Top of Form

**when i met you**

Bottom of Form

You gave me a reason for my being...   
and I love what I'm feeling...   
and you gave me a meaning to my life...   
yes I've gone beyond existing..   
  
........ and it all began   
  
  
...When I Met You   
  
  
  
-- THE CHARACTERS --   
  
-- JEREMY --   
  
-- IRIS --   
  
-- FULL CAST --   
  
not real. model images only. ;)   
  
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+++++   
  
  
  
  
Don’t you find it weird that after you've been hurt by someone, you begin hating the habit, but before you know it, you are already doing the same thing to others? ...   
  
It is definitely true that we tend to do the things that have been done to us in the past. We do it not specifically, but rather significantly. Why? Simply because the deep wound caused by this painful experience has not healed yet, and think about it... This is a picture within a bigger picture.   
  
We pass on the pain to somebody else because we haven't learned to forgive yet. Again, we hurt because we have not forgiven. And hatred empowers us, because love is being supressed.   
  
The cycle just keeps on going until somebody puts a stop to it. Our pain has now become everybody’s pain. It will be hard, but the stop has to begin with us, but in order to do so, we should start by forgiving the one who hurt us... and everything else after that will fall into place.   
  
Let’s not surround ourselves with huge walls. There’s more to life than the pain we feel. Learn to forgive and forget, because forgiving will not only heal our wounds and set us free from misery, but it will also open probably not a door yet, but a window for happiness to come in…   
  
Love and hate, what is the difference? As the famous line says, “there’s a thin line between love and hate.” True. A lover can be a hater, a hater can be a lover.. and what’s worse is falling for someone you swore to never fall for…   
  
What is the true meaning of being in love?   
  
  
to be in love is to discover the beautiful things in life -   
to be in love is to confuse night with days -   
to be in love is to walk with wings by the world -   
to be in love is to live with a naked heart -   
to be in love is to ignore the time and its measurement -   
to be in love is to contemplate the life from above -   
to be in love is to descry the smallest star in the sky -   
to be in love is to see the sea with trees and roses -   
to be in love is to listen to your voice within -   
and most of all.. to be in love is not being able to define what love is, at all…   
  
sometimes, loving could be so painful, yet it is the simplest way why we find ourselves smiling..   
  
makes sense?   
  
  
  
  
  
WHATEVER! >:( this is plain bull, I tell you. so I crumpled this piece of paper and threw it in the trash. Get over it, it’s been forever. There’s no such thing as love, it doesn’t exist…anymore.   
  
  
  
  
So, how do I start this? Ohh. Okay, let me introduce myself.. the name’s Madeleine Iris Martin. Iris for short. You can call me Madeleine if you want, I’d careless. 20 years old. I’m an only child, raised by single mother, born here in L.A., pure Filipina. Raised as Filipina, acts like a Filipina? Sometimes. Do I speak tagalog? OPO! Do I understand it? OO NAMAN! My Mom talks to me this way, not all the time, though.. only when she’s really mad, which would be.. uhmm… always? Okay, so she talks to me in this language all the time. What can I do? I’m that special. ::)   
  
My mom and I maintain a close relationship. – not! We’re like cats and dogs, I hate her, she hates me, she loves me, I love her. Simple as that. We get along alright, but for some strange reason, we show love for each other in a very odd way. My mom is self-employed, meaning, she works for her own business. a big business, that is, with many branches all over the continent, and one branch just recently opened in the east side of the world. My mom’s one of those stingy, tight, workaholic kind of people. She’s very controlling, as she has always been, but never to me.   
  
How come she’s always mad? Because I’m handful, I’m difficult, I’m hard-headed, I’m complicated, I’m inconsistent, I’m bad. I’m… Iris. 8)   
  
So, who is this famous Iris, anyways? How about, what you see is what you get? Yeah, that’ll work. – Attitude-wise. I party here and there, get in trouble here and there, being hated here and there. Haters love to hate me because I’m me. I’m unpredictable; I’m a deep person, meaning there’s more into me than meets the eye. there’s always a root to everything.   
  
Friends? Yes, I have a couple. Maybe a few more. Okay, I have a lot. but I wouldn’t exactly call them my friends, more like… people that claim to know me. they’re probably hating on me when my back is turned, anyway. I have one best friend, though, Lauren. She’s also Filipino, but unlike me, she was born in the Philippines and would constantly go back and forth there. Me? I’ve only been there for only 5 -10 times in my life.   
  
  
  
“Madeleine!!” see what I’m saying? “Come down here, right now!” ooohh! Mommy’s upset, I’m scared. ::)   
  
I put on my bunny slippers and ran down the stairs. “Calm down, Mom” I looked at the time, it’s almost 1:00 am. She just got home? ??? “geez.. what are you, an alarm clock?” she’s always like this, yelling like there’s no tomorrow! “What do you want?” ???   
  
She took out two pieces of paper from her purse. “What are these?” >:( even louder, “What are these?!?” >:(   
  
What are those? “uhmm… Papers?” ???   
  
“Wag kang pilosopo! Ano na namang ginawa mo?” >:( she pointed me with the papers.   
  
“In English, please.” 8) I just love pissing her off more! “I don’t understand you.” 8)   
  
“anong hindi mo ko naiintindihan? Umayos ka nga!” >:( she shouted.   
  
“fine.” I crossed my arms. “magtatagalog na.”   
  
“sanayin mo ang sarili mo, dahil Pilipino ka, at dapat lang na alam mong magtagalog.”   
  
“but I am sanay-ing my self.” Ang sabi ko. “yan ha, tagalog yan.” ::)   
  
She lifted the first envelop. “Alam mo ba kung ano to?” she asked, hawak niya yung isang paper with her left hand.   
  
“How about you tell me what it is, get this over with, so I can go back to bed and sleep?” I yawned. “I was sleeping, you know?”   
  
“This is a personal letter from your professor telling me how ill-mannered you are in her class! Sumasagot ka na naman sa mga teachers mo!” she sat down. “This is the second letter I’ve received from the same professor, Madeleine!”   
  
“That hag hates me!” seriously, she really does. “I was just trying to get my point across her thick head.” 8)   
  
“So? I don’t care! In this world, many people will hate you, but that doesn’t give you any permission to misbehave. Hindi kita pinalaki para maging bastos, Madeleine! What happened to your manners?” she started raising her voice.. again.   
  
I spoke sarcastically, “uhh.. I was in a hurry, I forgot them here.”   
  
“sumagot ka nga ng maayos! Stop acting like a smart ass.”   
  
“What? What’s wrong with what I just said?” ::) I rolled my eyes on her.   
  
“Ayusin mo yan ha! I want you to apologize to Mrs. Drummond first thing in the morning.” binigay nya saken yung letter. “And this,” hawak naman niya yung isang paper. “This is your bank statement." uh-oh, she has my bank statement. "What have you been doing with your money!?”   
  
“ano pa ba? ??? eh di. I shopped. ::)” Ang sabi ko naman.   
  
“You spent $3,000 in one day, for shopping!?” >:(   
  
“It’s just $3,000 Mom, chill. 8)” i chuckled. “I normally spend more, don’t I? I could’ve spent more, you know. Kaya lang, it was getting late, and the mall was closing. Oh, and about that car I want you buy…”   
  
“No! You are not getting another car, Madeleine! >:(”   
  
“But you promised me I’d get a new car this year! >:(” I yelled. “my car has a small dent on the side, I don't want to drive it anymore, it’s ugly.” I pouted.   
  
“Exactly my point. I buy you a new car, and you just slam it to some pole and dent it. Hindi ka nga marunong mag-alaga ng kotse mo eh! Wala kang pakialam sa paligid mo. Kung ayaw mo na yun i-drive, eh di wag! Hindi biro ang gumastos ng pagkalaki-laki para lang sa mga luho mo! >:( ”   
  
“But Mom!” I stomped my feet. I insisted more.   
  
“No, Madeleine. A no is a no. Hindi ko maintindihan kung san mo nilalagay lahat ng mga binibili mo, pwede ka na ngang magtayo ng sarili mong mall eh!” she folded the bank statement. “One more thing,” she crossed her arms, “Carol told me you went out with David wearing inappropriate attire.” Carol is her secretary. and David!? David na naman! Always David! Errr!!!! “flip-flops?” she wrinkled her forehead. "who wears flip-flops on a formal date?"   
  
I raised my voice. “My feet needed to relax from wearing those high heels you made me wear on that stupid party!” I showed her my right foot. “You see that!?" I pointed it. “Masakit yan! If that becomes bunion, it’s your fault!” I looked at her, "and eeww. that wasn't a date."   
  
“That party was for you, hija. You should be happy; other people don’t get parties that big… and elegant. And what did you do? You come in looking like a--”   
  
I cut her off. “Whore? ??? >:( That dress was the ugliest dress I’ve ever laid my eyes on. I can’t believe you wasted your money on that stupid sh—“   
  
“don’t even think about finishing that word! >:( ” she pointed at me.   
  
“Sh1t. 8) ” I raised my eyebrows. “And that party wasn’t mine in the first place, it was yours!” it’s true, she throws parties, supposedly for me, but the real deal is that she just wants me to be one of those socialite losers.   
  
She took off her glasses, “nagpunta sa office ko kanina si David, you were supposed to go out for a picnic,” okay? has she been listening to me? ??? She stood up and got herself a glass of water. “bakit tinakbuhan mo na naman siya?”   
  
“He was boring me.” I said. “I don’t have time for self-absorbed people.” kinuha ko yung magazine on the table and opened it.   
  
She let out a sigh. “What’s the matter with you?”   
  
“what’s the matter with me? ??? ”   
  
“oo, ano bang problema mo? Bakit ayaw mo kay David?” she started mellowing her voice. "He’s a nice guy, anak. Sweet, handsome, elegant---"   
  
“and a Stewart!? ??? >:( ” the Stewarts, not to mention, is one of the most in demand clients in the business world, that’s the reason why my Mom wants me to be with him. Some kind of nanay she is, huh? “did I mention to you how much of a jerk he is?” I got up and turned my back on her. “I don’t have time for this nonsense, Mom. I don't even know why you bothered waking me up for this. >:( If you don’t mind, I’m going back to bed.” I said. Inaantok na talaga ako, pwede ba!?   
  
“Madeleine! Don’t you ever turn your back on me!” she shouted.   
  
“I just did, Mom.” Nakatalikod parin ako. “good night! sweet dreams!” sinabi ko while walking up the stairs.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Madeleine!" >:( >:( >:(   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Madeleine!” >:( >:( >:(   
  
  
Madeleine, Madeleine, Madeleine! I’m starting to get tired of my own name, you know? Madeleine this, Madeleine that! Errr! My mom could be a monster sometimes. Hindi pala sometimes lang, palagi! Hello? I would at least expect a hi or hello when she gets home, but NO! She goes right ahead to the screaming part. Hay nako. Just shake it off, Iris. 8)   
  
So I walked out on my Mom again, which surely pissed her off even more, I must say. Oh yeah, I can feel the tension. She’s all talk, you know? So she’s not getting me a new car, hah. Sige, tignan lang natin. 8) 8) 8)   
  
  
Next morning.   
  
  
“Iris, anak.” She rubbed my back, “wake up, it’s 7:30.”   
  
I didn’t pay attention to her. Ano ba? she freakin’ woke me up last night tapos ngayon, she’s waking me up this early? And what's with her sweet attitude now, huh!? ???   
  
“Iris..” she continued.   
  
I rolled to my side, but my eyes were still closed. “Mmm!?!” ???   
  
“7:30 na,” she said calmly. “after ng school mo, I want you to go straight to my office.”   
  
“tsk!” >:( I rolled back on my tummy and pulled the covers up again. “go away! It’s too early!” my class doesn’t start til what… 12? I don’t know. Lol. ;D 8)   
  
“gumising ka na! >:(” hindi ko siya pinansin, so, she stood up and went to the windows and pulled the curtains. Arrrgghh!! The sun! >:(   
  
“MOM!!!!” I sat up. “ano ba!? >:(”   
  
“I told you to wake up, ano ka ba? mataas na yung araw!” oh gosh, here we go again. “remember, what we talked about last night, hm? I want you to apologize to your professor.” she slapped my butt lightly and gave me a sign that she’s going to fix my bed, so I moved upwards. “mag-sorry ka na rin kay David.” David!? ??? Wtf? ??? Why? ??? >:(   
  
“What? Why? >:(” ano bayan, now I’m all awake. Just hearing his name brings chills down my spine – not in a good way, by the way.   
  
“Because you owe him an apology, that’s why.” she continued fixing my bed. “nakakahiya yung ginawa mo.”   
  
“Are you kidding me!? ??? >:(” sumimangot na ako. seriously, what is it with David that my Mom likes? Hay nako. “whatever!” she looked at me again and gave me a stern look. “alright!” I got up. “stop it with the eyes, it’s burning me! >:(”   
  
"that a girl." Nakakainis! She’s already ruined my morning. Ha! she ruined mine, so I’ll ruin hers, too. “you’re going to be late."   
  
late? Si Iris? Iris is never late, I make my own time. Mwahahah. ;D “and don’t you ever think of a grand entrance again, by showing up halfway through the class!” sabi ko nga. Omg. That Mrs, Drummond is so.. what is it in tagalog? Sumbongera! >:( Whatever, I’d still come whenever I feel like it. She gave me pat on my nose. “get up, Princess.” Princess? Eww!!!   
  
“You know, you gave me a name. Don’t call me other names.” Tumayo na ako and went to the bathroom.   
  
While I was taking a shower, she shouted, “I’m going back to bed, your breakfast is ready downstairs, okay? And your car needs an oil change by the way.”   
  
What’s wrong with my Mom? She barges in my room, wakes me up, tells me that the sun is up and that I need to be in school and start my productive day, and then she goes back to bed? Sometimes, I don’t really get her. She could be at times pugnacious, and other times, well, I don’t know what to call it. She’s weird.   
  
After taking a shower, I went downstairs, ate my breakfast and got my car keys from the kitchen counter. It was just then when I entered my car that I realized the gas is low. I forgot to gas it up last night. Hmm. “I don’t feel like filling this dented thing up. 8)” So I went back inside and grabbed my Mom’s car keys instead. Now she’s gonna have to fill my tank up and take my car to Pepboys for an oil change! “have good day, Mommy!” ;D 8)   
  
So there I go, driving in the freeway, windows down, loud music, and over speeding ;D. While I was driving, my phone vibrated. “hello?” I rolled up the windows a little.   
  
“Hey Iris, good morning..” ugh! It’s David. >:(   
  
“Oh, it’s you.” Instead of turning down the volume, and rolling the windows up completely, I didn’t do anything.   
  
“Are you driving? Do you mind turning your volume down a little? I can’t hear you..” he said. Nakakatawa, this guy is so pathetic, I swear.   
  
“Actually, I do mind.”   
  
“Oh, okay then, I guess I’ll just have to bear with your loud music.” Omg?! ??? Can this guy get any more annoying? Hindi nya gets na ayaw kong siya kausap?   
  
“What’s up, blabbermouth?” emphasizing on the blabbermouth, “you’re such an ass hole, David. Why did you come to my Mom’s office to tell on me?”   
  
“oh,” he said calmly. “well.. you told me you were just gonna powder your nose, and I waited for you for like an hour.” LOL! So he did stay there looking like a total idiot waiting for someone who had left already! ;D “I didn’t know where you went, so I got worried.”   
  
“and you automatically assumed I went to my Mom? You swear!, you got me in trouble you shithead!” he so did it in purpose, alam ko yun.   
  
“I’m sorry, I didn’t intend for you to get in trouble.”   
  
He didn’t? my mom almost strangled me yesterday because of him. “oh, save your excuses, David, you’re full of crap.” And hung up on him. In a few seconds, I pulled up in our school’s parking lot. I quickly found a spot, which by the way is no biggie for me, because I have my own ‘spot’ in the parking lot. cool, huh? I know. 8)   
  
I was a few steps away from the main building where my class is located, and I could already hear Lauren’s voice, screaming across the open halls.   
  
“Iris!!!!!” that’s Lauren, my best-est friend in the whole wide world! Hahaa. Not to mention, she’s my partner in crime. Last month, we almost got arrested because… well, I was drunk driving ;D. It’s funny because when the officer told us to pull over, which we obediently did, she pretended to be a special child and that I had to take her home as soon as possible to take her medications. Officer bought the excuse so he let us go. She calls it.. astig! Oh diba? “oh my gosh, guess what I just saw?”   
  
This is so like her, she’s always alive. Parang loka loka. “what happened?”   
  
“okay, check this out.” She placed her books on top the table, “remember that guy… Eric? ???” I gave her a puzzled look, who’s Eric? I don’t remember Eric? “well, in case you forgot, he’s the guy at Katie’s party.”   
  
I tried to refresh my memory, which by the way took me like 2 minutes or something. Well, his name surely rings a bell, but… Ohh!! That guy! Okay now I remember. “the DJ?”   
  
“yea! Him! :D” tumawa siya and pointed at me.   
  
“okay? What about this Eric guy? ???” I asked.   
  
“I saw him and Stacy macking on each other in the parking lot.” kinuha nya yung face powder niya from her purse. “it’s gross, he kisses weird.”   
  
“you were watching them!? ??? ” yuck! Ano siya, paparazzi? “eeeew! kadiri ka!”   
  
Pinalo niya ko, “no silly! ::) You swear I would take time to look at them, especially Stacy. It just happened that when I stepped out of my car, they were right there.. sucking life out of each other. it was disgusting! sayang siya, you know? ang cute pa naman tapos kay Stacy lang babagsak. ::) ” She said, while putting make up on. “so anyway, how was your date with David? ??? :D”   
  
“why do you even bother asking? It’s always a disaster when I’m with David.” Ang sabi ko, “I was sitting there for 20 minutes or so, listening to him talk about himself.” I sat down. “I mean, girl! he so thinks he’s all that!” he really did talk about himself, like what kind of car he wants to buy next, and that he’s like this, he’s like that, he does this, he does that.. all sorts of crap. I mean, who cares?! “he bored me big time, so I left him.” 8)   
  
“ang maldita mo talaga! ;D ” by the way, Lauren and I talk like this, minsan tagalog, minsan English. Most of the time, mixed. “swerte nga ikaw eh, ang cute kaya ni David. He already has everything, you know? Looks, charm, name, money! Girl! package na yon! If you guys get together, you’ll be rolling over on money forever! :D :D” tumawa siya. “you’re such a lucky b itch, i hate you! ::) :D”   
  
“he’s… stupid. And he’s not my type.” Type ko yung simple lang, pero may appeal. Tapos, yung calm, pero aggressive! And.. shy, and reserved, but brave enough to speak his mind. Someone who’s not interested in talking about himself.. “you can have him if you want.” I stood up, I realized that our class started 20 minutes ago. We like talking a lot eh. ;)   
  
“hay nako! If I could only buy him, I would’ve done so a long time ago :D” ang sabi naman nya. She walked next to me, ang lakas ng voices namen while walking to our class. Good thing, all the doors here in the hallway are shut.   
  
“try mo, baka accept nya yung money mo! ::)”   
  
“gaga! hindi ako ganon kadesperada noh! ::)” binatukan niya ko. tama ba yun?! I opened the door to get in.   
  
It’s obvious that they had already started the class, because just by looking at the white board, marami na sulat. “oh, Ms. Debater and Ms. Phone decided to show up.” She was talking to me and Lauren, I, being the debater, because I always oppose her with everything she says, and Lauren being the phone person, because, yeah, it’s self-explanatory. “Aren’t you two too early for tomorrow’s class?” that’s Mrs. Drummond. My FAVORITE teacher. >:(   
  
“oh, gee, Mrs. Drummond, hate to tell ya, but that line is so old. Nobody uses that anymore, that line’s officially dead. 8)” I paused and looked at her straight in the eye. “aww. sorry to shut you down too soon, Professor. 8)”   
  
“if our grading system is based on personality and attitude, rather than knowledge, I failed you already!” >:( >:( >:(   
  
“and that just pisses you off more, doesn’t it?” tinawanan ko siya, “too bad, it's not that way. sorry to hear that, but this is reality.” I pointed my head, “it’s all up in here, Professor, all up in here.” 8)   
  
“ohh.. she got burned again! ;D” ang sabi ni Lauren, while busting out a big laugh. Loka loka talaga siya. ;D   
  
“SIT DOWN MS. MARTIN! >:( ” tinuro naman niya si Lauren. “AND YOU, MS. JAVIER, STOP LAUGHING AND SIT DOWN! >:( ” she yelled at us, ohh,, how I love making her day.   
  
And right on command, we found seats. We sat all the way in back row, and as soon as we sat down, I heard someone whisper.. “haters.” Haters? Inggit lang siya. So I looked over to my side to see who this ‘hater’ is, and.. eww. It’s Stacy.   
  
A little history about Stacy and I. very simple. Me + Stacy = national disaster!. We hated each other since.. I don’t know, since birth?! Stacy is pure evil, I tell you. and you think I’m mean, she’s worse! Because see, she doesn’t do it in front of you. unlike me, I would say whatever enters my mind, whether good or bad, I’ll say it right in your face. She’s more like the backstabber type, which is unfair, I must say. She doesn’t fight equally. Oh, and a kiss-ass, too!   
  
“nice shoes.” I said, after looking at her heels.   
  
“huh!? ???” she said, she was puzzled. Irrelevant to what she said? Yes.   
  
“I said your shoes are nice.” I faked a smile.   
  
Tumingin naman siya sa shoes nya, sabay smile. “I know, right? Thank you.”   
  
“how long have you been a hoe?! 8)” seriously, her heels are like pok-pok style. The kind that sluts wear when they walk along streets, trying to find customers kind of thing.   
  
“what did you just say!?” she raised her voice. I think I ticked her off. Lol oh yeah, I definitely did. ;D   
  
“what, all of a sudden, you can’t hear now? ???” tinignan ko siya. “you heard me.” 8)   
  
“what’s going on back there?” ang sabi ni Mrs. Drummond.   
  
“she called me hoe, Professor!” sumigaw naman si Stacy, omg. What kiss-ass talaga! I so want to pull her freakin nappy hair right now! “I was sitting back here trying to jot down notes. She’s distracting me. :-\”   
  
“what!? :o >:(” I slammed my hand on the desk, and grabbed her notebook, “does this look like taking notes to you?!” tinaas ko yung notebook nya, tapos tingin sa kanya “what were you using, and invisible ink!? ??? ”   
  
hindi niya ako pinansin. “Mrs. Drummond!”   
  
“that’s it, Iris! Get out! >:(” she pointed the door.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“into the dean’s office, right now!!” >:(   
  
  
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“into the dean’s office, right now!!” >:(   
  
  
“What!? ???” tumayo naman si Lauren, “that’s unfair, Professor!” she pointed Stacy, which by the way is laughing at both Lauren and I right now. “are you for real? ??? you believe this girl right here!?”   
  
Mrs. Drummond cleared her throat, “if you want to remain in this class, Ms. Javier, please sit down and be quiet.” Tapos tumingin siya saken, “and you, Ms. Martin, your mother will be expecting a call from me.”   
  
I just dogged her out, bwiset tong teacher ko eh, just because I have my own say on things, she thinks I’m being disrespectful. And just because I have an attitude, she automatically thinks I start things around here. “sure, Mrs. Drummond, I’d definitely inform my Mom about your phone call. 8)” Tinawanan ko siya.   
  
“go to the Dean’s office, right now! >:(” she shouted.   
  
So, I grabbed my stuff and walked towards the door, si Lauren naman, tumayo ulit. “You’re playing favoritism, Mrs. Drummond,” nung sinabi naman niya yun, tinignan siya ng masama ni Prof. “if you send Iris to the dean’s office right now, I will report you to the school board.” She said, sabay wink sa aken. “What you’re practicing is extremely unprofessional. 8)”   
  
“well..” tumingin siya kay Lauren, “in that case, grab your stuff, too. I’ll be seeing both of you at the dean’s office.”   
  
"goodbye, ladies!" Stacy waved. i'm gonna slap that b1tch, i swear!! >:(   
  
“see you when we see you, Professor hag. ;D” I said. The other students were just looking at us, some were laughing, and whispering, "oh sh1t! bad ass girls right there!" some… well. The usual. ::) Tapos lumabas na kame ni Lauren.   
  
“you’re crazy, why did you do that? ;D” ang sabi ko sa kanya, “now, you got yourself in trouble, too.”   
  
“okay lang yun noh, that class is boring anyway, ::)” ang sabi niya, while fixing her stuff. “and besides, someone’s gotta stand up para magsumbong sa ginagawa nya.” It’s true, favorite naman niya talaga si Stacy, I don’t know why, but because I give her attitude all the time that’s why she doesn’t like me. but nevertheless, she’s still… I still hate her. I have no idea why, but ever since the school year started, we’ve had bad blood on each other.   
  
“hala, lagot tayo sa mga mommy naten mamaya when we get home! ;D” I kidded. Her mom’s like my mom, too. Kontrabida type, no wonder they’re good friends! Pareho sila ng ugali. :D   
  
“hahah! ;D” she laughed, “I bet you tita’s gonna cut off your credit cards! ;D” ang sabi nya, “and my mom, wooo! She’s so sending me to Bermuda Triangle!”   
  
Lauren’s raised by a single mother, katulad ko. actually, my Mom and her mom have been friends back in the days, when they were still in the Philippines. Tapos, sabay sila nagpunta dito, to finish their studies. Before we came in the picture, Lauren’s mom went back to the Philippines, had an affair, and came back with… yeah, Lauren. And then a month later, I was born. Sobrang suplada sila siguro that they never remarried. See, may pinagmanahan naman kame ni Lauren eh. the only difference between Lauren and I is, she knows her Dad and would occasionally see him, kaya siya nagpupunta sa Philippines. She has a half brother there, second family lang kase sila Lauren. I never knew my Dad. I suppose my Mom was married to him at one point, but divorced right after I was born. According to my Mom, my Dad’s a businessman as well, kaya lang, due to both their very strong personalities, they didn’t click. Kaya they just decided to annul the wedding. And plus, my Mom said he hit her twice before, hindi naman battered wife kinda thing, but he did lift his hand on her, which led her to divorce him.   
  
