.

Heat, instant and primal, rushed through his veins.

The woman dancing in the middle of the floor could arouse any man with just a look of those wide, sultry eyes. Those full red lips could induce the dirtiest wet dream, and that soft, curvy body could make even a monk hard.

Shoulders swaying, arms up, hips rolling to the pulsating beat, she could have been the sex goddess

summoned by the hedonistic offering.

And she was looking at him.

Naningkit ang mga mata ni Scott.

The little black dress she wore was made of sin. The snug lace hugged her curves like a greedy lover, cupping the creamy swell of her breasts, the tiny waist, and the wide flaring hips.

He stared at the eyes of Edwina Isabel Abrera.

Time flies indeed. Or at least, it does when one is having fun. Hindi ba't iyon ang kasabihan?

Tumaas ang sulok ng mapupulang labi nito at inihilig ang ulo sa balikat ng lalaking kasayaw nito.

His muscles tensed, and his jaw hardened.

The smile on Edwina's blood red lips widened.

Itinulak nito ang lalaking kasayaw at humakbang papunta sa direksyon niya. Her hips swayed to the beat of the music as she strode toward him in her six-inch heels. The hemline of her lacy dress rode higher as she walked, revealing more of her creamy thighs.

His arousal throbbed in his pants and he shook his head.

He was f\*cking drunk.

Umupo ang dalaga sa stool sa tapat niya at sumandal sa counter.

He watched her long silky hair cascade over her creamy shoulders and back. A faint sweet scent wafted around him, mixing with the scent of

alcohol and smoke.

“Hi, Scott.”

He tensed at the way his name rolled off her tongue, and an image of her hot wet tongue running over his hardness flared through his mind.

Tumiim-bagang siya, napakunot sa sarili. “Hi, Edwina.”

“You have a nice place here,” anas nito, matamis na ngumiti kay Rico.

“The usual, Ma’am?” tanong ng bartender, halos mapunit ang mga pisngi sa lapad ng ngiti.

“Yes, thank you, Rico.”

“You’re here often?” Ibinaba ni Scott ang kanyang baso sa countertop, sumenyas sa kasamang bartender ni Rico ng isa pa.

“No. Pangalawang beses ko pa lang ’to. I dropped by two weeks ago before I went to Davao, but you’re not here.”

Pinanood ng dalaga ang pag-mix ni Rico ng inumin, at lumapad ang matamis na ngiti nito. Kunot-noo siyang napatitig sa bartender. Parang batang nagpapasikat si Rico habang pinaghahalo ang ingredients.

Lumalim ang kunot sa noo ni Scott.

“I was busy with a project in Tanay.” Tinanggap niya ang scotch na inilapag ng bartender sa kanyang harapan at bumaling ulit kay Edwina. “You visited the site for the *Global Complex*?”

His gaze roved over her smooth forehead, her deep set eyes, the sleek cheekbones and straight-edged nose. Her strong jawline could have looked too overpowering for some women, but not Edwina. There were beautiful women, and there were women like Edwina.

“Yes, I was there for a photo shoot so I decided to drop by and check the site again.”

Tumango siya at nilagok ang scotch. “So how was it, do you approve?”

She laughed. It was throaty and deep, and he wondered if her voice would be as husky after a long night of hard sex.

Muli, umiling siya sa sarili.

“It was the same as it was one year ago when I first visited. Wala pang construction na ginagawa.” She crossed her legs, and his eyes drifted to the long, toned limbs. “The engineers, architects and project managers are still talking to local officials and related government offices about permits and possible environmental issues. But of course you already know that.”

“And the photo shoot?”

“I almost had pneumonia. Ibinabad nila ako sa dagat nang halos anim na oras. Ng gabi. Habang umuulan. F\*cktards.”

He grinned, he couldn't help it, and shook his head at her. The f\*cktards probably just wanted

to see her wet and practically naked all night. He would. Nagsalubong ang mga kilay ni Scott sa isiping iyon.

“That hard, huh?” aniya, nakakunot pa rin ang noo sa sarili. “When I look at fashion magazines and posters, it looked, well... easy and effortless.”

“It had to be. It’s supposed to look effortless, but it’s f\*cking hardwork, I tell you. Remember Enrique’s MTV?”

Tumango siya, naalala ang MTV ng singer kung saan si Edwina ang kasama nito. It had looked idyllic and sensual. The heat of the desert served as a lazy haze to Edwina’s raw sexuality.

“That was in Arizona and we had sandstorms all day. We had to look like we’re all chilling and relaxing samantalang nagkakandapuwing-puwing na kami at mahi-heat stroke na. Mahirap talagang kumita ng pera, di ba, Rico?”

Ngumisi ang bartender. “Yes, Ma’am.”

Ibinaba ni Rico ang Bloody Mary sa harapan ng dalaga na nakangiting nagpasalamat.

He watched Edwina tip her head back, observing the slim column of her throat move as she drank. Drops of sweat trickled down her neck, slithering down to the soft swell of her heavy breasts. He imagined his tongue catching a single drop of sweat, imagined himself licking her creamy flesh.