Sometimes, I wonder how it’s like to have a family, you know, a Mom and a Dad, and maybe a couple of siblings. But every time I remember my Mom’s story about my Dad, it just makes me think that guys are generally like that, hitting, irresponsible, undedicated, and just plain… JERKS. >:( >:( >:(   
  
So, if in case you were wondering why I’m like this, hating mostly on the male gender, it’s because of my Dad, and maybe because of what I went through in the past as well. I’m bitter, and mean, yes, but I opened up my heart once. Happened only once, and never will again.   
  
Anyway, enough with the personal 411. I don’t like putting myself on the spot light that much.   
  
When we were walking down the hall, we saw that Eric guy Lauren was talking about earlier. What’s he doing here? don’t tell me he goes to the same school? “hey girls” he smiled at us. “what’s up? Where are you guys going? ???”   
  
“dean’s office,” sinabi ni Lauren. “you’re stupid girl got us in trouble.”   
  
“girl?” ??? he gave her a weird look.   
  
“yeah, Stacy, your girl,” ang sabi ko, while walking.   
  
“oh! her. 8)” He paused. “nah, she’s not my girl.” not my girl? pero nagkikiss sa parking lot? what is that? ???   
  
“well, whoever she is to you, she still got us in trouble.”   
  
When we got to the dean’s office, upo lang kame dun kase may tao pa sa office nya. “that blondie is just way too easy, that’s why.” ang sabi niya. well, she is. she’s a slut, remember? Dresses like one, and definitely acts like one.   
  
After 15 minutes of waiting, the door opened, so we went inside. “alright, girls, I’ll catch you later.” Sabi ni Eric. He winked at Lauren when he was about to leave the office.   
  
Pumasok naman kame sa office ng dean, “oh, my two favorite girls” sabi ni Mr. Kinley. “what did you girls do this time?” tingin sya samen. “let me see.. Mrs. Drummond? ???”   
  
“yes,” i sat down. “There’s something wrong with that old lady, Mr. K.” we don’t have any problems with the dean; we’re actually cool with each other. Bongga noh? 8) :D   
  
“okay,” he put on his glasses, “but you girls gotta realize that you shouldn’t talk back to your professors in any way, unless it’s necessary,” he was holding a piece of paper containing Professor Drummond’s complaint. “and, punctuality and attendance is mandatory, Iris and Lauren.” Punctuality and attendance?   
  
"I always come to class; you mean she marks me absent when I’m tardy?” ??? >:(   
  
“yea, Mr. K, we never missed any of her classes.” She crossed her arms.   
  
“it’s the school’s rule that excessive tardiness equals to an absence.” He signed that paper. “3 to 1 to be exact”   
  
“But sir!?” >:(   
  
“school rules, can’t do anything about it” he put the paper back to the folder. “Mrs. Drummond said that if you girls do not change your attitude in her class, she might consider dropping you out of the course.” Wth? ???   
  
“but!?” I said, bwiset talaga siya.   
  
“Iris and Lauren,” he looked at both of us, “you girls are one of the most intelligent students in your batch, I don’t want to have a problem with your behavior.” He took out the school’s handbook, and then he flipped to the page where the rules and regulations are. “it clearly states that the professor has every right to drop a student from his/her class.” He closed the handbook. “I don’t want this to come to a point where I’m forced to sign that proposal, Iris and Lauren. You girls better behave, there’s only two weeks left in the semester, anyway.” Oo nga noh? 2 weeks left, summer vacation na.   
  
Lauren and I looked at each other. “okay, Mr. K, I guess we can try to behave for 2 more weeks, right Iris? ;)” I nodded. “but you gotta talk to that lady, though. She has special preference on Stacy Linden.” Ang sabi ni Lauren.   
  
“alright, since equality between students and teachers is imposed in this campus, I will talk to Professor Drummond about this.”   
  
Okay! Good. But wait? “would she be still phoning my Mom? ???” I asked him. mahirap na noh, she might really cancel my credit cards. ::)   
  
“it’s up to her, to tell you honestly.”   
  
“that sucks!” she scratched her head, “if she’s calling Iris’ mom, she’ll definitely call my mom too!” errr! I’m in so much danger in losing my credit cards, and not to mention, a brand new car. Oh gosh. Speaking of cars, I have her car! Okay, we’re still good. Or probably not.   
  
“I’ll make you a proposal,” he started fixing his desk, “if you girls promise me you’ll behave the next time you enter her class, I will tell her not to call your parents.” that’s a good deal.   
  
“deal! ;)” ang sabi ko. “thanks, Mr. K. you’re the best!” I shook his hand.   
  
After leaving Mr. Kinley’s office, we went straight to our next class. Err. French class. My mom wanted me to learn French, so kahit hindi na siya part ng curriculum ng major ko, I had no choice but to take it all the way to French 8 – conversational French. Since this class is conversational French, we are not allowed to speak English, or any other language besides français. [French]   
  
“don’t you just love this class?” she spoke sarcastically.   
  
“oui, je l'aime beaucoup - pas !” meaning, yes, I love it a lot – not! sabay tawa ng malakas. We took our seats and waited til the class started. “can you believe this, we’re actually in before the professor!” first time nga naman.   
  
“I know, right!? nakakapanibago. ;D” she was putting on make up again. “ang galing, I’m sure masusurpise si Miller.”   
  
A few seconds after she said that, Mr. Miller walked in the class. “bonjour, classent désolé je suis tardif.” [good morning class, sorry, I’m late] “ouvrez vos livres pour paginer 106. nous serons fermeture le chapitre aujourd'hui.” [open your books to page 106. we will be closing the chapter today] “votre examen final sera la semaine prochaine.” [your final exam will be next week] omg? Next week na final for this class? :o ???   
  
I raised my hand to ask a question, I’m a good girl in this class eh. “mais monsieur, n'avons-nous pas un autre chapitre à couvrir après ceci?” [but sir, don't we have another chapter to cover after this?] “je pense que nous devons avoir plus de temps pour étudier pour l'examen final” [I think we need more time to study for the final] say nyo? I speak French fluently. 8)   
  
He stood up in the middle of the class, “oui, je me rends compte de celui, celui est pourquoi je vous donne le reste de la semaine plus le week-end pour apprendre le prochain chapitre.” [yes, I’m aware of that, that’s why I’m giving you the rest of the week plus the weekend to learn the next chapter] what? Are you kidding me? ??? “avez-vous plus de questions, Iris?” [do you have any more questions?] i said no by moving my head. “bien, dans ce cas, nous commencerons la classe.” [we’ll start the class]   
  
In the middle of the class, Lauren leaned next to me. “Iris, anong gagawin mo if your mom sends you to the Philippines? :D” okay? This girl is so random. What kind of question is that? ???   
  
“why would she do that?” I whispered.   
  
She looked at Mr. Miller to make sure he’s not gonna see us talking to each other, “it could happen, right?”   
  
It’ll never happen, my mom? Send me to Philippines? No way?! “nah, I doubt that’ll ever happen.” She’s so weird. “why did you ask? ???”   
  
“because my Mom is thinking of sending me to Europe this summer.” She said. How’s Philippines related to Europe? I don’t get it? ???   
  
“pano naging related yun? Philippines and Europe? Okay ka lang?” ??? ::)   
  
“hmm.. just being random, but what I’m saying is, you know there’s a small chance of us being together in summer,” it’s true, her mom sends her to different places during summer, business purposes. My mom does that, too, but I only travel within the country. “she might send you to Philippines to take a look at your newly-opened business.” true. My mom’s been talking about this since last week.   
  
This is our last class for the day, so right after this, I went home. Lauren? She’s going somewhere.   
  
When I got home, I saw my car in the driveway. What? My mom didn’t go to work today? Kaya baba ako kagad to get in the house. Our house is too big for the two of us, by the way. when I opened the door…   
  
“Madeleine, is that you!?” I didn’t answer her. When she realized that it's me,“MADELEINE IRIS! Get in here, right now!” she yelled from the kitchen. Pagpasok ko sa kitchen, I saw my mom standing there, with….   
  
“what are you doing here?! ??? >:(” it’s David.   
  
“why did you take my car!?” she said. David was quiet, eating his pie.   
  
“you told me not to be late today, and my car is low in gas, so I took yours. 8)” I grabbed a soda from the fridge. “I’m just following your orders, Ma’am” I saluted her.   
  
"you're so lazy, Madeleine! >:(" She was cutting vegetables, “you are pushing me way over the limit, young lady!” she said. Young lady? Lady na ko noh. I’m freakin’ 20 years old, for crying out loud.   
  
“what did I do!?” I said, David was smiling at me, okay, is there something I’m missing here? “and you, what are you smiling about!? ??? >:(” I pointed him with my soda.   
  
He took a bite of his pie. “oh, you didn’t tell her yet?” he asked my Mom.   
  
“tell me what?” I asked her, too. “Mom!?”   
  
“I don’t know what to do with you, Iris, you’re becoming way too handful.”   
  
Way too handful? What’s that supposed to mean? I laughed, “what, you can’t handle me anymore?! ;D” she’s so giving up, she might consider buying me that brand new car! Woohhhoo!! Todo smile naman ako. ;D ;D ;D “so, does this mean, you’re buying me the car? :D” i took a sip of my soda. "I knew it, hindi mo kaya, Mom."   
  
  
  
  
  
  
“no.” she’s still concentrating with the cutting. “I’m sending you to Philippines.”   
  
  
  
  
  
WHATTTTT!!!!?!?!?!? :o :o :o :o :o   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“--with David.” na choke yata ako! :o   
  
  
  
  
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“--with David.” na choke yata ako! :o   
  
  
Am I hearing this right? Me!? Getting sent to the Philippines?! Why? the question is, why with David!? EEWWWW!!!! Oh, it’s totally on! “you can’t be serious, Mom!?” tinuro ko si David, “I’m not going anywhere with that jerk!” >:( naiinis ako sa Mommy ko.   
  
“Iris!” she shouted, “your manners!” >:(   
  
“manners my ass Mom!” I’m so pissed off right now, I swear! Natapon tuloy bigla yung soda ko when I slammed it on the countertop.   
  
“I’m sending you to your lola, Iris.” She said calmly. "and that's final."   
  
“What?! You can’t handle me now, that’s why you’re passing on your parental duties to others!?” ??? >:( I don’t care if you guys think I’m maldita for answering back to my mother, but she is really getting into my nerves right now!!!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
“why not?” ang sabi nya, “kung hindi ka magtitino dito, sa Pilipinas, titino ka.” Hello?! And what makes her think na titino ako dun?   
  
“and how do you know that, Mom!? Ikaw nga hindi matino doon eh!” yup, she was sent here because apparently, my grandma could not handle her as well. See? Like mother like daughter, and most of all, what goes around, comes around. “and you suppose my manners will be straightened up over there? Ano ka ba? are you out of your mind?!” i was at the peak of my anger, when David stood up and walked towards my mom.   
  
Lumapit siya sa Mommy ko and gave her a pat in the back, “don’t worry, Tita,” David’s half Filipino, that’s why he’s accustomed to calling elderly women either tita or lola. Well, in my Mom’s case, she’s a tita to David. “I’ll take good care of her over there.” He faced me and said, “we’re gonna have fun over there, Iris. :)”   
  
Wth? Hindi ko siya pinansin, instead, I rolled my eyes on him. I instigated a war between my Mom and I. hindi ko siya talaga titigilan. “what Mom!? >:(”   
  
“that’s no way to treat your mother, Madeleine! do you even realize how you treat me? this is exactly why I’m sending you to your lola, para maturuan ka ng tamang asal!” she started raising her voice. “parang hindi mo ko nanay ah!” >:(   
  
“because that’s how you want to be treated!” I said. We’re both standing at this point, trying to get both our points across each other’s head. Pero hindi ako magpapatalo talaga. I’ve always had it my way, why give up now? “you know what,” I walked back and forth, “I think I know what’s going on here.” I looked at her, “this isn’t about you and me, it’s about me and,” I swung over to David, “that jerk.”   
  
“hindi. That’s not what this is all about, Iris.” She started calming herself down, “you grew up having everything you want and ask for, and look what happened, I raised a spoiled brat.” She sighed. “mamili ka, you’re going to stay here and I’ll cancel all your credit cards, and take away your car, or uuwi ka sa Pilipinas.”   
  
I can’t believe this! “why don't you just suck the life out of me and flush it down the freakin’ toilet?” I banged the countertop, “hindi! Ayoko! I'm not going anywhere!”   
  
“I’m giving you two options, Iris, either do what I want, or have a very difficult time.” She looked at me in a very serious manner, ohhh those eyes! “take your pick.”   
  
“this is ridiculous!” I started walking back and forth again, “you’re insane!” I pointed at her.   
  
“well?” she raised her right eyebrow, and crossed her arms.   
  
“yeah, right, Mom! You said that to me so many times, but you never cancelled nor took away my car!” it’s true, she always says she’s canceling and taking away my car, but guess what? She never did.   
  
“oh yea? Try me this time.” 8)   
  
“ugh!!! >:(” I stomped my right foot, “MOM!!” ??? :-[ I shouted.   
  
“Iris!” she said sarcastically.   
  
“i hate you!” I hate her. She’s a monster!! >:(   
  
When I said that, David stood up and walked right in front of me. “hey, Iris, don’t say that to your Mom.. She just wants you to learn a lesson..”   
  
Learn a lesson? Learn a lesson your face! “shut up you idiot!” sinigawan ko siya, “I’m not talking to you, so get your ugly ass face out of my way!” >:( >:( >:(   
  
“MADELEINE!” >:(   
  
“BAHALA KAYO SA BUHAY NYO!” I looked at both of them, “MAGSAMA KAYONG DALAWA!” I walked out on them, and walked with heavy feet towards my room.   
  
  
I locked myself inside my room and just stayed there until my mom unlocked it. Kanina pa kase sya katok ng katok eh. “I locked the door for a reason, shouldn’t you know that by now?!” I did not look at her.   
  
“kanina pa ko kumakatok eh, hindi mo ba ko naririnig?”   
  
“no.” I pointed my ears. “ duh? I-pod.”   
  
She sat beside me, “anak..” what is she, acting like nothing happened downstairs? Hindi pa rin ako tumitingin sa kanya. “I know my news was a bit of a shock to you, pero, I want you to know that I thought about it before even saying it..” she continued, “I’m always unavailable, I’m not always here for you, hindi kita mababantayan sa lahat ng ginagawa mo.” She scratched her head, “gagawa ka ng kalokohan, we fight about it, then what? You do it over and over again, Iris. This cycle just keeps on going…”   
  
“then make yourself available, Mom!” this is all bull crap. “nagrereklamo ka why I’m always b1tchy and whatnot, but did you ever ask yourself why I’m like this?” I told her. Lagi naman siya complain ng complain sa ugali ko eh.   
  
“I think your lola will be able to tune in to you more than I could.” Yun lang? “and no, I’m not passing on any of my parental skills to someone else, it’s just that I think you need to see things outside the box.” She said in a very mellow tone. “I’m not sending you there for good, a few months lang, for summer. After that, you may fly back if you like.” Whatever.   
  
“what are you up to? ???” I looked at her. I know when she starts saying these things, she's up to something. She’s not getting me with that mellow tone of hers!   
  
“wala, gusto ko lang magkasama kayo ng lola mo..” I frowned at her, she sighed, “okay, I want you to get a hands on sa business.” see!? and the truth comes out! I knew this is not about my attitude problem, business! “dun ka mag-iintern.” She added. “as of now, your lola is the president of the company, but in the near future, right after you graduate, I want to turn it over to you.”   
  
“why do you keep on insisting me to become a businesswoman like you!?” seriously, ever since.. forever, she’s been affirming me to be like her. Eh ayaw ko nga eh! I’m a designer, all I want is to design and coordinate, not run a business! “I’m not you, and I don’t want to like you, okay?” I don’t want to be like her, a very uptight-stingy-wears-boring-clothes-no social life kind of person. Eew. It’s just not me.   
  
“honestly, the company’s not in good shape right now.” :-\   
  
“what, and you suppose I’m gonna be able to shape it up?” ??? I raised my eyebrow. Is she trying to be funny or what? “so what if it’s not in good shape, you have other companies.”   
  
“yes,” she said with a serious voice, “as a matter of fact, I do. I really want to save that branch, Iris.”   
  
"okay, if you're that eager to save it," I looked at her from head to toe, “why don’t you come and save it, then?”   
  
“I can’t, I have many business arrangements here, I can’t leave those hanging.”   
  
“I thought you didn’t trust me?” she always said that. ‘I don’t trust you!’ with anything. I’ve come up with many things for our business, but she never considered any of it.   
  
“I know I said that, and i apologize.” sinabi nya, “but I’ve seen your work, anak. All your designs and ideas are incredible.” Is she for real? Am I really hearing this… from my monster mom? ??? “I’d really appreciate it if you could help out, we’re trying to close a merging deal with the Valdez’ ” she got up, and started rearranging my stuff in the dresser, “makakatrabaho mo yung anak ni Mr. Valdez.. he’s about your age, a little older than you.”   
  
“oh really? ???” she nodded, so the Stewarts are all of a sudden gone in the picture, ngayon Valdez naman? What the hell? What am I, a business attraction? >:( “What if I tell you I don’t want to help you!?” >:(   
  
“you can't do that, i've already booked your flight two weeks from now, they're expecting you." inirapan ko siya. "alam mo, hindi ko na alam kung anong gagawin ko sayo, I’m trying to give you a good life, tapos ikaw, binabaliwala mo lang. other people would actually die to be in your position, you know?” ows? Talaga lang ha.   
  
“I don’t care? If they want my life, let them die, then!” >:( I got up on my feet, “you know, Mom, okay lang naman that you want to send me over there for business purposes eh, I’d be willing to do it if you want. I’ve always obeyed you, haven’t I? even though you have to force me in the beginning, I’d end up doing what you ask for anyway. It’s not like you leave me with a choice, you’re taking everything away from me. What I consistently don’t like and understand about this is bakit isasama mo pa saken si David! bakit lagi siya kasama!? You know how much I despise that self-absorbed bastard!” >:( >:( >:(   
  
“I’m trying to get you guys..” she paused.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“—back together.”   
  
  
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“—back together.”   
  
  
Okay, I don’t know what’s in my mom’s head right now. Not pala right now, all the time. David and I are so over… WAY OVER! It’s been what? 2…3 years ago? Yeah. I was young, he was young, and we had raging hormones. That’s it, that’s about it. Yung sinasabi ko na I opened up my heart once? It was for David. Worst decision I’ve ever made, by the way. It was alright – in the beginning, but I really can’t be with someone who’s obsessed with himself. I mean, literally, he was, and he still is.   
  
I was about 17 when we were introduced to each other at one of the socialite gatherings. His mom and my mom and are so-called ‘amigas’ and whatnot. So anyway, yun nga. We were introduced and all that good stuff. They kinda set us up to be together, I mean, not just for personal choices only, but a big business deal was behind this, too. At first I thought he was really cute and interesting, but as the time progressed, nawala na yung interesting part, because I would hear about the same old crap over and over again.   
  
David’s a nice guy and all, but he tends to be really possessive most of the time. I practically lost my life when we were together. Kase all we ever did back then was to go to stupid, nonsense places, - car shows, car shows, and did I say car shows? Yeah, I probably said it like about three times already, huh?   
  
I wasn’t only a ‘chaperone’ to him; I was also a ‘business attraction’ and a ‘display’. Ang sama noh? He would take me to places and I would think it to be sweet, but I’d find out we went there for business. tapos, isasabay lang pala yung place, kinda like hitting two birds with one stone. Ganun. Probably half their business deals were because of me, not to be conceited or anything.   
  
Tapos, he was very conservative, so I could not wear clothes he thought was revealing. Imagine nyo, I could never wear spaghetti straps or anything that reveals my chest and shoulder area? So kahit sobrang init na, as in 100 plus degrees outside, I had no choice but put a sweater over it. What else? I could never go out with my friends unless I’m with him. basta! Yung mga ganun. We were the ‘hottest couple’, so to speak, in high school. Everybody wants to be tight with us, hang out with us.. those kinda stuff. Very superficial.   
  
  
\* Flashback – David’s mom’s birthday [2 years ago] \*   
  
“happy birthday, tita.” :)   
  
“thanks, you look beautiful, hija,” David’s mom said while I was walking down the stairs, “I’m sure my son will love you more for this… very eye catching dress.. How.. elegant.”   
  
I don’t know if that was a compliment or an insult. “oh, thanks, tita.” I kissed her in her cheek. “Where’s David?” ???   
  
She looked around and spotted him speaking with a couple of his friends, “he’s right there.” She pointed.   
  
“Thanks. Excuse me.” I walked towards David. I leaned over to give him a kiss, “hi ba--” :) ???   
  
He whispered to me, "Iris, it’s not appropriate to kiss in public.” He grabbed my hand and pulled me to the corner, “aren’t you wearing a rather revealing outfit?” ??? >:( he looked at me.   
  
“I thought I’d impress you,” :-[ I looked at my dress, okay.. so it’s tube top dress. It isn’t too revealing, yes my back is showing, but cleavage? Not totally. “don’t you like it?” :-\ I said. My dress is nice, what’s he talking about?   
  
“No, obviously not. you’re a lady, Iris, dress like one.” >:( He took off his jacket and put it on me. “I’m taking you home right now.” >:(   
  
“but I just got here..” :-[   
  
“I can’t let other people see you looking like that,” he looked at me from head to toe. “I don’t want people thinking my girl friend is cheap, so let’s go.” He grabbed my hand and led me to the door.   
  
  
\* end of flashback \*   
  
  
Even though he was like this, I seriously tried my very best for our relationship to work. Everything was fine, as in smooth sailing talaga, I even thought I’ve proven my theory wrong, which is the fact that guys are big jerks and ass holes, pero hindi eh, my theory still stands unproven. He didn’t actually cheat on me…well… almost. I guess he’s loyal, but he’s generally too nice, especially on… Stacy.   
  
Oh that Stacy! That evil Stacy! Napakalandi! >:( So instead of fighting over a stupid boy, I let go na lang. I ended ours before theirs even started. At the same time, I also found out about the whole business deal thing my mom and his mom had, that he apparently knew about. = our companies merging in together and make a one big, indestructible empire.   
  
Kaya lalong lumaki yung war namin ng Mommy ko eh, she just won’t stop using me for business.   
  
And David? Yeah, he started ‘caring’ about me the day I left him. I honestly did not feel that he loved me... He was just too late. If he could have shown me that he really loved and cared about me, I didn’t call it quits. But I guess everything happened for a reason. In the long run though, ginamit lang nila ako lahat, kaya galit ako sa kanila. especially to David! >:( >:( >:(   
  
  
“Mom, I told you, David and I are done.” I said annoyingly. She doesn’t know when to stop, does she!? “I’ve gotten over it; can you do the same, too? Hello!? Reality check!”   
  
She sat beside me and rubbed my back, ano to? Close na ulit kame? “I just.. I just think that,” she paused, “David’s a changed man.” :)   
  
“A man!?” ??? >:( he was never a man; he’ll always be a BOY! A Mama’s boy to be damn exact. “David and I are officially over Mom. Stop hoping there would be another chance for us, because there wouldn’t be.”   
  
“Iris naman, :-\” she stood up and walked to the other side of my room, “okay, I know you guys had a rough start and—”   
  
“—you really want me to go the Philippines? ??? >:(” I cut her off; I don’t have time to hear any other bull crap she has to say. Mas maganda na siguro na wala ako dito.   
  
“yes, that would really make me hap—”   
  
I cut her off again. “then I will.” She showed me a very fulfilling smile. But now, this ain’t over until I say it’s over. “but David’s not coming.” 8)   
  
It’s very obvious how that fulfilling smile became an overly disappointed smile as soon as I said that David is not coming. “who’s going to look after you over there?”   
  
“you said lola and my cousins are gonna be there, and I’m sure lola could find me body guard if you're crazy about my security or whatever. 8)” I looked at her, “I don’t need David.” 8)   
  
“but Madeleine, I trust David”   
  
“I’ve picked from my options, Mom.” I smiled at her, “and that’s final.”   
  
“alright, alright. I guess that’s good enough.” :) :-\   
  
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11 days later.   
  
“no way! :o” she shook her head, “I thought you were just kidding when you told me this last week!”   
  
“what can I say, my Mom’s totally evil.” I took a sip of my juice. “and for the record, I’m just doing this to get rid of her and David..”   
  
“hmm. siguro tama yan. Para naman,” she mimicked my mom’s voice, “magtino ka na ;D” she laughed. “who knows, malay mo, magtino ka nga doon.” ::)   
  
Pinalo ko siya. “sira! I don’t think so. 8) Let’s go, we don’t want to be late for Drummond.”   
  
  
We started walking to class, when we got there, we sat in the back area. We’re 10 minutes early, by the way. hindi naman nagtagal, dumating na si Professor Drummond.   
  
She put her things down, “oh, nice to see you, Iris and Lauren. This is something new, never in my wildest dreams did I think you two could be time conscious.” She opened the book, “I hope that arrangement between the Dean and you works out, although I highly doubt it.” Ang sama nito! Pigilan nyo ko, I’m in the verge of stepping up again! >:(   
  
“good morning, Professor. Nice to see you, too. 8) ;D ” Tinawanan siya ni Lauren.   
  
“is that sarcasm I’m sensing, Ms. Javier? ???”   
  
“no, why? ??? ::) ” she said.   
  
“I thought you girls want another referral.”   
  
tinapik ko si Lauren on the side. “no, Professor Drummond, we don’t want another trip to the Dean’s office.”   
  
"good, in that case we're speaking the same language." 8)   
  
“whatever.” I heard from… oh Stacy.   
  
“what did you say? ??? >:(” I looked at her.   
  
“what? ??? I didn’t say anything. ::)” Stacy said. “you’re just hearing things. 8)”   
  
“I heard what you said.” >:(   
  
“then why are you still asking me? ???” she raised an eyebrow.   
  
I sighed. Control yourself, Iris. Control yourself. “ugh! >:( Just forget it.”   
  
“sure, Iris.” 8)   
  
“oh Stacy,” Lauren said, “you just can’t stop being annoying.”   
  
"what can I say? it's a talent." 8)   
  
"talent my ass!" 8)   
  
“what is all the talking about back there?”   
  
“nothing, professor” tumingin sya samen, “these girls just need to be… reminded of something.” 8)   
  
Okay, ang laki talaga ng problema nitong babaeng ito.   
  
I looked down, “well, I can see you tossed your hooker shoes in the trash. 8)” I guess she also figured out that her shoes were ugly. ;D   
  
“Excuse me, Professor,” she raised her hand. “I’m so sorry to interrupt your lecture, but Iris is talking and it’s quite distracting. I really want to get an A on the final. :-\”   
  
What!? Ako pa ang distracting! “hey, did someone leave the vacuum on? ???” tinignan ko siya. “Because I hear a very loud sucking noise! 8)”   
  
“Professor! She’s doing it again!” :-\   
  
“Ms. Martin I thought everything was clear?”   
  
I stood up. “she started it!” >:(   
  
“sit down, Ms. Martin!” >:(   
  
Lauren leaned over to me and whispered, “sasapakin ko yang babaeng yan!”   
  
I can’t believe this. She so started it and I was the one who got in trouble? “I’m sorry, Professor.” I sat myself back down.   
  
“aww. Poor little Iris. 8)” She whispered. “Can’t do anything now, can you? 8)”   
  
“stupide, chienne idiote! >:(” I looked at her again, “vous allez lui avoir un jour, je jure!”   
  
“You’re weird, what are you saying? Are you calling me stupid? ???”   
  
“I don’t know, you tell me. 8)” Hindi ko na lang siya tinignan. If I say something else, I will surely end up at the dean’s office again.   
  
After class, Professor Drummond asked both Lauren and I to stay. “Iris and Lauren, the final is in two days, I expect both of you to come in class with an acceptable behavior.” And she added, “remember, I don’t want to fail the two of you.”   
  
“and you’re not going to.” I said.   
  
“good. I guess everything is well-negotiated.” She looked at Lauren. “by the way, Ms. Javier, great essay about Henry VIII.” :)   
  
“thanks. :)” She smiled at Professor Drummond.   
  
“I’ll see you girls in two days. Study, although I think you don’t really have to. ;)” She winked at us and grabbed her stuff. bumait yata bigla? “bye.”   
  
And we started walking to our next class. Today’s our final for French class. Kapag finals kase you may take the test and leave as soon as you’re done. Well, assuming that I’m fluent in French, I’m pretty much sure I aced it. So I handed it in early.   
  
“vous avez fini votre examen plutôt tôt, manque Martin.” [you finished your exam early, Ms. Martin] he looked up, “il a été seulement quinze minutes, manque Martin. n'avez-vous pas besoin de plus de temps?” [it’s only been 15 minutes, don’t you need more time?]   
  
“non, monsieur. j'ai déjà lu par la chose entière.” [no, sir I’ve already looked through the entire thing]   
  
“je sais que vous savez déjà tout ces derniers substance, j'ai juste pensé que vous avez fini tout à fait trop tôt.” [I know you know these things already. I just thought you finished too soon.]   
  
“oui, et je suis confiant que je l'aie fait du bien. :)” [yes, and I’m confident I did well] I said while fixing my stuff.   
  
He scanned through my paper and said, “bien, bien. je suis sûr que vous avez obtenu A déjà. :)” [alright, you got an A already.] he smiled at me, “points parfaits, d'ailleurs. :)” [perfect score, by the way]   
  
Ohh see! perfect score daw! :D “merci monsieur, vous m'avez enseigné bien.. :)” I got my purse and walked towards the door. “je vous verrai autour.” [see you around]   
  
Since I finished early, and for sure Lauren’s gonna take the whole period to finish hers, I decided to leave. I just texted her saying that I’ve already left, and that I’ll see her when I do.   
  
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Two days had already passed, and I have just finished taking my final for Drummond. Finally, I’m out of that hell-whole class! ;D ;D ;D   
  
Lauren had already left for an errand and I’m now walking to the parking lot when someone suddenly walked beside me.   
  
“so, I heard you’re getting sent to a far away place for summer, Iris?” ayaw talaga ako tigilan ni Stacy forever! “boot camp?” 8)   
  
“no, actually, I was going to ask you the same question.” I turned around, “which boot camp are you going to this time?” 8)   
  
“mind you, I’m going to France!” 8)   
  
“oh.. France.. I see. so you’re going to a fashion boot camp! ;D” I placed my hand on her shoulder, “good decision, Stacy.” 8)   
  
“ugh!! You tick me off!” >:(   
  
“aww. Gee. Am I flattered or what? ;)” I put my hands together and did a puppy face. Who got burned? Hahah!   
  
“whatever, Martin. When you come back… David’s all mine. 8)” Tumawa pa siya, sus! Sa kanya na siya, I don’t give a damn.   
  
“oh honey, trust me, you don’t have to work that hard for an ass hole. 8)” I turned my back on her and started walking away. “I’ll see you when I get back!”   
  
  
After that rather delightful chat Stacy and I had, I went straight to my Mom’s office, as she directed. Pupunta muna ako dito before Lauren and I take off to some place and hang out till tomorrow, she’s leaving at 7:00 am for London. “I’m here.”   
  
“oh good, honey. Here.” she handed me an envelope. “plane ticket, your flight is tomorrow at 10 pm.”   
  
“10 pm? ??? why so late? Couldn’t you book me in an earlier flight?” I’m so not leaving that late!   
  
“well, I thought David should take you out before you leave.. matagal tagal din kayong hindi magkikita.” :)   
  
“I thought we’ve already talked about this, Mom?” ??? >:(   
  
“talked about what? ???” okay, did she hit her head and suddenly forgot about what we talked about last week, or what? “wala naman sa usapan natin na hindi kayo magkakasama ni David while you’re still here ha. I remember you saying he’s not coming with you to the Philippines.”   
  
“I know that, but..” biglang bumukas yung door.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“ready, Iris? :)” errr!   
  
  
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“ready, Iris? :)” errr!   
  
  
  
Ano ba!!! Why is he here? “Mom?” ??? >:(   
  
She didn’t pay attention to me; instead she took out some more papers that needed her signature, as if she never heard me. “Have fun kids.” She waved at us, pero hindi sya nakatingin.   
  
“Let’s go, Princess.. a surprise awaits you.” ;) He winked at me, did an escorting gesture. ang lokong to!   
  
“whatever, let’s just get this over with.” I had no choice but to come with him, I don’t want any last minute drama between my Mom and I. it’s just way too much to handle right now.   
  
Sumakay ako sa kotse nya, pero hindi ko siya kinakausap. I have no idea where he’s taking me but I don’t really care at this point. Masaya na ko na mahihiwalay na din ako dito sa taong ito. “so, Iris, your mom told me that Philippines is a nice tropical country.. lots of beaches and stuff. :)” Hindi ko siya pinansin. “by the way, I know how much you love beaches, so that’s where I’m taking you.. Zuma beach… you know, just like the old times.. ;) ” he looked at the time. Yeah, we used to go a lot to the beach when we were still together, I guess this is the only thing he knows about me, besides the fact that I practically own the mall for shopping 24/7. the beach and the sunset are my.. remedies.. it makes me all calm inside and stuff. but it doesn’t matter anymore. “we have a couple of hours before the sun sets. It’ll be a nice view from the shore.” Then he smiled.   
  
Tumingin lang ako sa kanya, and that’s it.   
  
We got off the freeway after 30 minutes. My mom’s office isn’t really far from Zuma beach, considering the fact that this freak beside me drives like he’s always in a hurry. I guess that’s how it really is, I mean.. I drive like that, too.   
  
Good thing that I didn’t wear heels today, I could play in the sand! :D   
  
Anyway, he continued driving until he found a parking spot along the street. After that, he got out of the car, walked to my side, and…   
  
“no thanks, I got it.” I opened my door.   
  
So he went over to the trunk to get his stuff instead. Hindi ko na siya hinintay, I took off my slippers and walked towards the beach. Ahh.. the sand is very calming. “Iris, wait up!” I didn’t look behind.   
  
Maraming tao sa beach, almost summer vacation na kase, that’s why. “so, how do you like it so far?” I didn’t notice he was beside me already. “if you want to eat, there’s a nice restaurant over there... :)” tinuro nya yung resto.   
  
“I’m not hungry.”   
  
“well.. okay… just let me know if you are. :)” He smiled at me.   
  
At ayun, we just continued walking and acting like we don’t know each other. Actually, ako lang yun. hindi ko kase siya kinakausap. He continued talking; I guess he’s trying to make a conversation with me. Too bad, though, I’m not interested.   
  
I got tired, so I sat where he laid the blanket, the sun is almost about to set. “it’s nice, isn’t it?” he was referring to the sunset.   
  
“since when did you care about the sunset in the beach? ???” napatingin ako sa kanya bigla. “you hate beaches.” He does, he never enjoyed the beach every time I ask him to take me to one. Parang lagi siyang napipilitan lang.   
  
“well, I don’t actually hate it,” ang sabi nya. “I just didn’t have the time to enjoy it.”   
  
yeah, because you were too busy with other things! >:( “whatever.”   
  
“aren’t you enjoying it?” ??? :-\   
  
Okay, is it me or this guy is just plain stupid? Love ko nga yung beach and sunset eh!!!! I stood up and dusted myself, “okay, the sun is gone, take me home.” Sinabi ko when the sun finally set.   
  
“oh.. but I was planning.. maybe a dinner?” :)   
  
"I'm tired."   
  
he had a disappointed look, “well...okay…” :-[   
  
So we walked to his car, this time inunahan niya ko para mabuksan nya yung pinto ko. then after that, umalis na kame.   
  
“did you have fun at least, Iris?” I just nodded, I’m tired na eh. “good.” He entered the freeway, I remained quiet throughout the whole drive back home, sya din tahimik, pero when we got off the freeway, ayan hirit na naman. “Don’t do anything over there that’s going to break your mom’s heart okay.” He said while he was driving. “I don’t want to hear anything bad about you.”   
  
Huh?! “since when did you care?! ??? >:(” he looked at me with astonishment.   
  
“I’ve always cared about you, what are you talking about?” ???   
  
“oh, cut the crap, David.” We both know what’s going on here, what’s he talking about?   
  
“what crap? what are you talking about, Iris? ???” nakatingin parin siya sa daan. “don’t you believe me?” ???   
  
“duh?! You think I believe you? Psshh. ::)” I rolled my eyes and looked outside the window. “Never.” 8) >:(   
  
“I really wish you’d give me another chance… I changed already, Iris..” :-\   
  
Changed?! What the heck? "loser.”   
  
He sighed. “tell me what I have to do… :-[”   
  
“I don’t have time for this nonsense, David.” >:(   
  
“I’ll do anything just to get you back..” he put his right hand over my left hand.   
  
I removed it quickly, “ano ba?!” >:( ???   
  
“huh? ???” I forgot, he doesn’t understand tagalog pala..   
  
“just shut up and drive!” >:(   
  
“see, this is exactly what I’m talking about.” He slowed down, “you always want to keep everything to yourself, and how the hell would I know what’s bothering you, if you shut people out of your life?”   
  
I felt that I’ve reached beyond my boiling point when I heard what he just said. “so I shut people out now? ??? >:(” I looked at him, “well, maybe if you hadn’t been too focused on yourself David, then you would have noticed what was going wrong! >:(” I said.   
  
“what?” he raised his voice, “what was wrong, Iris!?”   
  
“YOU! you made me shut you out of my life! >:(” I yelled. “it always has to be you, and all about you!” I mimicked his voice, “Iris, do this, Iris don’t dress like that, Iris stop acting like a child, Iris… ahh! You sound like my mom!” I covered my face with my hands, “all of you treat me like I’m a freakin’ robot!” I slapped my lap, “well, guess what? I’M NOT!” >:( >:( >:(   
  
“Iris, that's not true.. :-\ I don’t know why you’re so upset…” he mellowed down his voice. “I was just asking…” he pulled over, “I’m sorry... :-[”   
  
I took a deep breath, is this guy stupid or what? “Just take me home.”   
  
He didn’t say anything anymore. He just took a deep breath and started driving again. Mabuti naman. In a few minutes, he pulled over to the driveway. “good night,” I got out of the car and walked straight to the front door without even looking back.   
  
Pumasok na ko sa loob, the balikbayan boxes are all packed and ready for tomorrow. Hay.. I’m leaving tomorrow.   
  
“hello?” I picked up Lauren’s call.   
  
"what’s up? What are you doing?”   
  
“nothing, just got home from the beach, David took me there.”   
  
“I know, tumawag ako kanina dyan eh, your mom picked up and told me you went out with David.”   
  
“are you all packed up for tomorrow?”   
  
“yes. I’m so excited! :D” I could hear in the background that she’s still doing some last-minute packing. “I bet you’re so anxious to leave for Pinas!” sinabi nya sarcastically.   
  
“yeah, anxious-worried. I’m totally dreading it.” I said. “My mom said my cousin Chris is picking me up at the airport.” Chris is my younger cousin, by the way. he’s 18 and he has an older sister, my other cousin, Isabel, who’s the same age as me.   
  
“well, that’s good, close ka naman sa kanila diba?” ??? ;D   
  
“yeah.. err.. I don’t know, I mean yeah I was close to them when I went there..” when was the last time? “4 years ago.” It’ll be somewhat awkward now, I know. considering the fact that we all grew up from the last time we saw each other. “too bad you’re leaving early tomorrow.. I wanted to spend time with you pa naman..”   
  
“aww. Madeleine, ang drama mo! para kang bata! ;D It’s only for summer.. it’s not like you’re staying there for good na diba? And as for me, I’ll be gone for summer as well.. pagdating ng fall sem, everything’s gonna be back to normal.”   
  
“yeah,, yeah,, it only sucks because I thought we were gonna spend summer together in Hawaii” :(   
  
“I know, but what can we do? MOMS! ;D” she laughed. "I don't even argue with my Mom anymore about these things, I realized that I'm just wasting my time. hindi naman papatalo yun eh, ;D ::) " she laughed again, “oh sya, tatapusin ko na to pinapack ko, I’ll see you in two and a half months! Behave ka dun ha!”   
  
Natawa naman ako dun, me? behave? Nah-uh. “oo naman! Ikaw din, behave ka and make sure you keep your hands by you all the time, baka kung kanino pa mapunta yan eh! bye! bon voyage!”   
  
“ikaw din!” tawa naman tawa si Lauren, parang loka loka! “ay! Iris, I almost forgot!”   
  
“what?”   
  
“puntahan mo naman kuya ko, tell him his most beautiful half-sister says hi!”   
  
“okay? How can I do that, I don’t know where your brother lives, I don’t even know your brother, at all!” I haven’t met nor seen her brother yet.   
  
“eh di bibigay ko sayo yung address, ano ka ba! pero I’ll text it to you na lang, kase nasa address book ko, I left it in my mom’s office.”   
  
“okay okay! Bye!” binaba ko na yung phone.   
  
I went up to my room to rest for a while before I pack my own stuff. Because so far, my Mom only packed the pasalubongs.   
  
I rested for about 2 hours tapos I got up and packed na. it took me about 3 hours to do it, since I have so much stuff, I’m starting to reconsider my mom’s offer: build my own mall. Haha. ;D   
  
  
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Airport. – LAX   
  
“anak, ingat ka don ha, call me as soon as you get off the plane okay? ???” she hugged me, “I’ll miss you! susunod ako don once I finish what I’m doing at work..”   
  
“okay, Mom. Take care of yourself.” I hugged her tightly, I’m gonna miss her for sure. – not! haha! Finally, no b1tching mother for almost 3 months! Ain’t that awesome!? Snap back, they’re calling my flight number already, “I have to go now.. bye Mommy..” I kissed her and left.   
  
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Hindi ako matagal nghintay bago nakasakay sa plane. It wasn’t a long wait as well before we took off. Bye Los Angeles, I’ll see you in a couple of months.   
  
The flight was okay, actually natulog lang naman ako the whole time. I woke up occasionally to eat and use the rest room. After almost forever, the plane finally landed in Manila. I’m in the Philippines already. Wow.   
  
So there, we were escorted out of the plane, then I got my luggage and the rest of the balikbayan boxes my mom packed.. was it last night, or the other night? okay, the other night, I skipped a day.   
  
While I was walking towards the arrival area, someone, I don’t know if intentionally or unintentionally bumped me and caused some of my stuff to.. well fall off the cart. “oww! >:(” I held my shoulder, masakit yun ah.   
  
“sorry, are you okay? ???” sinabi nung guy na nakabangga sa akin, while picking up his stuff. He was decently dressed, with a briefcase, the one that fell on the floor.   
  
Sorry? Yun lang? I knelt down, “how about, give me a hand on these? ??? >:(” I pointed my things on the floor.   
  
“I can’t, I’m in a hurry.” He said. Then he began to walk. Okay? What a gentleman!!!! >:( >:( >:( What’s so hard about helping me a little to pick up my stuff on the floor? It’s not like I’m taking all his time, and besides, it was his fault! >:(   
  
“What? ??? No! >:(” I pulled him back, “I’m not picking those up myself, you have to help me, it was your fault they fell off my cart in the first place! >:(”   
  
“may kamay ka naman diba? Kaya mo naman, bakit hihingi ka pa ng tulong? ???” what an idiot! Tell me this guy is a retard!? “I picked mine up, you can pick yours up, too.”   
  
“what!? >:( well, if you hadn’t realized it, these.,” I pointed my things on the floor, “were all your fault! The least that you could do is to offer me a hand!” >:(   
  
“eh nagmamadali nga ako!” errr!!!! “bahala ka na nga dyan!” umalis na siya, but while he was walking, I could still hear him talking, “tatanga-tanga kase, parang naglalakad sa buwan!”   
  
I was gonna run after that bastard, but then I realized my stuff are on the floor, kaya ako na lang nagpick up. Nakakainis! That guy acts like he’s all that, hindi naman! Ugh!! >:(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I can’t believe my first encounter with a person in Manila was with an impolite jerk! >:( >:(   
  
  
  
  
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I can’t believe my first encounter with a person in Manila was with an impolite jerk! >:( >:(   
  
  
  
  
I continued walking hanggang sa makalabas na ko. As soon as I stepped outside the airport, I felt this warm, more of a hot breeze brush through my face. Oh my God!! ANG INIT!!!! >:(   
  
Anong oras na ba? 6… almost 7… in the morning!? Early in the morning and it’s already hot like this?? ??? And eww… I’m already sweating!!! Dati kase, night kame dumadating ni Mommy dito. It’s my first time to arrive here this early.   
  
  
“ate Iris!!” I heard someone yell out my name. so I looked around and saw my cousin Chris waving at me, I waved back and walked towards him.   
  
“oh my God, Christopher! :D” this guy looks so different from the last time I saw him. “you’ve grown so tall!” niyakap ko siya. “how are you?! where’s Ella? How come she didn’t come with to pick me up? ???”   
  
“eto, ayos naman..si ate kasama ni lola eh.. you understand tagalog right? ;D”   
  
“of course, ano ka ba?” Tumawa siya. He must’ve forgotten I speak and understand tagalog.   
  
“akala ko kase hindi na eh! dati diba hirap na hirap kang magsalita?” he put his arm on my shoulder, “so, kamusta na ang pinakamaganda kong pinsan? :D” we walked to the car.   
  
of course ako lang pinaka pretty, i'm his only cousin eh. haha! ;D “ikaw, you still haven’t lost that sweet tongue of yours, huh?”   
  
“bakit? totoo naman eh.. ;)” he winked at me, “balita ko bad girl ka daw don eh kaya ka pinadala dito!”   
  
“no, of course not, 8)” I said sarcastically, “you know my mom, she’s crazy.. ::)”   
  
“yeah, like lola. ;D” He laughed, then he opened his trunk and put my things in there. “are you staying here for good?” nakatingin siya sa luggage ko, “mukang magmamigrate ka na dito sa mga bagahe mo eh! ;D”   
  
“sira hindi! There’s no way I’m staying here for good.. weather pa lang..” I wiped off my sweat in my forehead, “how do you even survive in this humid weather? ???”   
  
“sa umpisa lang yan, masasanay ka rin.” He turned the ignition and backed up, “so, how long are you staying here?”   
  
“a couple of months, Mom wants me to get a hands on training with the business..”   
  
“ohhh.. so you’re gonna work with Mr. Stiff! ;D” ang lakas ng tawa nya.   
  
“Mr. who? ???” I didn’t get what he said, is this some kind of an inside joke or his name is really Mr. Stiff? “Mr. Stiff? I thought I’m working with Mr. Valdez’ son or something.. ???”   
  
“diba magme-merge kayo ng company?” I nodded, “oh di yun, makakatrabaho mo nga siya..”   
  
Why am I getting a feeling that something isn’t right about this guy? “why? what’s wrong with him? ???”   
  
“hindi ko alam, basta si ate hindi nakatagal sa kanya.. mahigpit kase.”   
  
“Ella worked for him?” I really don’t understand what’s going on.   
  
He continued driving. Ngayon ko lang narealize.. the streets here in Manila are so cramped and tiny compared to the ones in L. A. how can he even manage driving here? well, sanay na talaga siya siguro, since he’s driving pretty smoothly, less the traffic. “oo, she was trying to merge the company with their company, pero hindi nya nakayanan yung ugali..mahiyain kase si ate. kaya naisip nila lola pati ni Tita na ikaw ang ipadala, since you know.. strong ang personality mo.”   
  
“okay? if there’s a problem with his personality, we can merge to other companies, right? Why do we have to deal with his attitude if we could find other companies to merge into? ???”   
  
“oo nga, pero mas maganda kung sa company nila. malaking company yun., more of an empire kung tutuusin.. they can save any collapsing business..”   
  
“so you mean to say…” no way, my Mom’s hard work is going to waste?   
  
“yup.. lola tried all sorts of strategy para tumaas yung sales, wala pa rin eh… a merging deal is the only way to save the company..”   
  
“why can’t my mom just loan lola money to save her business? marami naman pera Mommy ko eh.”   
  
“oo nga..”   
  
Ano ba to, am I just being slow, or talagang walang sense tong whole merging idea na to? I gave him a very confused look.. “sorry, ate hindi ko kase alam kung anong pinagusapan nila lola pati ni Tita eh.. tanungin mo na lang si lola para hindi ka maguluhan.. :-\”   
  
A few minutes, we pulled over to a very nice house, lola’s house. “wow, it’s even bigger from what I remember.. :D”   
  
He honked at the gate and not even a minute, someone already opened it.. tapos he continued driving through the drive way until he reached the garage. In the garage, ang daming maids na naka-line. I guess they’re waiting for us. Oh, I already have the feeling I’m going to enjoy living here. no doing the dishes, no doing laundry.. no nothing!   
  
“are all of them… working here? ???” there must be about 10 of them standing in a single-filed line by the main door.   
  
“yup. Meron pa sa loob kung sa tingin mo konti lang sila. ;)” He smiled. In LA, we only have one housekeeper, and a chauffer. Pero dito? Grabe.   
  
“good morning, Sir Chris.” Tapos tumingin sila saken, “Ms. Iris..”   
  
“good morning.”   
  
Pumasok na kame sa loob, sinalubong naman kame ni lola kagad. She’s all dressed up. “oh hi Darling..” she stretched out her arms, “welcome!” and she hugged me. “Christopher, hijo, magbihis ka na, may pupuntahan ka pa.” She said to him in a very cold manner.   
  
“yes, lola.”   
  
And then she led me to the garden, ang daming orchids.. they’re so pretty and the whole garden is just amazing, lots of flowers, green grass.. basta maganda. “so hija, how are you, are you okay? are you hungry?”   
  
“I’m fine, thank you.. it’s kinda… hot.” I wiped off my sweat from my neck. Something is telling me that my lola is not the same person from the last time my mom and I visited here.. parang ang sungit nya ngayon. She used to be a lot nicer and looser to us.. to me. or baka naman because of the business problem kaya sya parang problemado? Hindi rin eh. iba talaga sya. “uhm.. lola, where’s Ella? ???” hinanap ko si Isabel, my other cousin. It’s so unlikely for her not to pick me up in the airport, when she used to always do that.   
  
“I sent her to a business errand, she’ll be back later.” She got her scissors and started cutting dead leaves off of the orchids. “you have rest of the day to rest, Madeleine, pero bukas na bukas din, pupunta ka na sa office. You have lots to learn and lots to do.” She didn’t look at me, “the maids already fixed your room, ituturo nila kung san yung kwarto mo.” Hindi parin siya tumingin saken, “just a reminder, darling, your not here for a vacation, hm? 8)” yeah, I knew that, but not this attitude?!   
  
“but lola? ??? Don’t I at least get to have the whole week to adjust and to… you know, hang out with my cousins and stuff… I mean— :-\”   
  
She cut me off, “time is precious, darling.” Sabi ko nga. Time is precious. Whatever! >:(   
  
“but lola! I just got here and you’re making me work my ass off already?” >:(   
  
“precisely. 8)” I don’t like her anymore. She’s no longer a pushover, she’s mean!!! “oh? ano pang tinatayo mo dyan? Go have your rest, you don’t want to look like a zombie tomorrow when I take you to my office, and introduce you to Jeremy.”   
  
“who’s Jeremy? ???”   
  
“Jeremy.. Jeremy Valdez.. Ramon Valdez’ son and successor of his multi-million investments. A very important man in the business world, hija. 8)” When she said that name, her face suddenly lit up. Okay? What’s with this guy's name that my lola changed her mood? She talks about him like he’s a freakin’ god or something.   
  
I didn’t ask further about his guy. Chris calls him ‘Mr. Stiff’ so I’m guessing he’s kinda like the loser type-who-doesn’t-have-a life-and-a-boring type of a guy. Ugh! So typical in the so-called ‘business world’. That’s why I don’t want to be a part of it eh, I don’t want to be like them. Dull and lifeless. >:(   
  
I excused myself and went inside the house. The house is not only big on the outside, but it’s a lot bigger inside. Kaya lang, I noticed something, the furniture arrangement and all the other decorations are nothing but boring. Yung color kase white and gold lang, very plain. Ano bayan. At least add a little color to make it look lively diba? Ahhh!! This house is screaming for a makeover. First time you see it, you’ll already know that an old lady owns this mansion.   
  