Tumiim-bagang siya at kumuyom-palad. He was f\*cking drunk, all right.

This was Edwina Isabel Abrera, the daughter of an important business partner. Matagal nang kakilala ng mga Monteverde ang mga Abrera. They were both from old money, but it was only a year ago when their families became closely associated. And three months ago, they finalized a multi-billion peso deal for a shopping complex in Davao.

Edwina, the golden girl, was her father's right hand person. Kasama ito sa lahat ng business deals at meetings ng tatay nito sa kanila. She was only twenty-three years old, but already the Vice President and face of the Abrera Empire.

She was the media darling, the social butterfly, the f\*cking wet dream of every male from ages ten to eighty years old.

Ibinaba ng dalaga ang baso ng Bloody Mary at ngumiti kay Rico bago bumaba sa stool.

Scott tensed when she brushed past him, almost cursing out loud when her breasts grazed his chest.

She walked back to the dance floor, her curvy hips swaying in a natural rhythm. Agad itong napalibutan ng mga lalaki at nanigas muli ang sikhmura niya.

He watched her eyes drift close, watched her body melt to the music. Something hot and violent ignited through his bloodstream as men touched



her waist, her arms, her shoulders.

Her eyes opened, and their gazes met.

A suicide bomber could have attacked the crowded bar and screamed some religious code and it wouldn't have stopped him from striding toward Edwina. Parang may hindi nakikitang lubid na itinali ang dalaga sa leeg niya, at hinila para palapitin siya.

Pumalibot ang mga katawan sa paligid ni Scott, nanuot ang init sa ugat niya, umugong ang musika sa kanyang dugo. He pushed the men away from her.

“The f\*ck!” singhal ng isa sa mga ito.

“Get lost,” ang mahina, pero matigas niyang sagot sa mga ito. Hindi naalis ang titig niya kay Edwina.

The wicked, sensual smile never left her blood red lips. Lumapat ang palad ng dalaga sa kanyang dibdib, at ramdam niya ang paggalaw ng kanyang mga kalamnan bilang reaksiyon sa init nito. Umakyat sa kanyang balikat ang mga braso nito, paikot sa kanyang leeg. Her scent, strong and intoxicatingly sweet heated his blood.

Pumalibot ang mga braso niya sa katawan nito.

“What are you doing?”

“Hmm?” she murmured, pressing her heavy breasts against his chest.

Her flat and taut abdomen brushed against

his hardness and he cursed. His fingers kneaded her waist, gripped her hips, and pulled her closer against his heavy arousal.

A soft gasp escaped her lips, and her dark eyes widened. But the sinful curve of her lips never faltered. “What do you think, Scott?”

Tumalikod ito sa kanya, inilapat ang likod sa kanyang harapan. His arms automatically went around her, his palm splaying possessively across her stomach, his other hand molding her hip. Her hips rolled to the music. She rubbed her ass against the hard bulge in his pants.

Napamura siya sa tainga ni Edwina, at bumaon ang mga daliri niya sa balakang nito.

“What are you doing?” marahas niya uling bulong sa tainga ng dalaga, ang mga kamay niya, hindi niya mapigilan sa pagdama sa katawan nito. He kneaded her hips, her waist, rubbed his palms up and down her side, under the curves of her breasts.

She turned her face toward him, her hot, fragrant breath brushing his lips. He could see the gold flecks around her pupils, the light dusting of freckles across her upturned nose. The bright lights pulsed across her timeless face. One thousand years into the past, one thousand years into the future, and Edwina’s face would always be what poets and artists would always consider beautiful.

Bumigat ang mga talukap ng dalaga at idinampi nito ang mga labi sa kanya. Pakiramdam ni Scott ay kinuryente siya. Primal heat streaked through his bloodstream like unrestrained fire.

Humigpit ang hawak niya sa balakang nito at umawang ang mga labi nito sa ilalim ng mga labi niya. Bumugso ang puro at mainit na pagnanasa sa kanyang mga ugat sa pagniniig ng kanilang mga dila. She was power, she was danger, she was every man's sinful pleasure.

Her arms snaked around his neck, her fingers digging into his scalp. Her ass ground against his hardness. She shamelessly rubbed her flesh against his throbbing length.

He growled in her mouth, his tongue tangling with hers.

Naglandas ang mga kamay niya sa katawan ng dalaga. His palm covered her breast, squeezing the heavy mound. He could feel the hard tip of her breast against the silky lace rubbing against his palm. Bumaba ang isang kamay niya at hinaplos ang tagiliran nito, pababa sa baywang at balakang nito. Kumuyom ang palad niya sa laylayan ng bestida ng dalaga at ipinasok ang kamay sa ilalim niyon. Her hot skin was satiny-smooth underneath his palm.

He massaged her thigh, skimming his fingers over the hot, supple flesh. The heat of her body,

the heady scent of her, the feel of her soft curves against his hard frame saturated his blood with undiluted lust.

She suckled his tongue and his hardness throbbed in his pants. Gumapang paakyat ang palad ni Scott sa hita ng dalaga, papunta sa mainit na sentro nito.