So anyway, I didn’t take a tour inside the house, inaantok na kase ako, it’s 8ish in the morning, it’s about 12 midnight in LA right now. so I asked one of the maids to direct me to my room. Inside, everything’s neat and orderly; I would normally love this scenario, because I like my place well-kept. But this time, I feel like I’m being suffocated. It’s too clean! I ran my fingertips through one of the surfaces, and not a single dust got stuck to them. Oh my God. This is freaky. Again, this room looks so boring. White walls, gold borders, white bedspread, gold railings. Everything is in uniform!! Somebody get me out of here? s'il vous plait?   
  
Before I changed my clothes to a more comfortable outfit at humiga ako sa bed, I called my mom first to let her I got here safely. I didn’t realize that I fell asleep until I felt a tap on my right arm. “Iris..” another tap, “couz!”   
  
I opened my right eye and saw my cousin, Ella! “hey!! ;D” nagising naman ako bigla. “where were you? how come you didn’t pick me up at the airport, huh!?” I sat up.   
  
“sorry, si lola kase eh, sabi nya susunduin ka naman daw ni Chris, hindi na niya ako pinasama. :-\”   
  
“where did you go, then?”   
  
“meeting with Mr. Valdez. >:(” She frowned, “kakagaling lang nya sa business trip, kakainis yun, laging nagpapatawag ng meeting, naku!” another negative thing about this Mr. Valdez dude. “buti na lang, I don’t have to deal with him anymore. Your turn naman!” ginulo nya yung hair ko. “good luck! ;D” hindi rin siya masaya noh? Na she’s passing on her failure to me. she’s crazy, I know!   
  
“are you talking about the big guy, or the son?” ???   
  
“the son, yung tatay nun mabait eh. suplado nga lang, pero mas okay siya kesa dun sa anak, ewan ko nga kung san nagmana yun eh.”   
  
“really? ???” hindi naman ako makapaniwala, because usually, the parents are the ones who are very suplados and supladas..not the kids. “so what’s this guy like anyway?”   
  
“major suplado! Never nagsasmile. Yun lang ang masasabi ko.” it’s kinda like a fixed thing about him, very.. accurate description.   
  
Nawala naman yung concentration ko sa sinasabi nya when I scanned her from head to toe, oh gosh.. black skirt, white long-sleeve blouse, hair fixed in a bun… ano ba to? Parang teacher? “what are you wearing? ???”   
  
Tinignan naman nya yung suot nya, “business-attire… wardrobe regulation.”   
  
“you look old! Ano bayan!” she does! She’s only what? 20? And from what she’s wearing, she looks like she’s a 40-year-old woman who never had a boyfriend. she’s just too plain.. “you need a makeover, couz!” I said. Trust me, it’s really that bad!   
  
“sira!” pinalo nya ako, “makeover ka dyan, papagalitan ako ni lola.. alam mo naman yun, always professional ang dating.”   
  
“are you serious? ???” she nodded, “so you are you telling me that I’m gonna wear something like that when I go to work?” she nodded again, “no way! uh-uh! Never!”   
  
“relax, brattinella.. you don’t have to fix your hair in a bun if you don’t want to.. ;D” she laughed. “sorry, under lola’s supervision, ganito ang isusuot mo pag tumapak ka sa building nya.”   
  
Nagkwentuhan kame the whole night about things we missed out on each other. Grabe, I missed my cousin a lot! she even slept in my room for a couple of hours, well, considering the fact that we finished talking at around 5ish in the morning.   
  
The next day, I begged my lola to not make me go to her office today, or at least this early. Gusto ko kase lumabas kame nila Ella and Chris.. you know, so I could have a taste of morning in Manila once more, kahit na sobrang init. Fortunately, pumayag naman siya, kase daw, may business meeting pa daw si Mr. Valdez at mamaya pa siya matatapos in the afternoon.   
  
We didn’t waste anymore of our time, sumakay na kame sa kotse ni Chris and off we went to wherever his car is taking us. Siempre, since it’s early in the morning, they took me to Manila bay para magjogging kame. Wow, it looks different from the last time I’ve seen it.. enjoy naman ako, we even rode a bike.. hehe.   
  
After that, we ate breakfast, then kung san san na nila ako dinala.   
  
“so Chris, what are you doing for lola?” one of my questions while we were eating.   
  
“dun ako nakabase sa building nya.. nag-iintern ako dun..”   
  
Tapos tumingin ako kay Ella, “and you must be her representative, I’m guessing”   
  
“yup.” She tapped me in my shoulder, “and you are her successor.”   
  
“what!? :o ???” wala naman to sa usapan namen ni Mommy ah? she told me I was just coming here for a hands-on training.. the turn-over is not anytime soon.. “oh.. no.. I’m just here for training.. and for the merging deal with that Jeremy guy..”   
  
“oo nga, diba ikaw ang makakatrabaho nya?” I nodded, “so magiging business partners kayo once nagmerge na tayo sa kanila.” Oo nga noh? “so basically, couz, ikaw ang magiging President and CEO.”   
  
“but wouldn’t I be too young for the position? Lola is not ready to retire yet, anyway.” There’s no way I’m taking her place at this point! I’m still young, I want to have fun!   
  
In the middle of our conversation, nagring yung phone ni Ella.   
  
“yes, lola.. opo lola, nandito po siya.. okay.. pupunta na kame dyan ngayon..” she hung up the phone, “we need to go, nandon na daw si Mr. Valdez” she looked at me, “the big guy, not the son. ::)”   
  
Kaya nagdrive naman si Chris kagad, nung dumating na kame don, tinanong nya ko, “ate, hindi ka magpapalit ng damit? ???”   
  
I looked at myself; I’m wearing sweat pants and a tank, tapos naka baseball cap. “I don’t want to change, this is comfortable..”   
  
“pero? ???”   
  
“magagalit si lola.” Ang sabi ni Ella.   
  
“okay lang yan, eh kesa naman umuwi pa tayo, it’s gonna take us a while to get back if I change my clothes.. let’s go.” Sumakay na kame sa elevator.   
  
Her office is located at a very high floor, kaya nung bumukas yung door ng elevator, feeling ko I’ve been inside that thing forever.   
  
Pumunta kame dun sa secretary nya, who was kinda shocked to see me wearing what I’m wearing in my lola’s office. Hindi na sumama saken si Ella and Chris, instead, they left, may pupuntahan pa daw sila. The secretary escorted me in my lola’s office. “madam president, nandito na po sya..” inside the office, meron siya kasamang isang lalake, si Mr. Valdez siguro. Si lola naman, parang sobrang gulat sa suot ko. alright, I know it’s inappropriate for her, but who cares? I wear this when I go to my mom’s office and nobody cares.   
  
“oh she’s here,” kausap nya si Mr. Valdez. She walked towards me and whispered, “what are you wearing, Iris? ???” tapos she turned me around, “this is my other granddaughter, Iris.. she just flew in from LA yesterday.. and she’s working the merging deal with your son..”   
  
I extended my hand for a handshake, but instead, he took it and kissed it. “It’s a pleasure to finally meet you. I’ve heard many wonderful things about you, hija. :)” Wonderful daw?!   
  
“thank you.” I just smiled. “nice to meet you, Mr. Valdez.” Tapos we all sat down.   
  
“so, how do you find Manila so far?”   
  
“it’s… nice.”   
  
“you look like you came from somewhere..” nakatingin siya sa suot ko.   
  
“oh.. yeah, my cousins and I jogged this morning. And I didn’t want to change my attire, it’s hot.”   
  
“so kamusta naman ang biyahe mo? I heard there were a lot of people in the airport yesterday..”   
  
Oo nga, sobrang dami, isama mo na dun yung guy na nagbump saken, and called me tanga! hmpf! “yeah, the airport was packed yesterday, and this guy bumped me, too. My stuff were all over the floor.. He didn’t help me na nga, he called me tanga pa..how rude. >:(”   
  
“nako, nagkalat na talaga ang mga walang modo dito..” my lola said. She faced Mr. Valdez, “by the way, compare, where’s Jeremy? ???”   
  
“padating na yun, nagtext na sakin,” he looked at me, “he’ll be here shortly.”   
  
“oh okay..” shortly pa naman eh, I could probably use the restroom in the meantime, i need to pee “excuse me, I need to use the ladies’ room.” Tapos lumabas ako.   
  
And because I needed to pee badly, I ran towards the restroom, dahil anytime baka lumabas na to no! bigla naman…   
  
“owww!!! :o >:(” next thing I know, nasa floor na ko.   
  
“watch where you’re going!” >:(   
  
“watch where I’m going? ??? How about you watch where you’re going?! >:(” ang lokong to? Ako na nga yung nasa floor, and he has the guts to yell at me? for what? for falling on the floor? Wth?   
  
“bawal kase dito yung mga katulad mo,” he looked at me, hey.. it’s the guy from the airport! “ano ka ba? messenger? ???” ang yabang nito ah!!! “the information desk is downstairs. 8)”   
  
I stood up and dusted myself, “hoy! Excuse me, you don’t know who you’re talking to right now! >:( 8)”   
  
“oh really? ???” nakatingin lang siya saken, “you’re right, I don’t know who I’m talking to right now. and I wouldn't bother knowing you.” he turned his back from me, “excuse me, I have a meeting to attend to.”   
  
“hey you! I’m still talking to you! >:(” I yelled. Yung ibang tao naman nakatingin na saken, kaya I turned around na lang to go to the rest room. That jerk!!! Isusumbong ko siya kay lola! >:( >:( >:(   
  
After ko sa restroom, I hurried back to her office, I realized I’ve been gone for a while. When I opened the door.. “omg lola, you’ll never guess what happened to me out there, this jerk who bumped me in the airport, bumped me again! I don’t know who that guy is, but I want him found and thrown out of this building!” >:( >:(   
  
“darling, relax..” she rubbed my back. “Jeremy is here. :)”   
  
  
I turned around and found that same jerk standing perpendicular to me. oh great! >:(   
  
His father stood up, “Iris, this is my son, Jeremy.”   
  
He walked towards me and reached out his hand…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Thrown out of the building, huh?” 8)   
  
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“Thrown out of the building, huh?” 8)   
  
  
  
  
oh my.. tell me this is just a joke? I can’t work with this jerk! Never!!! “I don’t think you’d want to do that. 8)” I just stared at his hand, which, by the way is still hanging in the air. “you’re not gonna leave me hanging now, are you? ??? 8)” ang yabang nya!!!   
  
“of course not, why would I do that? 8) >:(” I smiled and shook his hand, but I held on it tightly. “I’m Iris, nice to meet you.”   
  
“aray! >:(” then I let go of the squeeze. “yeah, likewise.” Shinake nya yung hand nya.   
  
“oops, hard grip…sorry, did I hurt your precious hand? ::)” I just stared straight in his eyes. “ohh… you’re not hurt, are you? 8)”   
  
“no.. no.. I’m not.” I’m not daw, eh obvious naman! He’s touching his hand kaya. “so,” he looked at Mr. Valdez and my lola, “is she the one I'm working with?” he pointed at me… With an uncertain look. The kind na parang hindi siya makapaniwala.   
  
“oh yes, hijo.. she’s the one I was talking to you about. Remember? She’s my other granddaughter, Iris.. from LA. she’s pretty, isn’t she? :)” she smiled.   
  
He scanned me from head to toe, “she’s…. okay. 8)” He looked straight in my eyes, “typical LA girl.” Is it windy in here, or this guy just thinks he’s all that? >:(   
  
I placed my hands on my waist. “typical LA girl? ??? And what’s that supposed to mean? >:(”   
  
“nothing, you just look like an LA girl. 8)” He paused, “unless you’re thinking something else?”   
  
I rolled my eyes on him. Ang kapal ng muka, I know for a fact he didn’t mean what he said to compliment me. “and how about you, hija,” sabi ni Mr. Valdez, “what do you think of Jeremy?”   
  
Now it’s my turn to scan him from head to toe, hmmm… guy’s got style, pero kahit na! “well.. I guess he looks normal.” Then I stared at him, “dull. 8)”   
  
“dull!? ??? What do you mean, dull? >:(”   
  
“dull. What, you don’t know what dull means? ::)” I raised my eyebrow, “dull… plain…boring… uninteresting---”   
  
“yes, I know what dull means. >:(” He looked at himself, “I’m not dull.”   
  
“yeah, sure, whatever ::)” I did the quoting sign in the air, “Mr. Jeremy Valdez.” I let out a chuckle. Look at this guy, parang na conscious ata. ;D   
  
I sat down; my lola and his Dad were just watching us… talk. “you two seem to know each other already, have you guys met? ???” he looked at both of us.   
  
“actually, your son happened to be the one I ran into in the airport, and—” :o   
  
Sumingit naman siya, “we’re excited to work with each other.” What the heck!? ???   
  
“oh good, mukhang magkasundo na kayong dalawa, I’m sure you guys will enjoy working together. :)” Tuwang tuwa naman si lola. Pwede ba?   
  
“no, wait. I don’t—”   
  
He grabbed my arm, “when does she start?” napatingin naman ako sa kanya.   
  
“tomorrow?” he asked me.   
  
Sumagot naman si lola, “yeah, she’ll be reporting to work tomorrow” what am I, a mute? ???   
  
“great.” He faced Jeremy, “and for the project you were working on, I expect a full report in my office first thing in the morning.”   
  
“yes, Dad.”   
  
“Sir, Jeremy. Hindi Dad. Wala tayo sa bahay.” He looked down when his Dad said that. Hahah! Buti nga, pahiya siya. ;D   
  
“yes… SIR. :-\” He raised his chin up.   
  
“so..” he faced me this time, “welcome aboard, Ms. Martin.”   
  
“thank you, Sir.”   
  
He bowed his head down slightly, as a sign of welcoming, I guess.   
  
“Mr. Valdez, Ma’am .. hinihintay na po kayo sa meeting..” we heard, when my lola pressed the speaker of her phone.   
  
“excuse us,” he grabbed his stuff, pati na rin si lola. “si Jeremy na ang bahala sayo, Iris. Okay?”   
  
“yeah, you two..” she looked at Jeremy, then me, “get acquainted.. after all, you will be working together for a very long time.” She said ‘very’ with a stretch, kaya parang she was saying it to emphasize something.. something I don’t know, but kinda have an idea of.   
  
Oh no… not again. >:(   
  
Pagkalabas naman nila lola and Mr. Valdez sa office, I sat down at my lola’s leather chair and placed my feet on her desk. “don’t you have manners? ???” sinabi nya, “you’re not supposed to put your feet on the desk.”   
  
Bakit ba? what does he care? “I’m tired.” I looked at him, “this is my lola’s office, I can do whatever I want.” He shook his head, and put his hands on his waist. “what? ???” I raised my eyebrow.   
  
“get up.”   
  
“why? ???”   
  
“because I said so,” tumingin siya saken, “now, get up.”   
  
So tumayo naman ako… ano bayan.   
  
He walked towards the door and opened it. “let’s go.”   
  
“go where? ???”   
  
“ito-tour kita sa building. And we can discuss you job description at the same time.”   
  
“why don’t you tell me what I’ll be doing right now, then take your so-called tour later? ???” ano ba to, nakita na nga nya na I’m resting eh.   
  
“I don’t want to waste time.” Tapos, sumenyas siya na dapat sumunod na ko sa kanya, “it’s called multi-tasking. 8)” I just gave him a blank stare, I cannot believe this guy. Me? multi-tasking? The only ‘multi-tasking’ I know about is driving with one hand and a phone on the other, or walking in the mall, holding shopping bags with an arm and eating Auntie Anne’s with the other hand. “you know.. multi-tasking, doing things at the same time..? 8)”   
  
“oh, quit the smart-ass attitude, I know what multi-tasking is! >:(” I took my purse and walked to the door. Siya naman, nakatingin lang saken. when I passed him and he was still standing by the door, I turned around. “ano? ??? Let’s go!” then I turned my back.   
  
Anyway, so yun nga, we took a tour of the whole building, which by the way is more than 50 floors high. We just passed by the ‘important’ places, according to him, katulad ng iba’t ibang meeting rooms, different departments, and all other stuffs. All the while we were walking, meron pa kong hindi natatanong sa kanya…   
  
“wait,” I stopped walking, “since you have all these people here, what will I be doing? ???”   
  
“you will have the most rewarding job. 8)”   
  
“oh yeah?” rewarding job? I’ll probably be designing stuff. Hmm.. not bad. “what is it? ???”   
  
“well, since hindi ka pa trained and,” he looked at me from head to toe, “I don’t think you will be anytime soon, isasama kita sa lahat ng lakad ko.” ngumiti siya na parang nakakaloko. “you’ll be my secretary until you’re trained. 8)”   
  
“a secretary!? ??? :o” napasigaw naman ako bigla. “oh, no mister! I’m not working as your secretary! I’m a designer, not a girl Friday! >:(” I pointed at him.   
  
“wala ka dito para magdesign.”   
  
“I’d rather spend my entire day with my trainer, instead of following you around as your secretary! >:(”   
  
he covered my mouth, "wag ka nga sumigaw! nakakahiya!"   
  
tinanggal ko yung hand nya, "I don't care! >:("   
  
"I know that, but I do." he covered my mouth again with his hand.   
  
"ugh!! alright!!" tinaggal ko ulit. I mellowed down my voice, "who's my trainer, then!? ???"   
  
He smirked, “you're looking at him. 8)”   
  
“no way! >:(”   
  
“I want all my workers, and business partners to be in the same boat as I am. Kaya ang gusto ko, ako ang magte-train sa kanila. 8)” What an idiot. I swear!!! “so, Ms. Martin, I expect you in my office tomorrow morning at 8 am sharp.” He looked at my outfit again, “and dressed professionally. 8)”   
  
  
  
--   
  
I got home at around 3pm, and I’m telling you, I’ve been nothing but tired throughout my whole time with that Jeremy guy. Grabe, he’s as tight as a bamboo. Tama nga sila Chris and Ella, he really is Mr. Stiff. Akalain nyo, after he toured me, we went to his office and he made me read a book about being a good business person? And then after that, he asked me to tell him what I read about. May jetlag pa ko ha! No time wasted talaga. well… we’ll see about that. Ako pa? everything must always go Iris’ way. And that’s a fact. 8)   
  
Pagdating ko nga sa bahay, sinalubong ako kagad ni Ella.. ayun, she interviewed me about how my day went, which sucked, by the way. I also asked her, since I’m working the merging deal, ano ng gagawin nya? She said lola assigned her to a different account. She’s now working on the Guzman account, another big company. Gusto kase ni lola, magkaron kame ng maraming business partners… to boost the company and the sales up.. whatever. if I hadn’t known better, I’d think it’s a brilliant strategy, but no.. it’s a form of a strategy, alright, but basically, she’s auctioning us three, me, Ella, and Chris to big and wealthy people in the business world.. you know.. to keep the wealth circulating. It’s very greedy, I know.   
  
“but lola! He’s too tight.. I don’t want to work with him. >:(” nireklamo ko while we were having dinner.   
  
“hija, don’t speak while your mouth is full.” She said, yeah, I had something in my mouth. Pero kahit na! that’s not the issue here.   
  
“hindi nga nakatagal si Ella sa kanya eh! he wants me to work as his secretary until I'm trained!” I swallowed my food.   
  
"hija, part yun ng business strategy niya. Even your cousin had to go through that.."   
  
“which she wasn't able to stand!! what makes you think I’m gonna be able to pull this off?! ???”   
  
She placed her hand over my hand, “I have faith in you. and Ella..” tumingin siya kay Ella, “she will be working on another account.. the one that she can handle.” She did not say that right; it was more of an insult to my cousin na hindi naging successful yung merging deal with Jeremy. Eh masungit nga siya eh! sinong magtatagal sa attitude nya!? “kulang pa kase sa personality itong pinsan mo.” Okay, panong hindi siya magkukulang sa personality, eh kung padamit nya, parang old lady! “I have high hopes on you on this new account, Isabel.” She took a sip of her water.   
  
“pero lola, I haven’t thought of a good strategy yet for this one, medyo laging busy si Mr. Guzman eh.. :-\”   
  
“aba, eh gawan mo ng paraan. Hindi ka pwedeng maunahan ng iba dyan! Para san pa ang pinagaralan mo kung hindi mo naman mai-apply? ???” she gave her a stern look. “make me proud, Isabel.”   
  
“yes, lola. :-\” She just bowed her head down.   
  
“and you, Christopher.” Tumingin naman siya ngayon kay Chris, who was sitting beside Ella, “how’s that seminar I made you go to?”   
  
“okay naman po, lola.”   
  
“eh yung sales? ???”   
  
“uhmm… :-\” his voice was a little shaky, “ganun pa rin po. :-X”   
  
“ang tagal mo ng tinatrabaho yan, wala paring improvement? ???”   
  
“I will have a meeting with the staff tomorrow and we will discuss this, lola.” Whoa. A meeting with the staff already? Eh intern pa lang siya eh diba? ???   
  
Sumingit naman ako, “aren’t you just interning? ???” I asked Chris. “how come you’re already meeting with the staff?” grabe namang internship ito.   
  
“gusto kase ni lola yung advance, ate.”   
  
“advance? You’re young, Chris, why are you in a rush to get old and groggy!? ???”   
  
“uhm.. :-\” he had the uncertain look. Tapos, he looked at lola, as if he wanted her to answer my question.   
  
And she did. “Iris, hija.” She leaned towards me, “successful business comes from successful people. Successful people come with brains. And brains come with knowledge. :)”   
  
“but you could still be knowledgeable even if you’re kinda old..”   
  
“yes, I know that, darling. But knowledge is best gained while you’re still young.”   
  
“are you saying that younger people are better than the older ones?”   
  
“Iris, hija, don’t argue with me. I know what I’m doing, and I’m sure it’s for everybody’s benefit.” Binalik nya yung tingin nya kay Chris, “we will touch-base tomorrow afternoon, okay? 8)”   
  
“yes lola.” He answered.   
  
I don’t know what’s up with my cousins. Why can’t they stand up to lola? Puro na lang sila yes ng yes eh.. parang robot! This is exactly something I would never want to be. Hello? Eh pasaway nga ako sa Mommy ko, what makes anyone think I’m gonna prove her right na dito ako magtitino? No way. ::)   
  
Chris and Ella were just staring at me and lola the whole time I was trying to establish an argument with her, parang sobrang nabigla sila.. oh yeah, I figured, they’ve never done what I just did.   
  
“sya nga pala, hija, yung mga work clothes mo nasa closet mo na. I want you to come in to work tomorrow dressed appropriately.”   
  
Nagulat naman ako sa sinabi nya. You mean to say, I’m going to dress like Ella? Uh-uh. just a thought of dressing up like an old lady gives me the undesirable creeps already. Ugh! Goosebumps!   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“exactly what kind of clothes are in my closet? ???”   
  
  
“Ms. Iris..” I felt someone tap my back, “pinapagising napo kayo ng lola nyo..”   
  
I rolled on my tummy, and pulled up the covers, “mmm? ??? Go away, it’s too early..”   
  
“pero.. magagalit po yung lola nyo eh… inutos po saken.”   
  
I did not say anything, basta naramdaman ko na lang, tumayo siya at lumabas ng room ko. Maya maya naman, I heard someone yelling, at biglang binuksan yung door. “MADELEINE!” oh my goodness. ::) “GUMISING KA NA, ALAS-SIETE NA NG UMAGA!”   
  
I covered my ears. Hihi. ;D   
  
“IRIS! KAPAG HINDI KA BUMANGON NGAYON, TATAWAGAN KO ANG MOMMY MO! >:(”   
  
“err..fine.” I got up; I don’t want her calling my mom, kase naman, ipapadala non si David dito. Yun kase yung usapan namen ni Mommy.   
  
“maligo ka na, your tub is already set, pati na rin yung isusuot mong damit.” she is nothing different from my mother, seriously. Mag-ina nga sila. “pupunta na ko sa office, Isabel and Christopher are already downstairs, ihahatid ka nila sa office. Hindi na kita mahihintay, may meeting pa kame ni Mr. Valdez.”   
  
After the morning sermon from my lola, I took a shower already. It’s only my third day here in Manila and I’m already going to work. May jetlag pa ko ha.   
  
So when I finally came out of the shower, I went straight to the closet and looked at the clothes in there.   
  
Black skirt. Boring.   
  
White blouse. Old maid.   
  
Black blazer. Librarian   
  
Navy skirt. Eww!   
  
White skirt. Hmm.. can do.   
  
Pink blouse. This is okay.   
  
Ugh!! Wala akong mapili! Hmmmm… ah-ha! :o :D   
  
  
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“Alice! Nasan na si Ms. Martin? 8:15 na! >:(”   
  
“sir, padating na daw po,,”   
  
“tell her to report to my office as soon as she sets foot in the building!”   
  
“yes sir…”   
  
  
--   
  
  
“ate, sigurado ka,” tumingin siya saken, “hindi ka papagalitan? :-\ ???”   
  
“oo nga Iris, masungit yun, tapos late ka pa..” tinignan nya yung time, “exactly an hour late.”   
  
“nako, ate Ella, naririnig ko na yung sigaw nun.” Then he swung over his head to my direction, “I can imagine it. ;D”   
  
“tapos…naku!!” pinalo nya yung head nya, “patay tayo nyan!!”   
  
“ano ba, relax nga kayo.. this is not a big deal. 8)” Really.. it’s not. ::)   
  
“that’s what you think! Hala, ang lakas ng loob mo talaga, bilib ako sayo!”   
  
In a few minutes, we arrived at the Valdez’ building. It’s as big as my lola’s, actually, 5 minutes away lang sya sa office ni lola. So.. they own a banking corporation.. hmm. kaya naman pala big time eh.. they’re undeniably helpful to our almost collapsing telephone company. But of course that’ll never happen. If this telephone company becomes mine in the future, aba, eh dapat successful siya diba?   
  