Kinagat nito ang labi niya at itinulak siya palayo.

Hilo siyang napamulat.

Pumintig ang musika sa paligid niya, bumangga ang mga katawan sa kanya. Matingkad ang mga kulay na sumasayaw sa pagbugso ng musika. And Edwina, ungodly beautiful and wicked, crooked her finger at him and smiled.

Tumalikod ito at nakipagsisikan paalis sa dance floor.



# Chapter Two



Dazed and rock hard, Scott followed Edwina like a dog after a bone. Hinagilap niya ang kamay nito at hinila ito pabalik sa kanya.

She laughed, her fingers twining with his as their mouth fused together. The taste of Bloody Mary still lingered on her tongue, and he thought it would probably be his new favorite alcoholic drink.

Kinagat ng dalaga ang kanyang panga. “Your office, Scott. Let’s go somewhere private.”

Tila drogang bumubugso ang pagnanasa sa kanyang dugo habang nakikipagsiksikan sila sa mga tao papunta sa kanyang opisina. Umakyat sila sa hagdan, iniilagan ang mga sumasayaw at nagkikiskisang mga katawan.

He thought he couldn’t get any harder than he already was, but he was wrong. Nang makita niya ang pinto ng kanyang opisina, dark, raw heat curled in his gut and radiated off his big body.

Marahas ang paghinga, ipinasok niya ang combination sa panel sa gilid ng pinto at itinulak iyon pabukas.

Sumara sa likuran niya ang pinto, ikinukulong sila sa katahimikan ng kanyang opisina. Walang ilaw sa loob ng silid, pero tumatagos ang matatalas

na ilaw mula sa ibaba ng club sa isang salaming dingding.

In the dim light and humming silence, he could feel the hunger more sharply in his gut, could taste his need like a drug on his tongue. She stood there in the middle of his office in her short black dress, her hair tousled, her skin flushed, her lips swollen and parted.

Naglakad siya palapit kay Edwina.

Pumulupot ang mga braso nito sa kanyang leeg nang hapitin niya ito. Their mouths molded together, their tongues tangled and mated as their bodies meshed. Ipinulupot niya ang mahaba nitong buhok sa kanyang mga daliri at ihinilig ang mukha nito, pinapalalim ang halik.

She rubbed her body sensuously against his hard frame, her breasts molding against his solid chest, her abdomen pressing against his hard length.

He was so hard for her it was painful. His palms cupped her breasts, kneading and squeezing the heavy flesh. Umungol ito sa kanyang bibig at lalong idinikit ang katawan sa kanya. Malayang naglandas ang kamay ni Scott sa katawan nito. He palmed her ass, massaged the plump cheeks through the lacy fabric. Then he slid his hand under her dress to touch smooth bare flesh.

His hardness jerked in his pants and he cursed

in her mouth.

“Witch,” he growled, his fingers digging into the fleshy cheeks of her buttocks. “You’re not wearing any underwear.”

She licked her lips and rubbed herself against his pants.

“Faster this way,” anas nito.

He growled, pushing her back against his desk. Her fingers dug into his hair, her body rubbing wantonly against his. He let her grind herself against his hardness, allowed her wet heat to rub against the arousal in his pants.

Napasinghap si Edwina nang iangat niya ito paupo sa desk. Hinila niya pataas ang laylayan ng bestida nito.

His nostrils flared as he stared at the swollen mound between her thighs. She was a sight to behold. Sitting on his desk, her legs wide open, the skirt of her dress bunched up at her waist, her moist, swollen sex was exposed to him.

Breathing hard, he almost tore the fabric in his haste to pull it down to expose her breasts. His eyes darkened as he stared at her rosy tips. Her skin was perfect, the creamy mounds round and mouthwateringly full. He cupped the plump flesh, reveling in the weight in his palms. He watched her head fall back as he massaged the heavy mounds, his fingers tugging and pinching the tight hardened

tips.

“Keep your thighs open,” Scott ordered as he bent down to lick one pointed tip.

Napadaing ito at napasabunot sa kanyang buhok. The taste of her skin, the feel of her flesh inside his mouth pumped animal lust through his veins. He suckled her hard and deep, plumping the engorged mounds, drawing out cries and gasps from her. His hardness throbbed in his pants but he ignored it.

Malalim ang paghinga, lumuhod siya sa harapan nito.

She cried out and dug her fingers into his hair as his tongue parted the folds of her sex. Her taste spread over his tongue like a potent drug. He groaned, pushed his tongue inside her hot, creamy depth. Rinig niya ang pagdaing ng dalaga, at lalo lamang niyong pinatalas ang pagnanasa sa kanyang sikhura. Lust sharpened his senses, overwhelming him with her taste, her scent, her texture.

Itinaas niya ang mabibigat na mga mata sa dalaga.

Lips swollen and parted, eyes dark and heavily lidded, skin flushed with heat and sweat, she looked like a pagan goddess taking her pleasure from a mere mortal like him.

And he gave it to her.