“oh, sige ate, good luck sayo, sana hindi ka masigawan! ;)” he winked at me. sira ulo talaga itong sa Chris.   
  
“tawagan mo ko kapag pakiramdam mo nabibingi ka na ha! ;D” isa pa tong sira ulo!!   
  
“I don’t know why you’re so scared of him, wala naman yun eh!” I got my purse at tinanggal ko na yung seat belt ko.   
  
Lumabas na ko sa kotse ni Christopher and walked my way in. okay, not to be exaggerated or anything, but I wasn’t even in yet, sinalubong na ko kagad ng isang babae, she introduced herself as Alice, girl Friday of Jeremy. Secretary siya ni Jeremy.   
  
Eh meron naman pala siya secretary eh, why is he making me his secretary then?   
  
She walked towards me with all these papers in her hands, “Ms. Iris, pinapasabi po ni Sir Jeremy na pagdating nyo po dumeretso daw po kayo sa office nya.”   
  
“what? ???” hehe, I did that in purpose, naintindihan ko naman talaga ang sinabi nya eh.   
  
“oh, I’m sorry, Ma’am..” she cleared her throat, “Sir Jeremy wants to see you in his office.”   
  
“okay, but I don’t know where his office is at.” I raised my eyebrow, “this is the first time I've been here, as you can tell. ::)”   
  
“I’ll escort you there, Miss Iris.”   
  
While we were on our way to Jeremy’s office, yung mga tao na nakakasalubong namen eh nakatingin. Okay? is this the first time they’ve seen someone in this? ???   
  
“Miss Iris, he’s ready to see you.”   
  
“thank you.”   
  
I went inside and closed the door behind me. his chair was turned around.   
  
“I’m here. 8)”   
  
Nakatalikod parin siya, “anong oras na? >:(”   
  
“uhmm.. 9:00? ???” I looked closely to the time, “oh, no wait.. it’s 9:04. 8)”   
  
“you’re one hour and four minutes late! Ang usapan naten 8:00 sharp! >:(” he turned his chair around to face me. this time, his eyes widened, his face… well… PRICELESS.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“what are you wearing!?!?!?!? >:( >:( >:(”   
  
  
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“what are you wearing!?!?!?!? >:( >:( >:(”   
  
  
  
  
He stood up and placed his hands on the desk.   
  
“what am I wearing? ???” tumingin naman ako sa suot ko, “uhmm.. damit? ??? 8)”   
  
“anong klaseng damit yan?! >:(” he pointed my… dress. Okay, so it’s a pink halter top dress ::). It doesn’t look slutty or anything. Hindi nga revealing eh. well, not that revealing. “diba ang sabi ko, dress professionally? We’re not going to the beach. >:(”   
  
“uhmm? ??? Hello? Who said I’m going to the beach? This is not to be worn in the beach in the first place.. the fabric is not made for that. 8) ::)” I gave him a strange look, duh? Hindi ba nya alam ang mga sinusuot sa beach? “and this is fine.” Ang sabi ko, totoo naman eh, I’d rather be wearing this than wear those boring outfits in my closet. “the clothes my lola bought were uncomfortable. And plus..” I placed my hands on my waist, “I’m a secretary.. I don’t need to dress,” I did the quotation sign, “professionally. ::)”   
  
“you’re not supposed to be comfortable at work, Ms. Martin.”   
  
“don’t call me Ms. Martin, I feel like I’m my mom or something, and it gives me creeps to even think about that. Call me by my name.” Napaka formal naman masyado kase.   
  
He cleared his throat, “okay, Ms. Madeleine,” with a big emphasis on my name pa talaga, actually, I prefer being called Iris, but okay, fine Madeleine is good enough. “it is mandatory in this company to dress according to job description,” nilabas nya yung company handbook from his drawer, flipped it on the page where the dress code is, “you see.. 8)” he pointed the bold letters, “it is mandatory. Whether you’re a janitor, a messenger or the CEO. 8)” Tapos tumingin siya sa akin, “a dress code applies to all of us. what you’re wearing is nowhere to found in this handbook, it is extremely unacceptable, unless we have a company outing.”   
  
“whatever. I’d still dress the way I want to. 8)”   
  
He closed the handbook, “well, then I guess I’m going to be forced to write you a memo. 8)” He sat back down, “and you don’t want that.” He started flipping through his stuff on his desk, “trust me. >:( 8)”   
  
A memo!? What the heck? A memo is kinda like a referral to the dean, only this is more serious, since it concerns your career. My career ba kamo? Pshh. This isn’t even my career! “let’s see..” nilagay ko yung index finger ko by my lips, “who’s gonna fire me, my lola? ??? ::)” I looked at him, “yeah, like she will do that. 8)”   
  
“well, yes.. as a matter of fact she will be the one.” He looked up to me, “if that happens, Ms. Martin.. Ms. Madeleine, mawawalan kayo ng investor, a very important investor in your company.. I can't work with unprofessionals.8)” his facial expression became more serious. Grabe, may ikakaserious pa pala yung face nya? ???“there will be no more merging deal, and with no merging deal, your grandma’s company, which will be yours, is in landslide downfall.”   
  
Oo nga noh? Err! Why is he doing this to me? what’s wrong with wearing what you feel is comfortable? After all, wouldn’t you be more at ease to work if you sitting in your place comfortably? Diba? Mahirap naman kase yung hindi ka makagalaw masyado sa suot mo, I mean yeah, it’s all professional and stuff, but it’s irritating.   
  
So I stood there thinking the whole time. I don’t really think this whole set up works for me.   
  
“so,” he put his hands together, “take your pick. 8)” Omg! Famous line ng mommy ko yan. I’m already assuming I have two options, obey the so-called handbook, or no deal at all. “you will follow the company’s dress code and all the regulations in the handbook, or let’s just forget all about the merging deal.” See?! sabi ko na eh. “always keep in mind that we’re doing this, I’M doing this out of generosity. Your lola was one of our biggest investors before.” Out of generosity? Baka out of utang na loob? Right? “so, I’m doing you a favor, Ms. Madeleine. You need me in order to work this merging deal you want out. 8)”   
  
“ugh!! >:( Fine! Ang dami mong arte! >:(” I said, tapos siya naman, parang natawa pa, “but I’m not dressing like a freakin’ oldmaid.. like that Alicia girl out there! >:(” I pointed at his door, Alicia, his secretary, remember nyo? Basta siya yun, muka siyang librarian na old maid! Err! As in, no sense of style talaga! why am I stressing out, anyway? I could give her a total make over. Hmmmm….. ::) “I will come in tomorrow dressed professionally, according to MY style. 8)” I raised my chin up, “and you will not question me whatsoever.”   
  
“and what exactly is YOUR style? ???”   
  
“what, you think I don’t have style? ??? I’m a designer, if you hadn’t figured that out. ::)” Natawa pa ko ng konti, “professionalism it is. 8)”   
  
“okay, I guess that’ll do. As long as you come in dressed properly.” He extended his hand, “is that a deal? ???”   
  
I extended mine as well, oh gosh, I can’t believe I’m compromising with someone, when I always had it my way or there’s no way at all. “yes, it’s a deal.” Then we shook hands.   
  
“a couple or more of ground rules..” he added, “you will and only will listen to me at all times, susunod ka sa lahat ng sinasabi ko, because.” He stood up, “I’m the boss here, not you. You are not to act like a spoiled-brat Beverly Hills Barbie, because you are not here to relax and have a good time, unlike what you are used to in LA, you are here to work. 8)”   
  
Uh-uh! >:( He did not just call me a brat. “excuse me, I’m not spoiled, I’m just loved. 8)” Yeah, my mom loves me so much that she gives me everything I ask for.. what!? It’s not a crime to have everything? “and I’m not from Beverly Hills, I’m from Bellaire. ::)”   
  
“Whatever.” he circled around me, “pangalawa, sa lahat ng business engagements, you will be there, arriving with punctuality, ready to learn and share what you know.” Will this guy get any more demanding? “I repeat, you have to be there, wala akong pakialam kung may sakit ka, o tinatamad ka, you will be there, unless, otherwise, you have a doctor’s note, stating the reason of your absence.” Mas strict pa to sa mommy ko and my lola eh! >:( err. “pangatlo, you will work diligently, 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, from 8:00 am sharp to 5:00 pm. there are times when we have to work more days and more hours. Especially on this merging deal, out of town business trips are highly required. You are not to complain on any time arrangements. And you and I will be working closely with each other.” Tapos he raised both his eyebrows, “do you understand? ???”   
  
“understood 8). alright, I will abide by your ground rules, but of course, I have my own that you have to abide to, as well.” I placed my hands on his desk, “after all, we will be partners if this whole thing works out.”   
  
“okay, I’m listening.”   
  
“just a few, 8)” I looked straight in his eyes, “I will listen to you, provided that you will listen to me, too.” He sat down on his chair. “I understand that in this case, you are the boss and that you know more than I do, but I have matters I have to state as well.” He continued listening to me, “give and take analogy. You listen to me, I listen to you. 8)”   
  
“go on..”   
  
“next, expect me on every business engagements there will be, but you are not to demand me of anything. You can talk to me nicely, and professionally, but never demand or yell at me, otherwise, expect a bad scenario happening.” ako naman ngayon ang naglakad. “and lastly, yes, you have an assurance that I will work diligently, but you will not interfere with my decisions and choices. You will respect the way I handle and will handle future challenges, as I have my own way of handling matters.. special matters.” I stopped walking in front of his desk. “you are here to teach and work with me, not to dictate and treat me like a robot.” I faced him, “agree? ???”   
  
“only if you can prove me that everything you just said is worthy of an agreement. 8)”   
  
“don’t worry, it will be. 8) >:(”   
  
“then yes, I’ll take your word for it. I agree.” We were looking at each other’s eyes, which, by the way is getting a little awkward, “shake on it.” Nagshake ulit kame ng hands, ano ba yan, shake ulit.   
  
“good. 8)” I did not let go of his hand yet, “oh.. one more thing.” I added, “I understand that I have to undergo to your training process, but I don’t think being a secretary fits my stand. :-\” I paused, “I think it’s a rather silly idea to train me as your secretary when I will be a business partner.”   
  
“I’m afraid that’s not something we can talk over, part yan ng business strategy ko.”   
  
“but if I prove to you that I’m worth more than a secretary, and that you can train me without being your secretary first, then will you reconsider my proposal? ???”   
  
“certainly..” he looked at me, “if you can. 8)” Okay, that was an insult. “but I highly doubt it.”   
  
“okay. thank you, Mr. Valdez.” Then we let go of the handshake.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Nako! I so want to crush his hand talaga! Napaka-yabang! >:(   
  
  
  
So there goes my first what.. 2 hours with him, just plain arguing, compromising and other sorts of ‘meeting half-way’ kind of thing. What? we gotta agree on something at some point. I have something to protect, ayoko din naman na mawala yung business namin, so I guess I could, at some VERY RARE cases step down.   
  
But I’m not stepping down for so long, I will rise up to my character eventually, and he will be the one to step down then.   
  
Me? si Madeleine Iris Martin, magpapaboss sa kung sino? Nah-uh. I’ve always had it my way, and my way will always prevails. Pagbibigyan ko lang sya talaga ngayon, since I really need his approval for that stupid merging deal.   
  
That stupid merging deal that got me in this place to begin with! >:( >:( >:(   
  
After namen magusap tungkol sa ‘ground rules’ namin dalawa, he showed me where my office is gonna be at, which is just how many feet away from his. Ano ba to?   
  
He closed the door, which caused me to get the shivers, “this will be your office for the meantime.”   
  
“uhmm.. can I have another office,. :-\” I looked around the room, “this one’s a little stuffy for me. :-\” the one he showed me has only 1 window, the paint is in dark color, there’s little lighting, and ohh! The furniture is kinda like out of style already. No offense. “and can you please open the door? It’s… it’s hot in here. :-[”   
  
I’ve never really said it yet, but I’m claustrophobic. I can not stand being in a closed, dark, and airless place. Which in this matter, itong room na to is a perfect example of a place where I can be in terror of being locked in. “I want an office with windows surrounding it.” And not to mention, I want my room well-lighted. Basta!   
  
He looked at and saw me sweating already, nervous sweat by the way, so he opened the door for air. “are you alright? ??? What’s the matter with you? ???”   
  
“I’m.. I’m fine. :-\”   
  
He continued speaking, “wala ng ibang available office as of now, we still have to remodel this whole floor for more space.” Tapos tinignan nya ako, “unless of course you want that room beside my office. It’s actually an extension to mine.”   
  
“eww. That small room over there? ???” I pointed the one he’s talking about. “no, thanks.” Oh come on, that room is way smaller than this one over here.   
  
“kung ganon, eh di wala ng purpose itong usapan na to.” He looked at the time, “this will be your office, I’m gonna have it fixed, so tomorrow, when you come, pwede mo ng gamitin. I have to go report to the big boss.” He was talking about his dad, remember? Hindi nya pwedeng tawagin dad yung daddy nya kapag nasa work. I don’t know, but that’s kinda odd. My mom never told me not to call her mom when I’m at work with her? “stay here, and get yourself acquainted with the people you are going to be working with. After that, you may go.”   
  
When he left for a meeting with the big boss, I just walked around the cubicles and kinda glanced through the people working, and that’s it. umuwi na din ako. aba, eh ano naman gagawin ko dito? Just sit here and wait for him? no way, and besides wasn’t I already been introduced yesterday? Yeah, I was.   
  
Chris picked me up that afternoon. We went to the mall to shop for ‘professional attires’.. grabe, I had such a terrible first day at work, just the thought of me working with someone like that Jeremy guy, nako, I can already see myself with big eye bags, no social life, and most of all, be like one of those career-focused people.   
  
  
“so, ate..” he said while we were walking to the car, “pinagalitan ka ba ni Jeremy? ??? ;D”   
  
“yeah! That guy has a lot in his head. >:(”   
  
“masungit talaga yun.” Oh yeah, like I haven’t figured that out yet. Hindi siya masungit, OA siya! >:(   
  
“what’s his problem? ???” I sat inside the car, “I mean, why is he like that? ???”   
  
He turned the ignition, “uhmm.. hindi ko alam eh..” then he started driving. “pero ang alam ko, hindi naman sya ganyan dati.”   
  
“oh really? How so? ???”   
  
“classmates sila ni ate nung high school, ang sabi ni ate, makulit daw siya at maingay. Lagi na daw yan napapapunta sa principal’s office eh, puro kalokohan daw kase.”   
  
“what made him change then?”   
  
“I don’t know… hindi na kase sila magkaklase ni ate Ella nung college eh, kaya wala na syang nabalitaan about him.” he paused, “well, not until they worked together.. dun nya nakita yung difference. He suddenly became… serious.. parang galit sa mundo lagi.”   
  
“oh..” na intriga naman ako, bakit kaya sya ganon? “what could be the reason kaya? ???”   
  
“uyy! Si Ate Iris… curious! ;D Kaw ha, concerned ka noh? :D”   
  
“shut up! ::)” I said, in a kidding manner.   
  
I’m not curious.. and definitely not concerned! Eww. For that guy? Uh-uh. >:(   
  
We picked up Ella from a business errand on our way back home. Pagkadating naman namin sa bahay, lola called us three to the dining room to join her for dinner. Si Ella pati si Chris, ayaw na daw kumain, ako din, ayaw ko na, kaya lang, she still called me in.   
  
“so, darling, how was your first day at work?”   
  
“terrible. >:(” I rubbed my neck. “he’s such a control freak. >:(”   
  
“I was told you arrived an hour late, and not dressed properly..” oh, I knew this was going to reach her! That guy!!! Sumbongero! “everything was prepared for you, hija, all you had to do was to put your clothes on.” She looked at me, “baka gusto mo pang bihisan ka pa? ???”   
  
“I didn’t like the clothes in my closet.”   
  
“but they were designed for you, Madeleine. I had those especially made for you to wear to work.” Eh ang panget nga eh!! >:(   
  
“lola, that’s not exactly how I dress. And besides..” I lifted the shopping bags, “it’s already been taken cared of. I shopped for my work clothes. 8)”   
  
“which I believe is completely unnecessary, hija.”   
  
I sighed, “well, we compromised on this, lola. I’ll come to work dressed according to the company’s handbook, in my preferred, but acceptable attire.”   
  
She smiled at me when I said that, okay? why would she smile? Shouldn’t she be mad at me or something? ???   
  
“I’m so proud of you, Iris. :)” What? Am I missing something here? “nobody has ever made an arrangement with Jeremy, ikaw pa lang ang una nyang pinagbigyan.”   
  
  
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The next day, I was awaken early in the morning.. ginising ako ni lola. Hehe. Imagine, she woke me up at 6:00 am, para daw hindi ako malate na naman. At first I was very hesitant to get up, but then.. since I made a deal, I have to stand by it.   
  
So I took a shower, got dressed, ate breakfast, and off I went to work. It was 7:40 in the morning, to be exact when I left the house.   
  
Since Chris is still asleep, and Ella.. well.. she’s out somewhere working that deal with Mr. Guzman, yung driver ang nagdala saken sa work.   
  
Hindi naman malayo yung office from the house, to more or less, it was just a short drive to get there. I set foot in the building at exactly 7:56 am, and was able to get in his office, at… oh.. 8:02 am. Shoot. :-X   
  
Of course, assuming that it’s a normal thing to find his chair turned from the desk, pumasok na lang ako sa office nya.   
  
“good morning.”   
  
“you’re two minutes late. >:(” He said. Man, can this guy get any ruder? Magsasalita, yung chair nya nakaturn? ??? He seems to be reading something.   
  
“but I already was in the building at 7:56, there was just a little delay in the elevator. and--”   
  
“that’s not an excuse.”   
  
“oh come on, I was just 2 minutes late! Buti nga hindi an hour eh. >:(”   
  
“so should I be rejoicing right now? ???” binaba nya yung binabasa nya, “2 minutes not just 2 minutes. Those were minutes wasted. Diba napagusapan na natin to kahapon? Did you forget about what we agreed on? Pano mo ko mapapapayag sa proposal mo, when you couldn’t even be here on time? And..” this time he turned his chair around.   
  
  
Well, the stern look in his face vanished. His wrinkled forehead straightened..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“You… you look pr---- :-X acceptable.”   
  
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“You… you look pr---- :-X acceptable.”   
  
  
  
“acceptable? ???” tinaas ko yung kilay ko non, “acceptable lang? ???”   
  
“yeah, ano ba sa tingin mo? ???” tinaas din nya yung kilay nya, “you look amazing?” he looked at from head to toe, tapos sabay chuckle ng konti, “we’re not going to a party, Madeleine. 8)”   
  
Nagulat naman ako nun, “a party? ???” I gave him a sarcastic look, “I’m not dressed for a party. ::)”   
  
“You dressed acceptably, alright,” then he started walking to the other side of the room, “a pink suit? ??? >:(” he stopped walking, “this is not a place to party, and definitely not a fashion show! >:(”   
  
“so what if it’s a pink suit? ??? ::)” cute naman kaya, hot pink pa, pati stilettos ko, pink din. Oh diba? Coordinating sya? hhehe. ;D “I told you I’m coming in with style. 8)”   
  
“hindi yan style.”   
  
“ugh!! >:(”   
  
He’s starting to get on my nerves, seriously. So I walked out on him and went to my so-called office.. it wasn’t for so long that I realized he was following me, so when I got to my office, at nung nakaupo na ko sa chair ko, pumasok naman siya.   
  
“are you even aware that you’re the only one who’s wearing that kind of outfit in this building? ??? >:(”   
  
“duh? ??? You think I’m coming up here knowing there’s someone else wearing the same color as I am?” I placed my purse on top of the desk, “of course I’m the only person wearing this.. it’s a fashion statement, in case you haven’t heard of that. 8) ::)”   
  
“do you think this whole dress code thing is a joke huh, Ms. Martin? >:(” it’s very noticeable that he didn’t have a good morning… or is it just normal for him to already act this way this early? Tinignan lang nya ako nun, sinarado naman nya yung pinto, dahil yung labas ng office ko eh puro cubicles na, kaya in that case, maririnig kameng nag-aaway ng staff nya. “sa tingin mo ba nakakatawa tong ginagawa mo? ???”   
  
And of course, dahil nga sa claustrophobic ako, I started sweating, and I don’t know, siguro it’s psychological, but I felt like I was running out of air. :-[ “bakit? nagpapatawa ba ako? ???” I don’t get him. really. “please, it’s not my nature to make people laugh. ::)” I stood up to open the door. “and don’t close the door.”   
  
“hindi ako natatawa! >:(”   
  
“Sinabi ko bang natatawa ka? ???”   
  
“hindi! >:(” sinarado nya ulit yung door, “gusto mo bang marinig nila yung pinaguusapan naten?”   
  
“bakit? ano bang masama sa pinaguusapan naten? ??? >:(” binuksan ko ulit.   
  
“it's unethical to have an argument in front of other people.”   
  
“oh screw that ethical-unethical bullcrap! >:(”   
  
"wala ka bang manners? ???" Bago ko pa sya mabuksan talaga, he pushed it back, “do you want them to find out how unmanageable you are? ???”   
  
“they don’t think I’m unmanageable, they think you’re too tight! >:(” I forced my way to open the door, kaya lang, sobrang secure yung pagkahawak nya.   
  
“okay, sige fine, since you don’t want us to have this conversation this way, sige, keep the door open.” he placed his hands on his waist, after he loosened up his tie, “what’s with you and open doors? ???”   
  
Ha! so I got it my way. yey me! “wa... wala., gusto ko lang maraming hangin... :-[ and besides, can you mind your own business? >:(” I changed the topic to the orginal one, “ano bang problema mo?”   
  
“your... :-\ >:(” tapos tinignan nya ko ulit, “wala.”   
  
“wala? ??? then what are you so fussy about?” I asked him, “I don’t get you, ang sabi mo, dress professionally,” I pointed myself, “here. I’m already dressed like that! Ano pang inaarte mo dyan? The fact that it’s pink? What? ???”   
  
Yung mga tao sa labas, tumigil sa pagtatrabaho nila, kase naman, naiintriga yata sila sa pinag-aawayan namen nitong boss nilang sobrang.. stiff! Err!!! This guy’s got issues, big issues! >:( >:( >:(   
  
“hindi! >:( It’s the fact that you’re not taking any of these seriously, Ms. Martin! Hindi pa tayo nagsisimula sa totoong trabaho, nagkakaron na ko ng problema sayo sa mga simpleng bagay! >:(”   
  
This time naman, lumabas siya sa office ko, “hey! where are you going? ???” at naglakad papunta dun sa conference hall, across my office.. at siempre dahil hindi ako magpapatalo sa kanya, sinundan ko sya. 8)   
  
And then I walked to the other side of the room, “what do you want ba? ??? Magsuot ako ng black? ??? well, I’m sooooorrry!” I sharply said, “no matter how hard I try, I can’t be as boring as you.”   
  
He let out a big sigh, siguro sobrang pikon na to saken. ako din naman eh, kahapon pa ko pikon sa kanya. “this is nonsense.”   
  
“good you know. >:(”   
  
We stood there just staring at each other, our eyes fixed to one another, with temper raised. Ang aga-aga, bibigyan nya ako ng attitude? He’s such a… I don’t know what else to call him, but he’s a real pain in the butt! >:(   
  
Bigla naman pumasok si lola.   
  
“good morning, you two. :) Is this a bad time?” Tumingin siya sameng dalawa, medyo mukang curious pa nga sya, since we’re both standing up, sa magkabilang corner ng conference room, “oh? what’s the matter? Bakit ganyan ang mga muka nyo? ???” she closed the door, this time, okay lang, kase malaki naman yung room. “I got a call that there is an argument going on with the two of you. what are you two arguing about?” she stared at me, “ano bang nangyayare dito? ???”   
  
“ask that jerk! >:(” I pointed at him.   
  
She rolled her eyes over to Jeremy, “ask your prima donna granddaughter. >:(”   
  
“excuse me!? ??? >:( ” this bastard! “what did you just call me? >:(”   
  
“Iris, hija..” she walked towards me and held my arm, “calm down.” Tapos, she looked at him, “Jeremy, hijo? Ano ba talagang nangyare dito?”   
  
“nothing, Ma’am. We’re just having a discussion..” then he looked at me, “BUSINESS discussion. >:(”   
  
“yeah right. >:(” I rolled my eyes on him nga.   
  
Nagsmile naman si lola, the kind that probably means something.. you know? Ewan ko, pero pagdating sa mga ganito, I always have this feeling that I’m being put to a very awkward spot.   
  
“well, that’s great.. at nagkakaron na kayo ng business discussion. :)” She put her hands together, yung parang she’s clapping her hands softly, “dahil may good news ako sa inyo.”   
  
“it’s not good news unless you’re about to say that I’m not working with him.”   
  
“oh.. no, Iris.” Tapos she lifted an envelope up, “the merging deal is off.”   
  
“what? :o ??? ” we both said.   
  
“I thought we needed them for the company, lola?” honestly, right now, everything is a big blur. Nung una, the business is falling apart kaya kailangan kame magmerge, tapos ngayon, off na?   
  
“yes, we do.”   
  
“then why are you calling off the merging deal? ???” I know I should be happy, but I'm not.   
  
“hindi ko maintindihan..” he said, “I thought my dad wanted me to handle this? ???”   
  
“hintayin na lang natin ang daddy mo, Jeremy, then we can explain the whole change of plan thing to you, two.”   
  
“but would you mind telling me your part of the whole change-of-plan-thing, lola?! ???”   
  
“Iris, I already said my part,” inulit naman nya, “I said the merging deal is off. :)”   
  
“yeah I know that, but what I want to know is why you called it off… or whatever!” I paused. “have the sales gone up, or has Ella worked that deal with Mr. Guzman? ???”   
  
“no.”   
  
“no? ???”   
  
Si Jeremy oh, hindi na nagsalita, he was just watching me ask my lola what’s up. After all, he probably has the same questions. Kaya naupo na lang siya sa chair.   
  
The last time I glanced at him, hindi maganda yung facial expression nya, from the angry look, naging disappointed look naman sya.   
  