He feasted on her, drove her to the peak of



sensual madness again and again. Pumailanlang ang daing ni Edwina sa loob ng silid. Sumabunot ang mga kamay nito sa kanyang buhok at tuluyan itong napahiga sa kanyang mesa.

Tumayo siya, kinalas ang butones ng pantalon niya.

Nagmulat ito at nanghihinang tumitig sa kanya. Hinila siya ni Edwina paibabaw rito, halos punitin ang polo niya pahubad sa kanyang katawan. He ripped his zipper down and freed his throbbing hardness.

“Is this what you want, Edwina?” he murmured, rubbing his thick length up and down her drenched slit.

“Yes, yes... please!” She clutched his arms, lifted her hips and ground her molten softness into his engorged hardness.

He growled, squeezed and cupped her ass, the wide head of his arousal parting her creamy folds.

She moaned, dug her fingers into his biceps as he pushed into her hot, snug depth. A lick of fire spread over his nerves as her molten muscles clamped around him.

“F\*ck,” mura niya, bumabaon ang mga daliri sa mga balakang nito. “Relax, let me in.”

He pulled back, hissed at the loss of her warmth, and drove into her with quick, heavy strokes. He gritted his teeth as he pushed into her,

working his way into her tight, wet heat.

Growling, he gripped her hips, and in one brutal thrust, buried himself to the hilt. He groaned at the feel of her soft heat squeezing around him, swallowing all of him. Muntik na niyang hindi marinig ang marahas na pagdaing ng dalaga.

Natigilan siya at hilog napamulat.

Nakaawang ang mga labi ni Edwina, malalaking mga matang nakatitig sa kanya. Every cell in his body screamed for him to move, to push and f\*ck her hard the way he wanted. Pero may isang bahagi pa rin niya ang matino at sumigaw sa kanyang tumigil siya.

Kumakabog ang dibdib, napatitig si Scott sa pagitan nila.

There was no blood between them, but he knew a virgin when he's holding one. And by the feel of that incredible tightness coupled with her sharp, strained cry, he knew Edwina Isabel Abrera was a f\*cking virgin. Awang ang mga labing bumalik ang titig niya sa mga mata nito.

“What the...?” he stuttered, panic mixing with the heady lust. “Why...?”

Pumikit ito, iniarko ang likod at iniangat ang mga balakang.

Marahas siyang nagmura at hinawakan ang balakang nito. “Don’t,” he hissed. “Stop. Don’t move.”

“No,” she whimpered, rolling her hips as her inner muscles suckled him.

He hissed, his heavy thickness jerking inside of her. “Damn it, Edwina.”

He should stop, damn it to hell, he knew he should stop. But his fingers dug into her waist, his hips moving into a slow but hard rhythm. It was as if he couldn’t control his body anymore. Lust had poisoned his blood, lust for the woman writhing beneath him.

Umungol ang dalaga, lalong iniawang ang mga hita at itinaas ang katawan upang salubungin ang kanyang pigil na pag-indayog. He hardened and thickened even more inside her, his hips jerking into heavy, forceful thrusts. He could do nothing but give in to the primal hunger, could do nothing but yield to her. His hips pistoned between her thighs, driving into her with fast, powerful pumps.

Colors blurred around him, but Edwina remained sharp and bright. The flush of her damp creamy skin, the lustrous silk of her hair spread across his desk, the wide, sultry eyes.

Ibinaba niya ang mukha rito.

“Say my name,” he breathe, his voice rough and low from hunger. “Say my name.”

“Scott.” Her dark eyes widened as his hard length stroked her walls. “Scott...”

He groaned, covering her mouth with his as the

pulsating fire burned his blood. He lost rhythm, his hips pumping recklessly into her, driving his throbbing hardness with a force that should have frightened her.

But she took him, her legs wrapped tight around his waist as her mouth moved hungrily beneath his.

He swallowed her cry in his kiss, her muscles clenching around him, pulling him to the edge. He kept pumping between her thighs as his own release wash over him.



Mag-isa siyang nagising sa kama, malamig ang bahagi kung saan nakahiga dapat si Edwina. Bumugso ang lamig sa kanyang dugo at napabalikwas siya ng bangon. Tumayo siya mula sa kama, natatarantang hinahanap ang mga damit niya, nang marinig niya ang lagaslas ng tubig sa banyo.

Napalipad ang tingin ni Scott doon.

Nakasara iyon, pero rinig niya ang tunog ng tubig mula sa shower.

Nanghina ang mga tuhod niya at napaupo siya muli sa kama.

“F\*ck.” Naisuklay niya ang mga daliri sa buhok.

Bumukas ang pinto at lumabas ang dalaga. Her dark, sultry eyes widened when she saw him. “Oh, I’m sorry. Did I wake you?”

Tumutulo pa ang dulo ng basang buhok nito. Her damp skin looked mouthwateringly soft and smooth. Nakatabing ang isang blue towel sa katawan nito.

His towel.

He couldn't help grinning. "You should have woken me up." Tumayo siya at hinila ito.