“you’re not gonna tell me what’s up, are you? >:(” bakit ba yaw pa nyang sabihin? Gusto pa nya na i-freeze yung moment na to, eh I’m so curious na nga eh!   
  
She took a deep breath, siguro kase nakukulitan na si lola saken. “alright, there will be no more merging deal, because we’re going for a business partnership.”   
  
“partnership? ??? With who?” sobrang confused na talaga ako ha. si Mr. Stiff naman, ayun nagugulohan din. How did I know? Pareho kaya kame ng expression.   
  
Maya maya naman, dumating na si Mr. Valdez, Jeremy’s dad.   
  
“good morning, sorry to keep you waiting.” He must’ve noticed me… my outfit right away, because as soon as he closed the door, “you look very beautiful, Ms. Martin. :)” See!? buti pa yung daddy nya, may sense of style! 8) ;D   
  
“thank you, Sir. :)” Nagsmile naman ako sa kanya.   
  
We all said good morning back to him, tapos umupo siya sa isang chair, across where Jeremy is sitting. ako naman and si lola, nakaupo dun sa chairs on his both side.   
  
“what’s this all about, Dad.. uhm. Sir?” I’ve only been here for 3 days, and I know it’s not my business, but why is he not allowed to call Mr. Valdez dad at work? ??? Ano bang masama don, eh they both have the same last name naman? And besides, lahat naman ng employees dito alam na mag-ama sila.   
  
He took a couple of papers from his suitcase tapos binigay nya kay Jeremy yung isa, and the other one, to me.   
  
Hindi ko pa nga nababasa lahat, pero si Jeremy…   
  
“what!? >:(” yeah, he sounded shocked, so I guess….   
  
“what!? >:( :o” I had the same reaction.   
  
Pano ba naman..   
  
Okay, so there’s no more merging deal, and my lola said na magkakaron ng partnership, but she didn’t say it’s a partnership with them.. him! omg. This is beyond crazy, I swear.   
  
“sir!?” he asked his dad, at ako naman..   
  
“lola?” I looked at her, waiting for an explanation.   
  
“nag-usap kame ng lola mo, Iris.. and we both agreed on combining our resources and produce one big telephone company.” He stood up, “a partnership between the Valdez’ and the Martins. 8)”   
  
Si lola din, tumayo. “I already got your mom’s approval.. magtatayo tayo ng isang kumpanya kung saan ang isang department, sales department, to be precise, ay imamanage nyong dalawa.”   
  
“what about your collapsing company? Did you forget about that?”   
  
“Iris, hija, don’t worry about that, because you’d still be working in the same company, kaya lang, babaguhin lang ang pangalan.” She smiled at me, “ang intindihin mo na lang,” tapos she looked at Jeremy, “ninyong dalawa, kung pano nyo i-hahandle yung department na i-aasign sa inyo.”   
  
“that’s right, Jeremy, Iris. May potential kayong dalawa of being successful business people in the near future, kaya gusto ko,” he paused, “namen, eh magamit at matrain kayo ng husto habang maaga pa.”   
  
We sat there, both of us, wondering what the hell is going to happen next. Him and I? magiging partners? Eh simpleng dress code nga, hindi kame magkaintindihan eh, management pa kaya? ??? >:(   
  
“so, in a couple of weeks, magbubukas na ang bagong telephone company.. the MV TELECOMS.. which will the new and fresh revision of the Martin’s company. you, Iris,” he pointed at me, “you’ll be the Sales Manager.. since you have a very creative mind, ikaw ang magiisip ng strategies on how to boost up the sales of our products, at kung ano-ano pang klaseng mga product packages.” This time, tumingin naman siya kay Jeremy, “and you, son. You’ll be the General Manager. You’ll take charge of the whole sales department, including you, Ms. Martin. Since Jeremy has more experience in this business, he will be supervising you.”   
  
He then looked at me arrogantly, parang akala mo sya yung batas. Naku! Pwede ba?! >:(   
  
“wait.. >:(” I stood up. "we do not get along! >:(" ang sabi ko, what? it's true anyway!   
  
"she's right. >:("   
  
"you'll have the time to get to know each other... so you two are going to get along. :)" she gave us a convincing smile, "baka nga mamaya nyan, maging inseparable na kayo eh.. ;)"   
  
eww! >:(   
  
“So.. kung may mga tanong pa kayo, now’s the right time to ask.” He looked at both of us, kame naman, para kameng mga ewan don, trying to grasp all the information that’s been told to us. “no more questions? ???” he paused, “good. In that case, take these.” He handed us both another envelope.   
  
Okay? ano na naman kaya ito? Another ‘surprise’ ?? oh please, I had enough and unbearable surprises for today. >:(   
  
“go ahead, you can open the envelope.” Sabi naman ni lola.   
  
Something’s telling me that what’s inside this envelope wouldn’t be good news for me or for him for that matter. basta!   
  
Basta ang alam ko na lang, before I could even open the envelop, narinig ko na lang siya..   
  
  
  
“Sir!? ??? 2 weeks? :o >:(”   
  
  
  
2 weeks? :o What 2 weeks?? ???   
  
  
  
  
So I reached inside the envelop and found a..   
  
  
  
  
Plane ticket. To Davao.   
  
What the hell is this? “lola? What’s this? ???”   
  
“a plane ticket :)” ang sabi naman nya.   
  
“yeah I know it’s a plane ticket,” si lola naman, nakikigaya sa pagiging pilosopa ko eh! now I know how it feels to be around a smart-ass! “what is this for? ???”   
  
“hindi ka ba marunong magbasa? ???” humirit naman itong isang to! >:(   
  
"excuse me," I rolled my eyes on him, “I’m not talking to you.”   
  
so I took out the other piece paper in the envelop and read what's written in it..   
  
"you gotta be kidding me!! no way!? >:("   
  
  
"no i'm not kidding..." she looked at Mr. Valdez, tapos binalik nya samin ulit yung tingin nya, “you two will be going to a seminar in Davao..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
-- For two weeks.” Todo smile pa talaga si lola ah! >:(   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
-- For two weeks.”   
  
  
“pero, pano yung trabaho dito? ???” tinanong ko si Daddy, Sir pala. alam nyo naman, hindi ko daw siya pwedeng tawaging Dad pag nandito kame. ang labo no?   
  
“Jeremy, hijo. You will be working in Davao.” Ano bang sense ng seminar na yun eh matagal na ko dito, kabisado ko na ang mga pasikot sikot sa ganitong klaseng business eh. “it’s a 1 week seminar for the both of you, tapos yung isang linggo, gusto ko ilibot mo si Iris.”   
  
Napansin ko yung muka nga nung sinabi ni Daddy yun. Para siyang dinaganan ng may kung anong sobrang bigat. Mga babae talaga. “sayang lang yun sa oras.” Yun ang sinabi ko kay Daddy.   
  
“yeah, he’s right. I don’t need a chaperone to go around places. >:(” Pagkasabi nya non, tumingin siya saken. ang sama makatingin ah! >:(   
  
“I’m not a chaperone. >:(”   
  
“well, you certainly look like one. 8)” She crossed her arms, tapos inalis nya yung tingin nya saken.   
  
“ano? ??? >:(” loko tong babae na to ah! Ako? Mukang chaperone? ???   
  
“son, you have to go to that seminar. Essential yun para sa bagong business.” why does he get to call me son, tapos ako, kailangang Sir pa ang itawag sa kanya. If hadn’t known better, iisipin ko na napakabait naman ng Daddy ko at pinagbabakasyon nya ako.   
  
“sayang lang yung one week, Sir. Marami pa kong gagawin dito eh.” tambak tambak pa ang trabaho ko, pwede ba? "may mga meetings pa ko na kailangang puntahan."   
  
“hindi ka na dito sa opisinang ito magtatrabaho..”   
  
“that’s right, kase habang tinatayo yung bagong business, wala pa kayong office. That’s why we’re sending you two to Davao.” Sabi ni Mrs. Martin, yung lola ni Prinsesa Arte.   
  
“but lola?! ??? >:(” pumamewang pa siya, nakapaka reklamador talaga nya! “I don’t want to go to Davao.” Tinignan nya yung lola na na parang iritang-irita, “I want to go to bora-kay. I wanna see beaches.”   
  
“boracay.” Kinorect ko na naman siya.   
  
“Iris, it’s not an option, it’s a command. Kaya dapat lang na sundin mo. Kung hindi, tatawag ako sa Mommy mo, at hindi mo gusto ang magiging resulta.” Nagbago naman yung expression nya pagkarinig nya sa sinabi ng lola nya. “don’t worry, Davao has nice beaches too.” Nung narinig nya yun, naglight up naman yung muka nya.   
  
Takot pala siya sa Mommy nya eh, “unless gusto mong makasama si David dito. Which is perfectly fine.”   
  
Sino kaya si David? “no! >:(” she stomped her right foot. “alright, fine! >:(” Nagpout naman siya, grabe, para siyang bata. “bahala ka.” Tapos kinuha nya yung cellphone nya sa bag nya. “I’ll talk to Mommy! >:(”   
  
“go ahead, be my guest. But I’m telling you, baka madisappoint ka lang, mapahiya ka pa sa harap nila Mr. Valdez. ::)” Nung narinig naman nya yun, pinasok nya ulit yung phone nya sa bag nya. “good girl. 8)”   
  
“whatever.”   
  
Lahat na siguro ng masamang ugali ng isang babae, nasa kanya na. Totoo naman eh, ayoko ngang makasama tong babae na to. Napaka arte! Daig pa ang prinsesa kung umasta. Palibhasa, laking America pati anak-mayaman, kaya walang alam sa buhay. It’s very obvious, ni gumawa nga ng sarili nyang coffee, hindi pa nya magawa. Tapos kung maglakad pati manamit pa, parang akala mo eh rarampa sa fashion show. Magsuot ba naman ng pink sa trabaho? What does she think this place is? a mall? No wonder kaya pinauwi yan dito. Kung d dahil lang sa lola na nya, na malaking investor ng company namen, at kung hindi dahil sa Daddy kong napaka dictador, hindi naman ako papayag sa deal-deal na to. Kung ako lang talaga ang masusunod, ayoko syang makatrabaho. Masyado siyang maraming reklamo! Mas gugustohin ko pang magtayo ng sarili kong business, kaya lang, ayaw naman ni Daddy.   
  
“great,” sinabi ni Dad, “you both have a safe trip, at mag enjoy kayo.”   
  
“uhm? Sir.. when are we leaving?” tignan mo nga naman, pati magbasa, hindi pa marunong. Kasama na nga yung flight schedule sa ticket eh.   
  
“can’t you read? 8)” nakakairita talaga sya, “bukas nga, 7:00 am.”   
  
Hindi siya tumingin saken, para bang wala siyang narinig.   
  
“Princess.” Princess? Sabe ng lolo ko, never date a girl whose parents call her Princess, because most probably she’s thinking she’s one. Tama nga siya, eh muka ngang daig pa sa prinsesa kung ituring nya ang sarili nya eh. “eto oh, it already says in here.” tinuro ng lola nya yung ticket, “7:00 am. Kaya dapat maaga kang gumising bukas.”   
  
Nagring yung phone ni Dad, so he excused himself at lumabas siya sa conference room. “eww. Please don’t call me that.” Tinignan nya yung lola ng masama, “why so early?”   
  
"Princess? ???"   
  
"ayy, oo, hijo, nickname nya yun, muka kasing prinsesa itong apo ko. :)"   
  
"oh please, lola I never even approved that nickname." she crossed her arms, "it's ugly."   
  
tinitigan ko siya, oo, muka ngang prinsesa... Prinsesa ng mga maarte! >:(   
  
“at natural maaga ang flight, para marami kayong magawa.” Halata na sa lola nya na naiirita na siya dito sa Iris na to. Bakit naman kase ang dami pang tanong eh, hindi na lang sumunod. Lahat kailangan may kontra siya, ano ba naman klaseng tao ito? “stop asking questions, just do what you’re told.” ayan, buti nga. “hijo,” nakatingin naman siya saken ngayon, “ikaw na bahala dito ah. medyo may pagkamaldita nga lang, pero maasahan naman yan.”   
  
“lola, I told you I don’t need a chaperone. >:(”   
  
Tinignan ko lang siya non, muka ba akong chaperone? Sa gwapo kong ito?   
  
“malaki ang Davao, baka mawala ka don.”   
  
“oh, stop treating me like a little kid. >:(”   
  
“but you act like one. 8)” Ang sabi ko nga.   
  
“as if! >:(”   
  
“Princess!” inirapan niya yung lola nya, napaka walang galang. “Iris!” kaya naman pala ganyan siya eh, pano, masyadong spoiled.   
  
Alam nyo, kung nakakapatay lang yung tingin nya, siguro kanina pa ko patay. Kakaiba. Sa tagal ko ng buhay, ngayon pa lang ako nakakita ng ganitong klaseng babae. Wala ng galang, wala pang pakialam sa paligid nya.   
  
“can I come back after that whole seminar thing is done? I mean.. if you’re saying I get a week of vacation, I want to spend it with someone worth my time. >:(” Tapos lumingon siya saken. ano to? Insulto? “no offense. 8)”   
  
“none taken. 8)” Tapos binulong ko naman, “you’re not worth my time either.”   
  
“ano? >:(” ang lakas naman ng pangdinig nito.   
  
“eh sino naman makakasama mo dito, aber? Si Ella, busy yun. May nilalakad na deal. Si Chris naman, magbabakasyon daw sila ng barkada niya sa Batangas. Kaya itong si Jeremy na lang ang makakasama mo, tutal naman, nandun na rin lang naman kayo, lubus lubusin nyo na. diba hijo? ??? :)” hindi ko napansin, ako na pala kinakausap.   
  
Umoo na lang ako, para end of discussion na. baka kase patagalin pa nito eh. hindi na rin naman natagal at natapos na yung usapan naming lahat. Siempre, after sobrang dami pang angal at reklamo, eh napapayag din ang mahal na prinsesa. Siguro milyong milyon na ang sakit ng ulo ang naidulot nito sa mga magulang nya. Sayang, maganda sana, saksakan naman ang kaartehan. Wag na uy!   
  
Uuwi n asana ako, kaya lang tumawag naman si Anthony, nag-aayang maginuman. Hindi naman ako magtatagal, 7 am ang flight namen, dapat alas-cinco pa lang eh nasa airport na ko. ayoko kasing nalelate. gusto laging on-time. 8)   
  
So dumeretso na muna ako bar na pinagusapan namen.   
  
“so, bro, ano ng latest?” yan ang lagi nyang tanong saken, pano kase, hindi naman kame laging magkasama. Busy sa trabaho, alam nyo na.   
  
Si Anthony, magkaibigan na kame nyan simula pa ng magkaisip kame. Wala akong kapatid na lalake, pero kung magturingan kame nyan, eh parang higit pa sa kapatid. Mula kinder hanggang sa magtapos kame ng pag-aaral, magkasama na kame nyan.   
  
“dumating na yung babaeng makakatrabaho ko..”   
  
“talaga? ??? :D” sumenyas sya sa waiter para sa drinks, “anong itsura? Maganda ba? sexy? Diba sabe mo Amerikana? :D   
  
“laking-America. Pero, muka syang American, kase maputi. Grabe, ‘tol, ibang iba ang ugali. >:(”   
  
“pano? ???”   
  
Iilang araw pa lang kame nagkasama nun, pero pakiramdam ko, wala na akong pwedeng malalaman tungkol sa kanya, because as far as I know, wala siya sa matinong pag-iisip. “kakaiba sa mga babae dito, reklamador, maarte, walang galang, a spoiled brat… basta! >:(”   
  
“are you intimidated? ;D” sa totoo lang, nagulat ako sa tinanong nya, ewan ko kung bakit.   
  
“ano? ???” napatigil tuloy ako sa paginom. “naiinis nga ako sa kanya eh, parang hindi babae. >:(”   
  
“bro, hindi mo sinagot yung tanong ko.” anong tanong? Hindi ako intimidated sa kanya noh, hindi katulad nya ang magpapababa sa self-esteem ko.   
  
“self-explanatory, tol.” Totoo naman, sa pagkaka-describe ko pa lang sa kanya, it’s definitely not a form of intimidation. “hindi ako intimidated sa kanya. in fact, nakakawalang gana siyang kasama. Lahat ng hindi mo magugustohan sa isang babae, nasa kanya na eh.”   
  
“hindi naman siguro.”   
  
“anong hindi? Ayaw maniwala? >:(”   
  
Tumingin siya saken ng medyo natatawa pa. “eh yung isa ko pang tanong?”   
  
“anong tanong?”   
  
“kung maganda sya? ;D” talaga nga naman oh!   
  
“hindi noh. Panget siya.” Pagkasabi ko nun, tinignan nya lang ako na parang hindi siya naniniwala saken. kilala kase ni Anthony masyado, kaya hindi naman ako makapagsinungaling. “okay, fine, may itsura siya.” Hindi pa rin niya inalis yung expression sa muka nya. “maganda. From head to toe.” Tumawa naman siya. “ano? Okay na ba?”   
  
“di nga? ???” um-oo ako, “hook it up, ‘tol! :D”   
  
“trust me, hindi siya ang tipo mong babae, mga ganon klase? Major headache, tol.”   
  
"yun nga ang mga tipong masarap mahalin eh, yung mga suplada, imagine mo, kapag na-tame mo yung ganong kabagsik, at nakuha mo yung ganong kaganda, accomplishment na yun no. that's every guy's dream, pare." Umiling-iling siya, “type mo ata eh. ;D”   
  
“anong type? Yung ganong klaseng babae? >:(” parang hindi naman nya ako kilala eh. “Malayong malayo siya kay Tricia, bro. hinding hindi ko sya magugustuhan.”   
  
“ikaw naman bro,” nilagay nya yung kamay nya sa table, “wala namang lumamang kay Tricia eh. ::)” naging seryoso naman ang muka nya, “matagal na yun bro.”   
  
“let’s not talk about her. :-\”   
  
“ewan ko sayo. Hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit ayaw mo parin siyang alisin dyan sa isip mo. Move on, tol. Kaya ka ngmumukang matanda eh, lagi kang seryoso.”   
  
“bro. please. :-\” Hindi naman ako naiinis sa kanya, talagang ayoko lang pagusapan si Tricia. Ayoko talaga.   
  
Tinaas nya yung dalawang kamay nya, “okay, okay.”   
  
I checked the time, almost 12 na pala, kailangan ko ng umuwi, maaga pa ko bukas, kaya nilabas ko yung wallet ko para magbayad dun sa ininom ko. naka tatlong beer din ako. “mauna na ko, I have a flight to Davao tomorrow morning.”   
  
“sige, ingat!” tinaas nya yung beer sa kamay nya, “and come back a changed man, hm?”   
  
Tumango ako at naglakad na papunta sa parking lot.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Come back a changed man? ???   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“talaga? ??? :D” I didn’t say anything. “huy!” this time, she shook me. “tinatanong kaya kita. ::)”   
  
“oo nga! I’ve been telling you..” ang sabi ko naman, while fixing my stuff. “I can’t believe she would make such a decision. >:(” I walked to my closet and got more clothes, “I mean.. is she trusting me with that idiot? >:( ???” tinanggal ko sa hanger yung shirt, “come on, I barely know the guy!”   
  
“but she does.” She shrugged, “well.. ganyan talaga si lola. She makes decisions for all..” tinulungan naman nya ako mag-ayos. “okay lang naman yan eh, mag-eenjoy ka don, tignan mo. ::)”   
  
“Yeahh.. sure… whatever.” I said sarcastically. “it’s gonna be a disaster, watch.” I know it will be. Actually, even lola knows it will be! I don’t even get why she wanted me to go to that place with him. >:( >:( >:(   
  
“patingin nga ng location nyo.”   
  
“Here.” I handed her the envelop containing all the information about the trip.   
  
She scanned through the papers inside. “eh kaya naman pala pumayag si lola eh, dun kayo sa resort magseseminar. ::) ;D”   
  
“we have a resort in Davao?” I didn’t know that.   
  
“yeah. Family resort yan. First investment ng family naten yan.” her eyes were still on the paper. "it's a nice beach, actually."   
  
Did she say beach?! ??? “oh I love the beach! :D” naexcite naman ako, kase naman, beach yun eh. “but I don’t like who I’m coming there with.”   
  
Lumapit naman siya saken, she was sitting on the other side of my bed kase. “couz, don’t worry.. hindi naman manyak yun eh. ::)” Then she chuckled, “milagro na lang kung may mangyare sa inyo. ;D”   
  
“yuck! >:(” tinignan ko nga siya ng masama. Bakit? Did I ask if he was a manyak? Pero, wait? Milagro? “what did you say after man-yak? ???”   
  
“manyak. ::)”   
  
“whatever.”   
  
“ang sabi ko, milagro na lang kung may mangyare sa inyo. ::)” She repeated herself.   
  
“and what is that? ???”   
  
She sighed, pero muka siyang natatawa, she’s probably thinking I’m so bobo in tagalog. ;D ;D “it means… it would be a shocker if you know…” she paused, “something happens between the two of you. :D” she grinned at me. okay? what’s that for? “alam mo na, dalawa kayo don, boy and a girl.. ::)”   
  
Okay is she talking about the…. That? :o “oh my God! Eeewww!” I stood up.   
  
“ano ka ba! ::)” she hit me with a towel, “hindi ko naman sinabing may mangyayare noh, ::)” natawa naman sya, “ang sabi ko, himala,..you know.. miracle. ;D” Tumingin siya saken, “gets mo? ??? 8)”   
  
“yea!” I really feel awkward talking about this.. ‘that’ thing with my cousin.   
  
She laughed, “alam mo kase.. si Jeremy..” she continued, “maginoo yan, dapat nga dyan eh turuan ng konting kabastusan para naman total package na, gwapo, mayaman, matalino.. pati maganda nga ang katawan, hindi naman nagagamit ng tama...” Tumawa pa siya lalo, “turuan mo kaya? ??? ;D” she winked at me, “tutal naman eh,..” she looked at from head to toe, “mas mukang marami ka ng experience pagdating sa mga ganyan. ;D”   
  
Oh she did not just judge me from the way I look! “oh.. no no girl!” I placed my hands on waist and looked at her from head to toe as well, “me? ???” I pointed myself, “I may be b1tchy and all, but I ain’t a whore!” tapos I let out a laugh. It’s true though, I mean yeah, based on the outside I look like that, but hey, I’m one of those who wait for the ‘right-time-and-the-right-one’ kind of girls.   
  
Tumawa din naman siya, “alam mo, bagay kayo..maganda ka, gwapo siya. Masungit ka, masungit siya… oh diba? 8)” she did the thumbs up, “I’m sure magiging super ganda at gwapo ng mga magiging anak nyo.”   
  
What is this? What she doing? ??? “alam mo, you’re way beyond your wildest imagination.” I threw my hands in the air. “and.. yuck! As if! >:(” eww, that guy? ??? >:( “I don’t want my kids to be as boring as that person!” Yuckie talaga! “he’s not even my type.”   
  
She stared at me as if she didn’t believe me, “relax, hindi ko naman tinatanong kung type mo siya eh. ::)”   
  
“yeah but you were thinking it.”   
  
She leaned over to me, and gave me a puzzled look, “so you mean to say.. you don’t think he’s cute?”   
  
“no? ??? >:(” hindi naman talaga. Cute ba yun, laging may wrinkle yung forehead?   
  
“not even a little? ???”   
  
“no nga eh! >:(” ang kulit naman itong si Ella oh!   
  
“eh attractive? ???” she’s such a chismosa!   
  
“will you stop asking me these stupid questions? ???” tinaasan ko lang siya ng kilay. “you already know the answer.”   
  
“actually, I don’t. 8)” she leaned back and crossed her legs. “so?”   
  
Okay, honestly, hindi naman panget si Jeremy eh. he’s a good-looking man… less the attitude. “you think I’m going to be attracted to that kind of guy? ??? He’s… just like David. >:(”   
  
When she heard what I just said, she gave me this weird expression. She knows David kase, she’s been to L.A. almost every two years.   
  
“no. Jeremy’s far from being like David. ???” She paused, “David is hopeless.” Actually, that’s true, he is hopeless.   
  
“okay, I guess he could fit in the list. ::)”   
  
“see!! :D” she pointed at me. “you’re attracted to him. 8) ::)”   
  
“no. of course not! >:(” she just stared at me, “maybe a little… just on the outside.. but definitely not the personality.” Teka nga? Why am I being put in the hot spot here? what did I do? “why are you asking? ???” I raised my right eyebrow. “why? You like him? ???”   
  
“hindi noh.”   
  
“whatever!” I looked closer at her, “why are you blushing then? ???”   
  
“ano ka ba? kadiri ka naman eh. mainit kase dito sa room mo.” She fanned herself, “nakapatay ba yung aircon mo? ???”   
  
“you swear I’m going anywhere without an a/c! ::)” super init kaya dito sa Manila! Feeling ko every time I go out in the sun, natutunaw ako eh. Seriously. “why are you changing the subject, hm? ??? ::)”   
  
she rolled her eyes on me, “alam mo couz, Malabo yang iniisip mo. Me and Jeremy? No way. ::)”   
  
“why naman?”   
  
“gaga!? Eh nakita mo naman kung anong ugali non diba? Sino magkakagusto don? Hindi naman yun ang tipo kong lalake, pwede ba!? ::) ???” she’s right nga naman, “sayang, cute pa naman siya. ::)”   
  
“so you like him!” I pointed her.   
  
She corrected me naman, “sabi ko, cute, hindi ko naman sinabing may gusto ako sa kanya.” She took some more clothes from my closet, “ang sungit non, parang lagi nyang pasan lahat ng problema ng mundo, noh? ???”   
  
“what? ???” I didn’t understand what she said.   
  
“ang sabi ko,” she cleared her throat, “he acts as if he has all the problems of the world.” Napasigaw pa sya ng konti. “nako, mano-nosebleed ako sayo eh! :D”   
  
“ohh…” okay, whatever she said. “so, Chris told me you guys were friends back in High School? ???” I asked her while gathering my other stuff. “Can you pass me that shirt?.”   
  
“this one?” I nodded, tapos she handed me it. “oo, friends kame nung high school.”   
  
“how come you guys aren’t friends anymore? ???”   
  
“ewan ko, nagiba na siya eh. :-\” Nilagay naman nya yung iba ko pang clothes sa luggage ko, “ang dami mo namang dadalin? ???”   
  
“hello?! ??? Two weeks is long. You expect me to repeat my clothes in two weeks?” I said, while I was on my way to the dresser to get my make-up. That’s ridiculous, I’m not about to wear the same set of clothes! “bakit siya iba na? ???”   
  
“di ko alam. Basta nung nagkita ulit kame, iba na siya.” Tinignan nya ulit yung luggage ko, “seriously, etong mga dadalin mo? ???” she faced me, “parang isang buwan kang mawawala. Sobrang dami. Baka hindi na magkasya yan sa kotse!”   
  
“then I’ll take two cars..that’s not a problem, there’s a lot of cars in the garage.. or I can use the SUV to take in my luggage. 8)” Pumasok naman ako sa bathroom to get more stuff, a very simple thing, ginagawa pang complicated, kung hindi siya fit sa isang car, why not take two, or kaya take a bigger car, diba? “and you don’t have an idea or whatnot on how he became like that?” when I gathered what I needed, I took my toothbrush and put toothpaste on it.   
  
“tama.” She said, while I was brushing my teeth. Meron pa siyang sinasabi eh, but I didn’t understand her. Next thing I know, nasa loob na rin siya ng bathroom. “hey..” she looked at me in a weird way.   
  
“what? ???”   
  
“you know what I think? ??? ::)” I gave her a sign that I didn’t, “I think you guys are each other’s match. ::)” She said what? me? him? each other’s match? Uh-uh. Not even.   
  
“are you out of your mind? >:(” tinignan ko lang sya, “have you been listening to what I’ve been telling you?” lumapit ako sa kanya.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“we’re not each other’s match, we’re each other’s worst nightmare! >:( >:( >:(”   
  
  
“exactly.” Didn’t she understand what I just said? I said we’re each other’s worst nightmare! >:(   
  
“hello? I barely get through the day with him, and I’ve only been here for less than a week ha.”   
  
“eh basta, tingin ko bagay kayo.”   
  
“eww! ???”   
  
“eww ka dyan, tignan mo balang araw, baka kainin mo yung pa-eewww ewww mo dyan. ::)”   
  
“yeah, you swear. ::)” Inirapan ko nga siya.   
  
“alam mo, couz, siguro hindi mo naririnig yung expression na,” she threw the quotation sign in the air, “opposites attract noh? ::)” she just stared at me, “you know.. the whole positive and negative thing?” hindi naman ako nagsalita, “like magnets..” tinuloy pa nya, eh I understand naman kung anong sinasabi nya. “hindi sila dapat pareho ng charge para mag-attract.”   
  
I know what she’s saying. Really. “what do you think am I? Stupid? ??? Of course I know that expression.” Alam ko naman talaga noh. “and in case you haven’t noticed, negative kame pareho. So hindi yun attractive.” Really, diba kung mag-argue kame non, parang lions hunting for food? Survival of the fittest, according to Charles Darwin. Hehe. “why are you giving me this analogy?” I raised an eyebrow, “what’s it for? ???”   
  
“mahina ka rin noh?”   
  
“ma-hina? ???” I repeated what she said, but I wasn’t able to, kase naman I forgot the rest of the words. “what?”   
  
“mahina. ::)” She corrected me. “it means you’re slow.”   
  
“yeah, I knew that.”   
  
“so you know it’s a fact that opposites attract, right? ???”   
  
“yes, everybody knows that. ???” My cousin is really getting weirder and weirder. “diba sabi ko we’re both negative? Have you been getting any of what I’m saying here?”   
  
“but you know the saying that opposites attract?”   
  
“hello? Isabel!!” I widened my eyes, kase naman, parang hindi naman nya naga-grasp yung sinasabi ko eh. “oo nga diba?!”   
  
“eh yun naman pala eh. 8)” she was relieved. For some reason, my answer kinda satisfied her, or at least that’s the way she seemed. “case closed.”   
  
“you’re weird.”   
  
So, after that rather unusual talk with Ella, I ‘shooshed’ her away kase naman, sabi ni Mr. Stiff, dapat 5 am nasa airport na. that schmuck.   
  
I tried to get some sleep, but seriously, for some unexplainable way, I couldn’t get some. Maybe because I haven’t found my sweet spot yet, but it feels like, I don’t know…   
  
Or maybe I’m thinking about whatever out of this world thing she kept on insisting me kanina… NO.   
  
I know I’ve only been here for how many days, and it’s impossible that I’m just lagging because I’m pretty sure I’ve already adjusted to this time. Wala lang, I just kept on tossing and turning. I wanted to get up and wake Ella, but then I remember, she has to go somewhere tomorrow, ‘a-rather-important-meeting,’ she calls it.   
  
Well, I tried everything I can to get some sleep, eh wala talaga eh. so I grabbed my phone and dialed my mom’s number. It’s past one in the morning, so it means day dun sa L.A. right now.   
  
She picked up after 2 rings. Wow, that’s a first. I never recall her picking up that quickly. “hi Princess!”   
  
“mom, calm down.” hindi naman obvious na she’s excited no? “what are you doing? ???”   
  
“eto.. nasa office.” Yeah, I can tell. “anong oras na dyan? it’s past five here so…” she paused to compute the time difference, “bakit gising ka pa? madaling araw na dyan ah?”   
  
“I couldn’t sleep mom.”   
  
I could hear her flipping papers, she sounds very busy, actually. Well, that’s her typically. “may jetlag ka pa ba?”   
  
“I don’t know. I don’t think so.” Eh kase if this is jetlag lang, dapat hindi rin ako nakatulog last night diba? I was sound asleep last night naman. “mom, lola is sending me to Davao. >:(”   
  
“I know, she told me. I suggested that place by the way.. because I know how much you love the beach.”   
  
“yeah, sure.” This is the problem with her and my grandma, they just go for what they want, without even asking me. “and do you also know that lola is sending me there with a guy I barely know? ???”   
  
“who are you talking about? si Jeremy? He’s not a stranger, I know his father.”   
  
“ikaw kilala mo, ako hindi. He’s such an ass—”   
  
She cut me off, “Madeleine, what’s with that kind of language? I thought we talked about this already?”   
  
“whatever.” I just sighed, “mom just please let me come back there. I promise to behave na. I can’t stand being here anymore.”   
  
“Princess, ano ka ba? wala ka pa nga dyan ng isang linggo, nagrereklamo ka na kagad. Pano ka matututo kung maaga pa lang, you’re giving up na? diba sabi mo gusto mo ng challenge? eto, this is a challenge.”   
  
“but this is not what I want!” totoo naman talaga, this telephone company is the last thing on my list. “how many times do I have to say that I am a designer, I want to design stuff, mom. not manage this… your business?!”   
  
“what is that tone your using on me?” okay so I maybe speaking with raised voice, but she is getting on my nerves. “I’m still your mother, don’t forget that.”   
  
“sorry.”   
  
“anak, this is supposed to be a learning experience for you. I know you don’t like this whole set up thing, pero believe me, one day makikita mo rin kung bakit ko to ginagawa. And when that day comes, you’re gonna thank me for sending you there.”   
  
“which is what exactly, mom? Because right now I’m just thinking you want to torture me that’s why you sent me here. >:(”   
  
“no, of course not. why would I do that?” she started to sound irritated.   
  
Okay, here’s the thing about my mom: she doesn’t like to argue, she doesn’t want to be disturbed while signing papers, kase naman baka magkamali siya. And she doesn’t want to repeat herself more than two times. Well, too bad, I’m Iris. She can’t do anything. Heheh.   
  
“I’ll make you a deal, Princess.” She said, after a long pause. “if you take on this challenge, at kapag naging maganda ang sales ng bagong company under you and Jeremy’s supervision, you’ll get that proposal you’ve been dying for.”   
  
“are you serious? ???”   
  
“yes. Plus the car. And I'll buy that place you and Lauren want to live in.” Omg! Alright, this is awesome! Alam nyo ba na matagal ko na siya kinoconvince about opening my own shop in L.A? the one where I design the clothes, and then sell them! Dream ko yun eh, kaya lang you know, my mom doesn’t want me to become a designer, she wants to pass on to me her telephone company. Eww. And wow! Not to mention, she’s buying me that car I’ve been eyeing for so long!!! And that nice condo up in Malibu! by the BEACH!   
  
From whining, I am now negotiating. Hehe! “you’ll finance my business? you’re gonna approve on that? Papayag ka to send me to London to pursue designing?”   
  
“yes, and I’ll lay off your back. You can be a designer, if that’s what you want.”   
  
“alright. You got yourself a deal, mother. 8)”   
  
--   
  
“Madeleine!!” she said, “Iris!!” she said again. my head is spinning, really. “five o’clock na!”   
  
“hmm?”   
  
“Princess!” okay. she mentioned three of my names already. “7 ang flight nyo, gumising ka na dyan.”   
  
So I got up to get ready na. wala pang sun, I feel so sleepy!   
  
After an hour, I was all set to go na, nagulat na lang ako ng…   
  
“hello? ???” nobody knows my number here, who could this be?   
  
“where are you? It’s almost 6! >:(” I knew it.   
  
“hold your horses, I’m almost there. >:(” I said, kahit hindi naman, I’m barely leaving the house.   
  
“aba, bilisan mo, maiiwan tayo ng plane eh! >:(”   
  
“yeah, yeah. Stop nagging, you sound like an old lady!”   
  
“hindi ako nakikipagbiruan sayo ha!” then he hung up on me. Okay? Talk about having manners! Ugh!   
  
Sumakay na ko ng car, but before I even had the chance to, kung ano ano naman sinabi saken ni lola. Mag-ingat daw ako don, don’t stay up late, concentrate on the job, no goofing around, wag pasasakitin ang ulo ni Mr. Stiff. Yadda yadda yadda. . As if naman may gagawin ako eh. Err! I hate it when I’m being treated like a little kid! And of course, she complained about my luggage, sobrang dami ko daw dala. Honestly, what is it with these people and limited luggage?!?   
  
Before I went inside the car, I passed by muna sa rooms nila Ella and Chris. Si Ella, when I entered her room, she was getting ready na for that meeting with Mr. Guzman, whoever he is. Si Chris naman, I didn’t wake him up as he was sound asleep. Baka naman mawala yung antok nya kase kapag ginising ko pa eh. So I just left a note by his nightstand telling him I’ll be back in two weeks… or less. I doubt na magtatagal ako sa Davao ng ganon ka tagal.   
  
The airport isn’t that far away from my lola’s place. It only took us about forty-five minutes to get there, since it’s early and not a lot of people are using the roads yet. Thank God.   
  
Wait, did I say forty-five?   
  
Before ako bumaba ng car, I glanced at the time and I saw….   
  
6:50. shoot.   
  
Okay, I have ten more minutes, hindi naman ako maiiwan siguro noh? So I went inside, but when I was near to checking in, this is what the lady said…   
  
  
“sorry ma’am the flight to Davao has left already..”   
  
wait, I thought it was only 6:50? “but it’s only 6:50, how can the plane leave? I got 10 more minutes!” what is this lady talking about? I mean, what? Can’t she read the time?   
  
“ma’am, it’s already 7:10.”   
  
What?? “no way, I just glanced through the time, it says 6:50!” she is starting to get on my nerves ha. But she looked at me as if I was a crazy woman or something.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Ayaw nya maniwala ha? So I lifted my hand to take a look at the time.   
  
  
  
Uh-oh.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7:10. :-X   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Jeremy’s house – dinner table – night before the flight.   
  
“Jeremy, I’m expecting a positive feedback on your trip, okay?” hindi siya tumitingin saken, “ayokong makarining ng kahit anong hindi maganda.”   
  
“yes dad.” Tapos sumubo na ko.   
  
“be presentable at all times, tandaan mong maagi, marami kayong dapat i-impress don.”   
  
“yes dad.”   
  
“I’m counting on you, wag mo kong papahiyain.”   
  
“yes dad.”   
  
“look after Iris, make sure she’s well accommodated. Wag mo siyang pababayaan. Binigay ko yung number ko sa kanya, ang sabi ko tawagan ako kapag may problema siya sayo. ”   
  
“ye— :o” ano!? >:( ???   
  
Ano ba? Alam nyo bang hindi pa dumadating yan dito, bukang bibig na siya ng maraming tao sa paligid ko, kesyo apo ng may-ari ng malaking kumpanya, anak ni Josephine Martin. Blah blah blah. Ano bang espesyal don? At bakit lahat nalang ng tao parang tinuturing siyang dyosa, eh ubod ng itim naman ng budhi. Walang sincerity sa trabaho, puro kaartehan pa ang inaaatupag. tapos ngayon, pati tatay ko na sobrang tigas at walang pakialam kahit saken, nakuha pa siyang intindihin? Prinsesa talaga… ng mga maarte! >:(   
  
“son, are you listening to me?” tinapik nya ko.   
  
Tumango na lang ako, wala naman akong pwedeng sabihin eh. :-\   
  
“pagdating nyo don, mag-check in kayo kagad sa hotel. The resort rooms are under renovation, kaya sa ibang hotel kayo nakareserve. Be on time, dahil maraming nagbabaskyon ngayon. Ibibigay nila yung kwarto nyo sa iba kung wala kayo.”   
  
Tango ulit.   
  
Nilabas naman nya ngayon yung schedule, “at 12 noon may lunch kayo, kasama ng mga investors. Yung iba dun foreigners.” Then he scanned through the guest list, “a French investor.. Mr. Leroy. He’s a VIP.”   
  
“when’s the seminar then? ???”   
  
“right after.”   
  
“right after?” inulit ko.   
  
“oo, at 1:30 pm.”   
  
“hindi ba kame pwedeng magpahinga, kahit saglit man lang? ???” ano yun, kakatapos pa lang kumain, wala man lang pahinga?   
  
“trabaho muna bago pahinga.” Sabi ko nga. :-\   
  
“I’m sure ipapahiya lang ako ni.. niya.” Nararamdaman ko na, sa mga kinikilos nun? Disaster talaga.   
  
“don’t be so negative, son.” Napatingin siya saken kagad na parang may sinabi akong hindi maganda. “Iris is an important person in this company, Jeremy.” Para namang hindi niya alam kung pano kumilos yung babaeng yun eh! “in case you forgot, kung hindi dahil sa lola nya, hindi lalago ang business naten." oo alam ko yun! mula bata pa lang ako, pasok na yan sa isip ko. "she has the attitude.. persuasive attitude of a succesful business person. Importante sa business yun.” Sus! Ang sabihin mo, maarte talaga, persuasive? Hindi rin. Spoiled brat, pwede pa! “you two will make a good team.” Team!? Ayoko sa kanya. Period. >:(   
  
Hanggang tingin na lang ako sa kanya, habang siya naman, tinuloy yung pagbabasa ng mga details sa seminar. Ganito naman lagi dito sa bahay eh, sama-sama nga kame, para namang hindi kame magkakakilala. Kung pwede lang isara ang mga tenga ko, matagal ko ng ginawa. Wala na kase akong narinig dito kay Daddy kundi business. Puro na lang business. >:( >:( >:(   
  
Kung bibigyan lang nya ako ng pagkakataong magsalita para sa sarili ko, hindi talaga ako sang-ayon sa mga gusto nyang manyare. Una, nagdecide siyang maging business partners, okay lang yun eh, dahil matino naman ang kumpanya nila, kahit na bumaba yung sales nila, ayos lang yun magagawan naman ng paraan yun. Ang hindi ko lang gusto, is the fact that I’m working with someone na walang alam at ni kahit konting interest sa business. Hindi ba nila alam yun? Sa itsura pa lang nun, kitang kita na eh!   
  
Sumingit naman si Mommy, she’s probably feeling the heat forming between my dad and I, “so, hijo, why don’t you tell me about Iris? Ang sabi ng Daddy mo she’s a nice girl.. very pretty.” Sus! Maganda nga, saksakan naman ng kaartehan.   
  
“she nothing different from the American girls.” Tinuloy ko na lang yung pagkain ko, “typical American-raised girl.”   
  
“American? :D” parang natuwa pa ata siya ha. “interesting.. I’d like to meet her. :)”   
  
“nako Ma, wag na, madidisappoint ka lang.”   
  
--   
  
Kinabukasan, alas-cuatro pa lang, gising nako. Kahit na 7 pa ang flight namen, bumangon na ko para maghanda at magbihis. Dahil sa may duda na ko na magtatagal kame don, konti lang ang dinala ko.   
  
Two weeks.   
  
I’m scheduled to be gone that long.   
  
5 am ng umalis ako sa bahay, nagpaalam lang ako sa Mommy ko, siya lang naman ang gumising para magpaalam saken eh.   
  
Mabilis naman ako nakadating sa airport. Buti na lang at maaga pa, konti pa lang ang bumibyahe ng ganitong oras, kaya maluwag pa ang daan.   
  
5:45 ng mag check in ako sa airport.   
  
5:55, nilabas ko yung laptop ko para i-review yung mga ibang dapat i-turn over sa papalit saken sa dati kong trabaho. Nasan na kaya yun? Alas-seis ang usapan namin ah! >:(   
  
“Alicia, may number ka ba ni Ms. Martin?” tinawagan ko yung secretary ko.   
  
“si Ms. Iris po?”   
  
“alangan naman yung lola nya? Alicia naman.” Isa pa tong mahina eh!   
  
“ay! Yes, sir. One moment.”   
  
“bilisan mo, nagmamadali ako.” ang bagal.   
  
“eto po…”   
  
Pagkakuha ko ng number nya, dinial ko naman kagad yung number ng mahal na Prinsesa… ng mga late!   
  
After 5 rings, sinagot nya yung telepono. “hello?”   
  
“where are you? it’s almost 6! >:(” ang sabi ko. aba, hindi ako nalelate!   
  
Halata namang nagkakanda ugaga na siya sa kung ano mang ginagawa nya. “hold your horses, I’m almost there! >:(” and she has the guts to give me an attitude!?   
  
“aba, bilisan mo, maiiwan tayo ng plane eh! >:(” yung mga katabi ko, napatingin sakin bigla, pano, napalakas ang boses ko.   
  
“yeah, yeah. Stop nagging, you sound like an old lady! >:( >:( >:(” kung hindi lang to babae, matagal ng nakatikim sakin to ng sapak! Anong old lady!?!?!   
  
“hindi ako nakikipagbiruan sayo ha!” binabaan ko siya ng telepono. Ngayon pa lang, sumasakit na ulo ko sa kanya, pano pa kaya kung magkatrabaho na kame? Nako! Mapapaaga ang pagputi ng buhok ko dito eh!   
  
Pagkababa ko ng telepono, tumayo muna ko para bumili ng tubig, pakiramdam ko aatikihin ako sa puso eh! naglakad lakad muna ko non, hanggang sa inannounce na pwede ng pumasok sa plane.   
  
So she said she’s almost here ha? well. It’s 6:40 already. The plane is starting to board passengers. No signs of her at anywhere. Talaga nga naman oh! malalagot ako nito sa daddy ko eh! sabi ko na, hindi dapat siya ang kasama ko sa mga ganitong klaseng trips, hindi siya maaasahan!   
  
“last call to the passengers of flight \*\*\*…”   
  
Nakooo!!! Kapag minalas ka nga naman!!!! >:(   
  
Kinuha ko yung cell phone ko para tawagan siya, kaya lang hindi naman sinasagot. Ibang klase talaga tong babaeng to!!!   
  
Bahala siya iiwanan ko siya! Bad trip!   
  
Papasok na sana ako ng mag-ring naman ang phone ko.   
  
“dad?” si daddy pala.   
  
“pasakay na ba kayo ng plane?”   
  
“ako lang, Ms. Martin did not come.” totoo naman ah.   
  
“hindi ka pwedeng umalis ng hindi siya kasama. Did you call her?”   
  
“tinawagan ko na kanina pa, hindi naman sumasagot. Maiiwanan ako ng plane eh, sumunod na lang siya. Nagpapaimportante pa kase eh!”   
  
“hindi pwede, magpaiwan ka na lang.” seryoso siya!? Bakit ako magpapaiwan? “may jetlag pa siguro siya. Oh kaya baka natraffic lang.” And that’s an excuse?!   
  
“dad? Pano yung schedule? Pano yung—”   
  
“just take the next flight to Davao.”   
  
“pero? ???”   
  
“Jeremy, do I have to repeat myself?”   
  
“no, dad. We’ll just take the next available flight to Davao.” bwiset!!!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
Kaya bumalik na lang ako sa upuan para makahinga naman ako maayos. Gumising ako ng maaga para lang magpaiwan sa scheduled flight ko? kapag ako hindi nakarating don before 1:30 pm, at kapag ako nalagot kay daddy dahil hindi ako nakaattend sa first day ng seminar, talagang makakatikim siya saken. this is all because of that girl!!!   
  
Magtatanong sana kung anong oras yung susunod na flight papuntang Davao ng may bigla naman akong narinig na isang babaeng nakikipag-away sa isang empleyado dito. Ang mga babae talaga, napakainitin ng ulo!   
  
“but it’s only 6:50, how can the plane leave? I got 10 more minutes!” teka!? Parang kilala ko yung boses na yun ah? ???   
  
“ma’am, it’s already 7:10”   
  
“no way, I just glanced through the time, it says 6:50!” anong 6:50? Marunong bang tumingin sa oras itong babaeng to? Namimilit pa, eh talaga namang 7:10 na.   
  
Pagtingin ko..   
  
Yeah, just the person I expected it would be. It’s her, with her pink… stuff. Tinaas pa nya yung kamay nya para tignan yung oras, ayan, buti nga napahiya siya. Masyado kaseng pa-importante eh.   
  
Kahit na alam nyang tama yung kausap nya, she still gave her an attitude. Alam nyo ba kung anong ginawa? Tinignan pa nya mula ulo hanggang paa, sabay, ‘hmf! You’re so rude. i want to talk to your manager.’   
  
Napailing nalang sa kinikilos nya, ako na ang nahihiya para sa kanya. parang walang pinag-aralan.   
  
Tuloy tuloy pa rin sa kakadada don, kaya nilapitan ko na siya, at hinablot siya sa braso nya.   
  
“late ka! >:(” sinigawan ko nga.   
  
Napatingin naman siya kagad sa kamay ko na nakahablot sa braso nya, tapos tumingin sya saken. “I’m sorry, I thought it was only 6:50, I didn’t realize I— :-X”   
  
“I don’t care, you’re still late. Naiwan ako ng dahil sayo. >:(”   
  
“gosh! I said sorry! >:(” sinigawan pa ko. siya pa ngayon ang may ganang magmalaki, samantalang siya na itong dahilan kung bakit kame hindi nakaalis. “you could’ve just gone by yourself, you know?”   
  
“magdadahilan ka pa! >:(” nako!   
  
“why? I do have a point, don’t I? 8)” sabay irap saken, “use your common sense sometimes, hm? 8)” nanginsulto pa!   
  
Hindi ko na siya pinatulan, dahil baka makasapak lang ako ng wala sa oras eh. nagtanong na lang ako ng next available flight, and luckily, meron naman, at 10:00. kaya tinawag ko kagad kay daddy.   
  
“you know..” tinignan nya ko, “if he was your mom, I’d call you a mama’s boy. 8) ;D” tapos natawa siya, “you’re such a loser.” Ano kamo!? Oh hell no! “taking orders like a freakin’ slave. 8) ::)” Nainis ako dun sa sinabi nya, so I wrinkled my forehead. “oh.. you are, are you?! ??? 8)”   
  
Ano bang pinagsasabi nya? “tumahimik ka na nga.” Tumayo ako at kinuha yung hand carry ko, “wala akong panahong makipagusap sayo.” Then I distanced myself to her.   
  
Pero ayaw pa rin nyang magpaawat dahil sinundan nya ako. “and what am I supposed to do while we’re waiting to leave?”   
  
“umupo ka dyan. >:(” Tinuro ko yung upuan.   
  
Inikot nya muna yung mga mata nya, hanggang sa nakita na nya yung..   
  
“ohh! :D” tapos kinuha nya yung bag nya na pinatong nya sa upuan at.. “I’ll be back, I’m going shopping. 8)” I can’t believe this girl.   
  
Mahigit isang oras din siyang wala, paikot ikot lang siya dun sa airport. Pasok sa isang store, labas ng may dala. I mean, kung titignan mo siya, para syang isang batang walang pakialam sa mundo…. Which is definitely not good.   
  
Siguro nung napagod na siya sa kakashopping, which by the way seems like the she bought the whole place dahil sa sobrang dami nyang shopping bags, eh nagdecide na siyang tumigil. Siempre dahil sa ang dami nga nyang binili, malamang, dagdag bagahe na naman yan.   
  
Naglakad na siya papunta sa kinakaupuan ko, tapos nung malapit na siya saken, hinawakan nya bigla yung tiyan nya. Anong ginagawa nya!? “I’m hungry; let’s go grab something to eat. 8)”   
  
“eh di kumain ka mag-isa mo! >:(” naupo ako sa bench, at nilabas ko yung laptop ko. “what are you standing there for?” hindi ba to nakakaintindi? Diba sabi ko kumain siya mag-isa? Anong hinihintay nya, bagong taon?   
  
"come with me."   
  
"hindi ako gutom."   
  
“I said I’m hungry! >:(” tinaas nya yung boses nya. Bakit ba ang mga babae, ang hilig sumigaw?   
  
“alam ko, hindi ako bingi! >:(”   
  
“I’m hungry! >:(” lumapit siya sakin lalo, sabay agaw sa laptop ko. isa pa, sasapakin ko na to.   
  
Kaya napatayo ako bigla. “ano ba? ???”   
  
Nakatingin lang siya saken ng masama, hanep naman makatingin to. Akala mo kung sino akong may atraso sa kanya. kung tutuusin nga, siya ang may atraso saken, tapos, aasta ng parang prinsesa? Ano ko? servant?   
  