Ngumiti ito, iniyakap ang mga braso sa kanyang leeg. Wala itong makeup, at tila nagliliwanag ang balat nito. She was so f\*cking beautiful it hurt. Ibinaon niya ang mukha sa leeg ng dalaga at malalim siyang huminga.

God, she smelled so good.

Her natural sweet scent still lingered on her skin, but she also smelled like his soap and shampoo. He felt his maleness stir.

"You smell like me," Scott murmured, rubbing his nose along the side of her neck.

Tumawa ito at pinadaan ang mga daliri sa kanyang buhok. "Well, I used your soap and shampoo."

"I like my smell on you."

Muli itong tumawa at inihilig ang pisngi sa kanyang balikat. Sa loob ng ilang sandali, nanatili silang ganoon, magkayakap lang at ninanamnam ang init ng bawat isa.

Marahang isinuklay ni Edwina ang mga daliri sa kanyang buhok. "I have to go."

Nanigas ang katawan niya. Maingat ang paghinga, itinaas niya ang mukha para tumitig sa mga mata ng dalaga. “Not yet.”

Tumaas ang sulok ng mga labi nito pero umiling siya.

“No. We have to talk first, Edwina. We can’t ignore what happened here.”

She laughed that deep throaty laugh that could arouse him in an instant, and melt him like butter inside.

“Of course we can’t and *won’t* ignore what happened last night,” anito, malapad ang ngiti sa mga labi. “You and I, Mr. Scott Monteverde, are going officially steady.”

Hindi siya nakapagsalita nang ilang segundo, gulat na napatitig lang dito.

Hindi ito natinag doon. “What, may objection ka?”

A thousand thoughts ran through his head. It made him feel like a jerk, but he thought of Simone. Guilt pierced him like a sharp blade. Guilt dahil parang nagtaksil siya kay Simone, o guilt dahil naalala niya ito ngayong kasama niya si Edwina, hindi siya sigurado.

Nanigas ang ngiti sa mga labi ng dalaga. He felt her stiffen in his arms, too. Pero napakabilis niyon na halos hindi niya napansin.

Maikli itong tumawa. “That was a joke, Scott.

Don't worry—”

“Yes.” Humigpit ang yakap niya rito nang akmang aatras ito. His fingers flexed against her waist. His brows scrunched together at the panic he felt when she tried to pull away from him.

Natigilan ito, itinaas ang mga mata sa kanya.

“Yes,” ulit niya, hinahayaan ang sariling malunod sa mga mata nito. “Yes, I want a relationship with you.”

He thought he saw shadows dim her eyes for a moment, pero lumapad ang matamis na ngiti sa mga labi ni Edwina.

“Good,” she murmured, pressing her sweet lips to his.

He felt his own lips curving into a smile. A steady relationship with Edwina? His smile widened. Something warm and fuzzy fluttered in his stomach as he sank into her kiss.



# Chapter Three



“The *Palace Resort* will open next month according to schedule,” pahayag ni Scott habang nakaupo sa tabi niya sa mahabang conference table. Seryoso ang guwapong mukha ng binata habang nakabaling sa report sa malaking screen. “We closed the deal with *Ferera* last weekend for the joint project in Italy. Construction will start at the end of the year.”

“We will discuss the preliminary reports with the *Ferera* representatives next week,” paliwanag ni Edwina, at natuon sa kanya ang atensyon ng kanyang papa at ng ama ni Scott. “The *DPWH* awarded us the project in Catanduanes and Davao. We also had the two *BOT* projects in Cebu from the local government.”

“Good job, both of you,” pormal na bati ni Vincent Monteverde. Namana ni Scott ang kulay ng tatay nito. Golden brown with a hint of bronze. Pareho rin ang buhok ng mga ito. Kahit matanda na, malago at maitim pa rin ang buhok ng matandang Monteverde. “The *Ferera’s* were impressed with our project proposal. After Italy, we could start another project in London.”

Tumayo ang ama ni Scott para pormal na



makipagkamay sa kanila. Tumayo rin sila ng nobyo para tanggapin ang pagbati nito.

“Congratulations, these projects would open our corporations to wider and better opportunities.” Saglit na tumango sa kanya ang matandang Monteverde na para bang napipilitan itong aminin ang contribution niya. Hindi na bago iyon sa kanya. Naiwan yata sa 18th Century ang tatay ni Scott kung saan ang tingin sa mga babae ay para lamang sa bahay.

Vincent Monteverde didn't believe women have what it takes to join the business world. Para itong lumulunok ng buhay na daga sa tuwing kailangan siyang i-congratulate sa mga naiambag niya sa kompanya.

“Our stocks increased by ten percent this week with these projects. Well done.”

Lumapit din ang kanyang ama at nakipagkamay sa kanila. Gaya ni Vincent, tila may kumot ng kapangyarihan na nakabalot kay Lucio Abrera. Alpha males, iyon ang mga ama nila.

“Now let's talk about another important matter. Your wedding.”

*Business*, she thought to herself. Kung banggitin ng mga ito ang kasal nila ni Scott ay para lamang iyong isang business transaction.

“Let's discuss it tonight at our house,” patuloy ng ama. “Be home by seven.”

Just like the CEOs that their fathers were, tumango ang mga ito para ipahayag na tapos na ang meeting, at lumabas na ng conference room.

“Well, I suppose we should get ready to go home, too,” saad ng nobyo. Hinawakan siya nito sa baywang, marahang pinisil.

“Maybe.” Hindi napigilan ni Edwina ang pagtambol ng kanyang puso habang nakatitig dito.

Stupid, she knew, but her breath still hitched whenever she looked at him.

Lagi niya itong nakikita at nakakasalamuha sa mga gatherings bago pa man naging malapit ang pamilya nila. They have been together for seven years, yet he could still make her dizzy with just a single look.

The strong and sharp angles of his face was an inheritance from his mother’s side. May lahing Griego ang ina ni Scott. He could have been a model for the statues of those Greek gods with his perfectly straight nose, sharp cheekbones and chiseled jaw. And his lips, her blood hummed at the memory of those sensual lips moving between her legs just this morning. Tumaas ang tingin niya sa mga mata ng binata at nakita ang panunukso sa mga iyon, tanda na alam nito ang iniisip niya.

Naging mayabang ang ngiti ni Edwina at tinaasan niya ito ng kilay.

“You’ve read the status reports I sent you?”

Marahan nitong minasahe ang kanyang balakang, naghahatid ng mumunting boltahe ng kuryente sa kanyang laman.

“Yes, nakausap ko na ang project engineer sa Malolos. Magsisimula na ang construction ng roofing, interior and exterior wall framing sa Building A sa makalawa. Sa Building B, ’yung wall insulation, plaster sa West Side at interior elevator ang tatapusin.”

“Kailangang matapos ang project na ’yon bago magtapos ang quarter. I don’t want any delays.”

“There won’t be.”

“Good.” His lips curved, and his mouth covered hers.

Hot, heavy lust coiled between her thighs as his tongue slipped between her lips.

Umakyat ang mga braso niya sa leeg ng nobyo at bumaon ang kanyang mga daliri sa buhok nito. Bumaba ang kamay nito sa kanyang mga hita, pumaloob sa kanyang palda at marahang pumisil doon, gumapang papunta sa kanyang pang-upo. His big, warm hands cupped her ass, squeezing the globes, pressing her abdomen to the hardness in his pants.

Umungol siya at kinagat nito ang lower lip niya.

“We’d better leave,” mainit nitong bulong sa kanyang bibig.

She opened her eyes, licked her lips, and felt

his hardness throbbed against her stomach as he watched her tongue.

“Yes.” Pinadausdos ni Edwina ang mga kamay sa dibdib nito, marahang dinadama ang matigas na mga kalamnan doon.

Ito naman ang umungol at marahang pinisil ang kanyang pang-upo. “Keep doing that and we’ll never get out of here.”

Tumawa siya, at mababang umungol muli si Scott.

“You started it.” Kinagat niya ang panga nito. “But you’re right. I have to be home by seven. I don’t want to be late. Come on.” Hinila niya ito papunta sa pinto.



“December would be the best date for the wedding,” maawtoridad na pahayag ni Lucio Abrera. Para itong haring nakaupo sa high back chair sa main parlor ng *Abrera Mansion*.

Tumango siya sa ama at ibinaba ang tasa ng kape sa mahogany coffee table. “Yes, Papa, iyon din ang balak namin ni Scott. Right, Scott?”

His lips curved into a smile as he nodded at her father. “Yes, Papa. We thought December was the best date, too.”

Isang buwan na silang engaged, pero halos isang taon nang tinatawag ni Scott na Papa at Mama ang mga magulang niya. She smiled, and

settled her head against his shoulder.

“This is good for both our families.” Vincent Monteverde lifted his snifter and drank his brandy. “Dapat matagal na kayong na-engage at nagpakasal. We could have started many of our business projects earlier if the two of you had tied the knot sooner.”

“You know why we didn’t, Dad.” Pinaglaro ni Scott ang daliri sa kanyang buhok, pasensyosong nakatitig sa ama nito. “Edwina and I have both been very busy.”

Umismid ang ama nito at matamang tumitig sa kanya. “Would you still continue your modeling career?” May halong pang-aakusa ang tanong nito.

She didn’t bother to be offended. Masyado na siyang sanay sa ama ng kanyang fiancé. Pero mukhang nao-offend pa rin si Scott para sa kanya.

“Edwina can do whatever she wants.”

Pinisil niya ang kamay ng nobyo para patigilin ito. Ngumiti siya sa ama ni Scott. “Yes, Dad, I’ll still accept commercial and print ad offers. But I assure you they won’t be a problem. Rest assured, modeling won’t affect my performance in the company and my relationship with Scott.”

Umismid muli ang lalaki at umiling sa kanya. “If you didn’t insist on finishing your masters and—”

“Dad,” pakli ni Scott, matigas ang titig sa ama. “Stop it please. We’re getting off track.”

“May punto ang dad mo, Scott,” matigas na untag ng kanyang ama. “You have to stop being stubborn, Edwina. Your relationship with Scott should be your first priority. We have billions at stake here. This marriage is important for the Monteverdes and the Abreras. We can’t afford any mishaps.”

It was all business to them, she thought miserably.

Ramdam niyang gustong makipagtalo ng fiancé, pero pinisil niya ang kamay nito. Matipid siyang ngumiti sa nobyo at nagkibit-balikat para sabihin ditong walang epekto sa kanya ang pasaring ng mga magulang nila.

His shoulders relaxed, but irritation still flickered in his eyes. Binalingan ulit niya ang mga kasama nila. “The wedding dress—”

“We’ve found the right dress for you.” Maliit na ngumiti sa kanya ang mama niya. The former beauty queen still looked lovely even in her sixties. Perfect dress, perfect makeup, perfect hair, ito ang epitome ng trophy wife.

“Yes, Edwina, you should see it soon. You’re going to be a beautiful bride,” nakangiting sabi ng mom ni Scott.

“Do it later,” sabat ni Vincent. “The guest list should be finalized before this weekend. We will decide the time and place this week.”

Tahimik na tumango ang mama niya at ni Scott, walang angal na sinusunod ang utos ng asawa ng mga ito. Ito ang mga babae sa buhay nila, nakakulong sa makipot na mundo na pinaglagyan dito ng makapangyarihang mga asawa ng mga ito.

At pumapayag lang ang mga ito.

Umiling si Edwina at ipinagpatuloy ang diskusyon sa date at venue ng kasal nila ng nobyo.

“We’ll have the guest list by Saturday,” aniya, at dinampot ang tasa ng kanyang kape. Tumayo siya para kumuha ng tubig sa side table. “We could...” Umikot ang paligid niya at napahawak siya sa sofa.

“Hey.” Ginagap ni Scott ang kamay niya.

“What’s wrong?”

Naramdaman niyang tumayo ito at hinawakan siya sa baywang.

Umiling siya, pilit inayos ang pagtayo. “I’m okay. Nabigla lang ako sa pagtayo.”

“Yan ang sinasabi ko sa ’yo,” akusa ng kanyang papa. “You think you can do all that you want and damn the repercussions!”

“Thank you for your concern, Papa, but I’m okay,” nakangiti niyang putol dito. Binalingan niya ang nobyo at pinisil ang kamay nito. “I’ll just go to the restroom.”

Tinanguan niya ang mga kasama sa parlor at lumabas siya ng silid.



Tinitigan ni Edwina ang repleksyon niya sa salamin. Medyo maputla ang mga pisngi at labi niya. She couldn't get sick, she thought disgustedly. She's too goddamn busy to get sick.

Nagpahid siya ng blush sa mga pisngi at pink gloss sa kanyang mga labi. Satisfied she didn't look like an anemic vampire anymore, she walked out of the restroom.

At saktong nakita niya ang paglabas ng isang staff sa study ng kanyang ama.

Magulo ang buhok nito at naka-tuck out ang puting blouse. Maingat na inayos ng babae ang black nitong palda. Mahubog ang katawan ng babae, iyong tipong laging kinahuhumalingan ng kanyang ama.

Nagtaas ng tingin ang staff.

“Ma’am Edwina.” Pulang-pula ang mukha nito. Bahagyang namamaga rin ang mga labi ng babae, at halos burado na ang lipstick sa bibig. “Uhm, sorry po... excuse me po.”

Mabilis itong tumalikod at naglakad palayo.

Tiim-labi siyang pumasok sa study ng kanyang papa.

Nasa likod ng mahaba nitong desk ang ama, abala sa pag-aayos ng pantalon nito.

“Couldn't you have waited for us to leave before you messed with the house help?”

Nag-angat ng kilay ang ginoo, kaswal na inabot



ang decanter ng alak at nagsalin sa kopita nito. “Huwag kang makialam sa mga ginagawa ko. Ayusin mo ang mga pinaggagagawa mo.”

Tumayo ito at lumagok ng alak, nakatitig sa kanya na para bang maduming basahan siya sa loob ng study nito. “Anong kapalpakan na naman ang ginawa mo sa hotel sa Ilocos?”

“The hotel in Ilocos is perfectly fine. We hit the target sales for the year.”

“Your target is too low.”

“Low?” Pagak siyang tumawa. “No one would think that a forty percent increase is a low target. Ah, yes.” Dramatiko siyang ngumiti sa ama. “Meron nga pala. Ikaw.”

Her father sneered. “Yan ang problema sa ’yo, Edwina. Kuntento ka na sa puwede na. You don’t strive for the best. Pathetic.” Nilagpasan siya nito at tinungo ang pinto.

Amoy niya ang mumurahing perfume ng babaeng staff sa katawan nito, at pinigilan niyang masuka.

“If you can’t be the best, you’re nothing. ’Wag mong pakialaman ang mga ginagawa ko, sarili mo ang ayusin mo. Focus on making Scott happy. Be sure you’re the goddamn perfect wife for him. ’Wag na ’wag kang magiging pabigat kahit kailan sa kanya at siguraduhin mong alam niya na may pakinabang siya sa ’yo. You’re an Abrera, the

heiress of a multibillion dollar empire. You're an asset to him. Make damn sure you stay that way. Because once you become a liability, he will leave you. There are many women like you, Edwina. Madali kang palitan.”

Lumabas ito ng pinto.

Sarkastiko siyang tumawa at mariing tumitig sa labas ng bintana. “Thanks, Papa,” mapait niyang usal sa kawalan.

“Edwina!” Bumukas muli ang pinto ng study at pumasok ang kanyang mama. If her father was the king, her mother was surely the queen. At least, sa pisikal na hitsura nito. Draped in diamonds and silk, her mother would look perfect in any royal palace in Europe.

“Darling, I've been looking for you everywhere.”

Hinawi nito ang buhok sa kanyang pisngi at masuyong hinawakan ang kanyang baba.

“You're a bit pale, napupuyat ka ba? Take care of your skin, Edwina. You have to always look perfect for Scott.”

“Mama.” Hinawakan ng dalaga ang kamay ng ina at malamlam siyang ngumiti. “I'm okay. And yes, I'm taking care of my skin. How are you, Mama?”

Nanatili ang ngiti sa mga labi ni Juanita Abrera. “I'm okay. I'm great.”

“Ma, I think—”

“Stop it.” Tumigas ang malamusikang tinig ng kanyang ina, pero agad din itong ngumiti at muling inabala ang sarili sa pag-aayos ng buhok niya. “I’m fabulous, Edwina. Your father just gave me a ruby necklace last week. It’s magnificent. We will have a charity event this week for the victims of *Bagyong Glenda*. I think I’m going to wear that necklace for the event.”

May kumatok sa pinto ng study at bumukas iyon.

“Edwina...” Natigilan si Scott nang makita nitong kasama niya ang mama niya. Tuluyan itong pumasok ng silid at tila lumiit ang espasyo nang makatuloy ito. Laging nangyayari iyon kapag nasa paligid ang nobyo. His presence seemed to dominate the surrounding. Powerful, confident, all encompassing. “Am I interrupting?”

“It’s okay, Hijo.” Malapad na ngumiti ang mestiza niyang mama at nilapitan ang kanyang fiancé. “I was just telling Edwina about the fundraising event I helped organize. I want the two of you to be there.”

“Of course, Mama.” Nag-angat ng titig si Scott sa kanya at tumaas ang sulok ng sensual nitong mga labi.

Her stomach fluttered as she stared at those chiseled lips. Everything about him just seemed so goddamn perfect. From the tips of his thick black

hair, to the intense eyes and strong hard jaw. And that smile. Her blood hummed as she stared at his smile. He could make a woman wet with just that smile. No wonder some women still practically throw their damp panties at him even though he was already with her. Women basically eye f\*cked him wherever they went.

Nag-tense ang sikmura niya sa isiping iyon.

“Edwina and I will be there,” sagot ng nobyo.

“Thank you, Dear. Sige, maiwan ko na muna kayo.”

Ngumiti ang mama niya sa kanya bago ito lumabas ng study.

“Everything okay?” Nilapitan siya ni Scott, pinadaan ang mga daliri sa kanyang buhok.

Sandali siyang pumikit at ninamnam lamang ang pakiramdam ng pagmasahe ng mga daliri nito sa kanyang anit.

“Yes.” Naramdaman ni Edwina ang marahang pagdampi ng mga labi nito sa kanyang noo.

“You don’t have a fever,” he murmured. “But you’re a bit pale. Do you have a tummy ache?”

Hindi niya mapigilang ngumiti. Scott could be so simple sometimes. Minsan para pa rin itong bata at tingin nito masakit na tiyan ang laging dahilan kaya hindi maganda ang pakiramdam ng isang tao.

“I’m okay, medyo nahihilo lang.” Gumapang ang mga daliri nito sa kanyang batok at marahang

pinisil ang mga tense na muscles niya roon. Napaungol siya at napayuko para mas malaya nitong mahaplos ang kanyang batok.

“When was the last time you had your period, Edwina?”

Napatunghay siya, napamulagat dito. “What?”

Kinabig siya ni Scott at niyakap. “Your period, Edwina. When was the last time you had it?”

“Huh? Ano ba’ng itinatanong mo?” Natigilan siya, lalong nanlaki ang mga mata nang mapagtanto sa wakas ang ibig sabihin ng nobyo. “Oh.”

“Yeah, oh.” Lumapad ang ngiti ni Scott. Matunog siya nitong hinagkan sa mga labi.

“But I’m on the pill.”

“Walang contraception ang one hundred percent effective.”

“But—”

“You’ve been throwing up every morning the last four days. You get dizzy sometimes. Sounds pregnant to me.”

Nasabi na ba niyang sobrang simple nito minsan? “It could be a virus,” giit niya.

He kissed her hard and pulled her toward the door. “Let’s stop speculating. Do a pregnancy test.”