“fine! >:(” she stomped her feet, “if you won’t go with me..” nilabas nya yung phone nya. Anong gagawin nya, magsusumbong sa lola nya?   
  
Napipikon na talaga ako ha. “ano, magsusumbong ka sa lola mo? As if she can do anything except yell at you.”   
  
Tuloy pa rin siya sa pag-dial. “no, silly. why would I call her? ::)” tapos bigla nyang pinakita sakin yung phone nya, “I’m calling your father. 8)”   
  
Ano!? :o “bakit mo tatawagan ang daddy ko? >:(”   
  
“of course, he told me to call him in case I have problems with you. 8)”   
  
“anong feeling mo, close kayo? ???”   
  
Inirapan pa nya ko ha. “duh? Would I be calling him if we weren’t close? ???” sabay tawa ng mahina, “sige ka, if you don’t eat with me, tatawagan ko daddy mo, isusumbong kita. tapos he’s gonna get mad at you, tapos…”   
  
“are you blackmailing me?” loko to ah! >:(   
  
“no.” hinarap nya ulit sa kanya yung phone nya, “I’m commanding you. 8)” tapos pinakita nya saken na pipindutin na nya yung call.   
  
Kaya bago pa nya napindot yung call, inagaw ko na sa kanya yung cell phone nya.   
  
“oh sige na! ang dami mong arte! What do you want to eat?!?”   
  
"good! ;D" she smiled, "good boy ka naman pala eh."   
  
so sinamahan ko siyang kumain. anong kinain nya? hotdog. ewan ko ba dito, napaka weirdo.   
  
Sumakay na kame ng plane after nun. Buong trip, hindi na nya ko kinulit, kase naman, natulog sya. Mabuti na rin to, dahil baka sumabog na ulo ko sa sobrang inis sa kanya.   
  
So obviously, na-miss na namin yung lunch with the investors, dahil nga sa nalate tong babaeng ito. kaya tumuloy na kame sa hotel na sinabi ni daddy para makapag check in. Since late na rin naman kame sa lunch na yun, magpapahinga na muna ko, bago magsimula yung seminar.   
  
Pero nung pagdating na namin sa receptionist para mag check in, eto ang sinabi nya.   
  
"this is your room card, enjoy your stay. :)"   
  
"bakit isa lang? ???"   
  
"ma'am, isa lang po yung room na pinareserve para sa inyong dalawa."   
  
"ano!? :o ???" nagloloko ba to?   
  
  
pareho kameng tumingin sa receptionist, isang room? para saming dalawa? ano ko sira ulo? hindi ako matutulog sa isang kwartong kasama siya no! >:( >:(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
"HINDI PWEDE!!!! >:( >:( >:("   
  
  
  
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"HINDI PWEDE!!!! >:( >:( >:("   
  
  
“uh-uh! Ayoko! No way! >:(” nagsisigaw na naman siya. She looked at me like I’m a criminal or something, “eww!”   
  
“eww ka dyan. >:(” Ang sabi ko. “you think I want to sleep in one room with you?” anong akala nya? “NEVER. >:(” If I had a choice, hindi ko gusto talaga.   
  
“ugh!” tapos humarap siya ulit dun sa receptionist, “I can’t sleep with him! >:(” sabay turo saken. “no way. Find me another room, I’ll pay for it, kahit magkano!”   
  
“sorry po ma’am, all the rooms are occupied,” hinarap nya yung monitor para makita namin. Puno na nga. “suite naman po yan, malaki yung room, pati yung bed.”   
  
“bed?! :o are you serious? One bed lang!? ??? >:(” yung receptionist natakot na ata sa kanya, pano kase kung tignan nya parang gusto nyang patayin eh.   
  
“it’s a king size bed ma’am. I’m sorry pero yan po kase yung pina reserve ng tumawag dito eh..”   
  
“it’s fine. We’ll take it.” Tapos kinuha ko yung room card.   
  
Hinawakan naman niya yung braso ko, “are you out of your mind!? ??? >:(” oo, I’m probably out of my mind by doing this, dahil kung hindi lagot ako kay Daddy.   
  
“Madeleine. Ahem.” I cleared my throat, “I mean…Ms. Martin, I’m just doing what I was told. I hope you do the same thing too. Let’s not make it hard on both of us, kapag hindi tayo nagpunta sa seminar which is…” tinignan ko yung time, “20 minutes from now, lagot tayo. Ako sa Daddy ko, at ikaw sa lola mo.. at pag nakaabot ito sa mommy mo, lagot ka.” Talaga naman eh, sigaw na naman ang aabutin ko nito. “kaya please..” grabe hindi ko matanggap na nakikiusap ako ngayon sa kanya. at sya naman, well nagiba yung expression ng muka nya. takot din pala sya sa mommy nya eh! 8)   
  
but that facial expression did not last very long, dahil.. “I don’t care, I’m not sharing the same room with you! >:(”   
  
“wala na tayong magagawa, okay!? >:(” sinabi ng no choice eh, ang kulit!!!   
  
Hindi ko naman napansin na nakaharang na pala kame sa ibang tao na gustong magcheck in, pano kase napaka arte nitong babaeng to, akala mo naman may gagawin akong masama sa kanya. pwede ba? hindi siya ang tipo kong babae, at lalong hindi siya ang klaseng babae na magugustohan ko, KAHIT KAILAN.   
  
“excuse me, pwede dun na lang kayo mag-away mag-syota sa gilid?” ang sabi ng lalake sa likod namen, “nagmamadali ako eh, nakaharang kayo.”   
  
Pumamewang siya, “hello? Can’t you see we’re having a conversation here?”   
  
“eh nakaharang nga kayo eh! ang dami pang tao na gustong magcheck in dito! >:(”   
  
“then wait for your turn! >:(” sinigawan pa nya. Ano ba to! Pinatong nya yung bag nya sa desk at nagsimulang maghalungkat para sa phone nya siguro.   
  
Humarap naman ngayon saken yung lalake na mukang pikon na, pano naman kase, napaka walang modo nitong babaeng to, akala mo eh lahat pagsisilbihan at pagbibigyan siya.   
  
“pare, pagsabihan mo nga tong syota mo, akala mo kung sino eh! >:(” huh? ???   
  
“what the hell are you talking about?” humarap siya dun sa lalake, “syo-ta? ???” nakatingin lang siya dun sa lalake, "speak english, will you!? >:("   
  
“bakit ako mag-eenglish eh nasa Pilipinas ako? dapat ikaw ang magtagalog! >:(" humarap siya saken, "pare, foreigner ba to? ???” tinanong nya ko, hindi ba obvious? Tapos binalik nya ulit yung tingin nya sa kanya, “oo, syota.” He gave her a weird expression, “girlfriend.” Nanlaki yung mga mata nya, nagulat ata sa sinabi nung lalake. Kinausap naman ako ulit, “’tol kung ako sayo disiplinahin mo tong syota mo, ina-under ka masyado eh.”   
  
“what!? ??? >:(” halatang hindi nya naiintindihan yung sinabi nung lalake, buti naman.   
  
“excuse us.” Hinila ko siya sa tabi, nakakahiya naman kase no, nageeskandalo dito sa lobby.   
  
Hindi pa man kame nakakaabot dun sa gilid eh nagsisigaw na naman siya. “hey! >:( What are you doing? >:(”   
  
Kaya binilisan ko kung lakad ko, dahil konti na lang, wala na akong mukang maihaharap dito sa mga tao sa lobby sa sobrang hiya. Hanep tong babaeng to! >:(   
  
Nung nandon na kame sa gilid at nung hindi na masyadong nakatingin samen yung mga tao, kinausap ko na siya, “nakakahiya ka, that’s no way to behave in a public place!”   
  
“but that fool can’t wait for his turn!” tinuro nya ulit yung lalake, “he deserves every bad treatment he received from me.”   
  
“kahit na! >:(” napipikon na ko ha. “wala ka naman sa tamang lugar para gawin yun, kung gusto mong ipahiya ang sarili mo, go ahead! Pero wag mo kong idadamay!”   
  
“eh di umalis ka! >:(” eto na naman, yung mga tao, tumitingin na naman samen. “I didn’t ask you to always come with me!”   
  
Excuse me, sapilitan lang ito. Ano bang pinoproblema nya? Why is she tripping a lot about this? “alam mo!” huminga ako ng malalim, kung papatulan ko to ngayon, masisira lang ang araw ko. “let’s go. We’re gonna be late.”   
  
“what? ???” tumalikod na ko at nagsimulang maglakad papunta sa elevator, “are you even listening to me? ???” sumunod naman siya saken. “aren’t you alarmed that we’re sleeping in one room?” nakasakay na kame ngayon sa elevator. “hey!” hinawakan nya ulit yung braso ko.   
  
Nakakarami na to ah, kaya tinanggal ko naman. “saka ka na magreklamo dyan, we’re gonna be late.”   
  
“what? ???” hindi ba talaga ito nakakaintindi masyado ng tagalog, oh kaya talagang bingi at tanga lang siya?   
  
“I said..” bakit ba ako nagpapaliwanag sa kanya? “I said we’re gonna be late, bingi ka ba? ???” tuloy parin yung paglakad ko papuntang room namin, habang sya naman, ayun, hindi pa rin matigil sa kakadada, at sa kakasunod!   
  
“did you just call me deaf? ??? >:(”   
  
Ano ba naman! eh nakakaintindi naman pala eh. “hindi! >:(” uupakan ko na to eh, nasa harap na kame ngayon ng room namin, ako naman, pinasok ko na yung card para ma-unlock.   
  
Pumasok na ko sa loob, at siya naman, sumunod saken. nilibot ko muna yung buong room, malaki naman pala eh, may couch, may maliit na kitchen, malaki din ang restroom, at king-sized bed nga ang kama. pinatong nya yung mga gamit sa couch at lumapit saken.   
  
“hello? did you hear what I just asked you? ???” tinaasan nya ako ng kilay, “ikaw yata ang deaf eh! 8)”   
  
Pakiramdam ko, sasabog na talaga yung ulo ko sa sobrang rindi sa boses niya. ayaw pa rin tumigil!!! >:( “will you shut up!? >:(”   
  
“haaaa!!! :o” nanlaki ulit yung mga mata nya, for some reason, pakiramdam ko, nawala yung bigat sa ulo ko. nabigla lang siguro ako. pareho kame ngayon nakatingin sa isa’t isa, pero dahil sa hindi ko natagal yung titig nya, inalis ko yung akin. “what did you just say!?”   
  
“I meant to say…” ano ba yun? bakit ako nagpapaliwanag? hindi naman dapat diba? “stop talking.”   
  
“hmf! >:(” tumalikod siya saken, “you’re mean and very disrespectful! >:(”   
  
What? ako? ako pa? baka siya! Arrrggghhh!!! Kung lalake lang sya, kanina ko pa yan sinapak! “pwede bang tumahimik ka? Sumasakit ang ulo ko sayo eh! >:(”   
  
“and who are you to tell me that!?” kinuha nya yung, make up nya, at naglakad papuntang banyo. “I will talk whenever and however I want! 8) >:(” sinabi nya, habang nandon siya sa banyo.   
  
“bahala ka nga sa buhay mo! >:(” kinuha ko yung laptop ko para umalis na, late na ko sa seminar eh!   
  
“hey wait for me!!”   
  
Hindi ko na siya pinansin, kase kapag pinansin ko pa yan, hahaba na naman ang usapan, at baka hindi pa ko nakakaabot dun sa venue, puti na ang buhok ko.   
  
Pero, siya naman, kahit na hindi ko pinapansin, eh tuloy tuloy pa rin ang pagsasalita. I wasn’t really listening to her, dahil karamihan naman ng mga sinasabi nya, hindi ko maintindihan, at wala din namang sense. Katulad na lang ng..   
  
“why is your hair like that? ???” diba? Anong klaseng tanong yan? At tsaka ano namang mali sa buhok ko? “it lacks volume. 8)” Ano volume pinagsasabi nito? “what shampoo do you use? ???” ano bang pakialam nya kung anong shampoo ang ginagamit ko? “hello? I’m talking to you!”   
  
Hanggang sa nakaabot na kame sa seminar hall, hindi ko pa rin sinagot yung tanong nya. Nagsimula na nga yung seminar eh, bumubulong bulong pa rin siya saken.   
  
Ano bang issue dun sa kung anong shampoo ang ginagamit ko diba? Bakit, hihiram siya? Hay nako, mga babae nga naman. Now, I’m starting to think that girls are generally like this – mga pakialamera! >:(   
  
Hanggang sa natapos na yung seminar, hindi pa rin sya tumigil. Sa sobrang dami nyang tinanong at pinagsasabi, isa lang ang nakatawag ng pansin ko. dahil bigla na lang nyang tinanong kung…   
  
“have you ever had a girlfriend? ???” that was an out of nowhere question that really caught my attention. napatigil ako nun sa ginagawa ko kasi naman… wala lang. I don’t want to talk about it. :-\   
  
Napansin naman nya na parang nawala ako sa concentration ko nun nung tinanong nya yun kaya siguro tumigil siya. That’s what I thought, pero bumanat naman ulit after ng ilang sandali. "well, there are only two ways that can make a guy like.." tinignan niya ko, "you. masungit, sobrang uptight, and.. boring. 8)" ang sama ah! hindi ako boring! "one, you're not attractive and two.." she paused, “ah ha!! You got dumped, did you? 8)”   
  
Okay this time, I think she went over board. Ano bang alam nya sa nakaraan ko? wala! Habang naglalakad kame pabalik sa room, sinabi ko na lang na, “can you just mind your own business?! ???” yan na lang ang sinabi ko, “wag kang chismosa.”   
  
“I’m not being chismosa, I’m just asking. don't take it to the bones! 8)”   
  
“pwes, wag kang magtanong, dahil wala akong isasagot sayo.” Sino ba siya para pagsabihan ko tungkol sa ganitong klaseng bagay diba?   
  
She threw her hands in the air, na parang sumusuko na siya. Mabuti naman. “alright, Mr. Stiff! 8)” Mr. Stiff? Did she just call me that? “are there any other places we have to be in today?” tinanong nya ko.   
  
“wala.” Bukas na ulit yung seminar eh. “wala na.”   
  
Nagsmile naman siya saken, “alright! :D” at umalis siya sa harapan ko, kinuha yung luggage nya at nagpunta sa banyo. Anong oras na ba? 6:30 pm. magpapahinga nako, kaya I settled myself in bed para magbasa ng libro – pamparelax, masyado akong nastress ngayong araw na to eh. At bukas.. well tomorrow is going to be a hectic day, too. May breakfast kame bukas at 8, followed by the seminar at 9 hanggang 5 pm na yun.   
  
So I was concentrating on the book I was reading, when all of a sudden eh lumabas sya galing banyo…..   
  
  
  
  
  
in her bathing suit.   
  
  
  
  
But not just any typical bathing suit….   
  
  
  
  
is she out of her mind?   
  
  
  
  
  
  
is she really gonna wear that in public!?   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
IT’S A TWO-PIECE SWIM WEAR!!!! :o :o :o :o :o :o   
  
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“what are you looking at me for? ???” I asked him, after I stepped out from the shower.   
  
“lalabas ka ng naka ganyan lang? ???” he asked.   
  
So I got my robe and put it on top of the bed, “relax, Stiffie, 8)” I pointed the robe, “I’ll wear that on my way to the beach. ::)”   
  
He looked at me with astonishment, as if all these were new to his sight, hello!? Hindi ba siya ngswim before? “Ano ba yang suot mo!? ??? >:(” ano bang suot ko? ???   
  
“bathing suit.” I looked at myself, then at him, “you know, it’s what you wear when you go swimming? ::)” I can’t believe he’s asking me this stupid question.   
  
Sinara nya yung book na nasa harap nya. “I know what a bathing suit is!”   
  
“alam mo? Why are you asking what I’m wearing then? ???” seriously, is this guy dumb or what?   
  
“hindi ka talaga marunong umintindi no?” what? what is he saying? “ang ibig kong sabihin, why are you wearing that.” Okay? call me dumb, but I don’t really get why asking me what I’m wearing is the same as asking me why I’m wearing such an outfit.   
  
So even if I could not comprehend what he’s saying, , kahit ano na lang ang sinabi ko. “pakialam mo ba? ??? >:(” yeah, what does he care? Eh ano ngayon if I’m wearing this? Don’t tell me hanggang pag swim ko dapat office attire!? “what to do expect me to wear?” I stared at him, “office suit? ???” he’s out of this world, seriously. “don’t be a kill joy, hm?”   
  
“ewan ko sayo. >:(”   
  
“what’s your problem? ???” why is he tripping?   
  
“muka ka kasing hostes! >:(” what the hell is hos-tes? Did he mean hostess? Do I look like I’m hosting something? ???   
  
So I just looked at him like I didn’t have an idea of what he’s talking about. totoo naman, hindi ko naman gets talaga eh.   
  
“you’re weird.” Yun lang ang sinabi ko. “lay off my back, will you? ???” sinabi nya ako makulit, eh siya nga no! on a second thought, I had an epiphany… hmm. “don’t tell me this is the first time you’ve seen a woman in her bikinis? ??? ;D” yeah, probably.. based on his reaction… hahaha! What a loser! ;D   
  
Sumagot naman siya bigla, “anong tingin mo saken, taga bundok?” then he raised his eyebrow, “magsusuot ka ng ganyan, hindi naman bagay sayo. 8)”   
  
Oh no he didn’t! hindi bagay saken? “excuse me, but I was told I have great legs! >:(” And not to mention, a flawless skin! Anong hindi bagay saken ha? baka siya may eye defect! This guy!!! Arrrrggh! Blind siya, he doesn’t know what’s bagay and not! >:( >:(   
  
He looked at my legs, okay. why is he looking at them? “anong great legs? ???” he let out a mischievous smile, “kung sino man ang nagsabi nun, sinungaling. 8) nakakahiya ka, ang laki ng mga pata mo! Tapos lalabas ka ng ganyan? ??? 8)” then he chuckled.   
  
ano ba yung pata? Yung crispy pata? Do I look like food? ???   
  
“excuse me, I’m not a food! >:(”   
  
“anong food? ???” he stared at me. okay, are we on the same wavelength here or what? “ang hina mo talaga. 8)”   
  
hina.. soft? ??? I’m soft? ???   
  
I raised an eyebrow again; he must’ve known it by now that when I do that, it means I do not understand anything.   
  
“I said,” he paused, “your legs are fat. 8)” Haaaa?! My legs are not fat! “gets mo? ??? 8)” tingin lang sya saken, “and not to mention..” he covered his mouth, “you really need a tan. 8)”   
  
“my legs are not fat! >:(” sira pala sya eh! my trainer told me maganda ang legs ko and they are not definitely fat! “If I know..” I widened my eyes, because I just realized something. Hmm. “are you checking me out? ??? ::)” he is, isn’t he? Because otherwise, how would he be able to tell that my legs are fat? – Which by the way is a total lie! And yes, I do need a tan, pero kahit na!   
  
“me? ??? checking you out? ???” he put his index finger over his chest, “tss. In your dreams! 8)”   
  
“whatever, I know you are. ::)” He’s so checking me out. Hahah!   
  
Tingin lang siya saken, with a wrinkled forehead, siempre. Ahhh that forehead never gets old, trust me. it’s like you’d think he’s a different person if you don’t see the wrinkle in his forehead, for real!   
  
“you’re conceited. >:(” Conceited my ass!   
  
“so what? ???” so I’ve been told, if you got it, flaunt it! “I’m just flaunting what I have. 8)” Nakakainis naman to! “if you want to wear a bathing suit, go ahead. Don’t take your frustration out on me.” baka insecure lang siya, kase hindi siya pwede mag suot ng two-piece? Mwahha! ;D ;D ;D   
  
“hindi ako frustrated no, and besides, bakit ako magsusuot ng ganyan, eh hindi naman ako babae? ???”   
  
“well, you certainly act like one. 8)” I whispered.   
  
Pero narinig nya, okay, that’s alright. “sus.” Then he shook his head on me, okay? he doesn’t believe me? eh totoo naman na he acts like a girl, very temperamental! “are you aware that you’re attracting guys with your outfit? ??? >:(”   
  
“yeah, and probably girls, too. 8)” Cute kase yung suot ko, it’s green and pink, aww. My two favorite colors! :D   
  
“and you’re attracting them to do something that is not right.”   
  
“as if?!” ewan ko sa kanya! “I don’t care what they think, and if they something to me, I can handle them, trust me.” he’s so weird talaga! bakit pa na-invent yung two piece kung hindi naman pwede isuot diba? “you know what, I don’t really have time for this, the beach is waiting for me..” then I started heading for the door, “and besides…” I looked at him, “je ne vous imaginerais jamais porter un costume de bain, quoi qu'il en soit. 8)” [I don’t see you wearing a swim suit, anyway.]   
  
“ano? ???” haha!   
  
“tata Mr. Stiff! voyez-vous plus tard! 8)” I just said, I’ll see him later in French, I bet he didn’t understand that, haha! I’ll give him a taste of his own medicine, from now on, I’ll be speaking in French if I want to talk trash around him, so he’ll know what it’s like to not understand what the person in front of you is saying! Mwahah! ;D 8)   
  
I didn’t give him a chance to say something more, he’s just gonna get on my nerves big time, kaya.. I closed the door behind me.   
  
Nagpunta ako sa lobby to ask for directions to the beach. Kasi diba we’re staying in a hotel which is kinda distant to the resort? Eh di tinuro nung receptionist saken where the place is, she said it’s a five-minute walk from here. not bad, it’s not that far.   
  
“ma’am just to let you know, we have a big pool in the roof top, if you don’t want to walk.. baka ho kase mabastos kayo sa labas..”   
  
“thanks for the concern, but I'll be alright. want to go to the beach.” Sabi ko na beach eh, ang kulit naman!   
  
So then I started walking to the resort, actually, wala namang 5 minutes eh, more like 3. kase next to the hotel lang pala. Pagpasok ko pa lang sa resort, nakita ko na kagad yung beach, ohhh the beach! It’s so beautiful! And the sand! I love the sand! I could make a sand angel right here! haha! :D   
  
Maraming tao, but it’s not jam-packed or whatever, marami lang sya compared to the average beach day. Everybody is in the state of relaxation, naka higa lang, yung iba nasa tubig, then the kids.. aww. They’re making sand castles! :D :D :D   
  
I settled my stuff near the water, wala ng sun eh, that’s weird, because in L.A. the sun sets at around 8–ish during the summer season. Sayang, I wanted to see the sunset pa naman, kase si Stiffie eh! if he hadn’t given me that whole attitude kanina, eh di naabutan ko pa yung sunset! Hmf! >:( :-\   
  
I placed a towel on the sand, so I could lay on it for a while. Wala na rin namang sun eh, hindi ako makakapag sun bathing. Kainis! I’m in desperate need of a tan! Er!   
  
After a while, I stood up. I looked around and saw a bar on the other side of the beach. Tapos may loud music, like a party. Hmm.. they’re serving drinks here? how cool is that?! So this is the ‘night life at the beach’ that Ella was talking about! Man, I love this beach! :D :D :D   
  
Kaya naman I walked towards the bar where most of the people are. Ang dami nga nila don eh, and a lot of them are drinking. Duh?! Bar nga eh. I wonder if they have a legal age to drink here. Kase, I’m only 20 eh. But who cares, this is our resort!   
  
“good evening, Miss Martin.” Kilala nya ko? How? ???   
  
“you know me? ???”   
  
“why, yes ma’am. We’ve been informed of your arrival.” Ohh.. I see.   
  
“ohh.. okay., well, you can call me Iris. :)” I smiled at the bartender. “mango margarita please.”   
  
“right away ma’am.” Oh, so they don’t ask for an ID!? How cool is that?   
  
Okay pala dito eh, unlike in LA, I can only drink at home, or at selected bars, bars where I have hook ups! Haha.   
  
It wasn’t a long wait until I got my drink, so there I was, sitting by the bar, drinking my oh-so-favorite-margarita.   
  
When this guy sat beside me and started talking to me. eww.   
  
“hey there sexy. 8)”   
  
Call me snob, but I do not, I repeat, I do not talk to strangers!   
  
“ang sungit mo naman, miss.”   
  
I just stared at him. yuck! He’s.. he’s so panget! You know those kinds of guys who think they’re all that, just because they have a six pack? Maganda nga ang body, ang panget naman ng face! Eeww! Eww talaga!   
  
“anong pangalan mo, ha Miss? ??? 8)”   
  
“eww. >:(” Then I continued sipping on my margarita. I hate this, while I’m having a good time, someone has to always ruin it. Kanina, si Stiffie, ngayon, eto naman guy na to! >:(   
  
He leaned closer to me, “I’m Rick.. and you are?”   
  
“nobody. please don’t talk to me, you’re freaking me out. >:(” totoo!   
  
“relax, I just want to know your name, did anybody tell you that you look like an angel?.” ang sabi nya, then he waved at the waiter for a drink. Oh please, that angel line is so old, it even goes back to the you-don’t-want-to-know-what century! “bago ka ba dito? Ngayon lang kase kita nakita sa place na to eh.”   
  
Hindi ko siya kinakausap, kase naman, I don’t have time to talk to people like him noh! Pwede ba? he’s just a waste of my time. My oh-so-precious-time! >:(   
  
“okay, since you’re not talking to me,” nilapit nya lalo yung sarili nya, “which is totally fine.” Tapos yung drink naman nya ngayon.. he was kinda toasting it with mine, “maybe you want to go somewhere else with me. 8)” nilapit nya yung lips nya sa ears ko to whisper something, “I can make you talk.. more like.. scream in excitement. 8)”   
  
What the hell!? :o ??? What does he think I am? A slut? So I faced him and said, “excuse me!? >:(”   
  
“pahalik nga. 8)” he winked at me, yuck! “you know you want it. 8)”   
  
Ugh! “you know what, >:(” I stood up with my drink, “you’re really not worth screaming in excitement for.” Then, I spilled my drink on him. “try going to cheap places, maybe you’ll get someone to scream for you. >:(” then I rolled my eyes, “how pathetic.”   
  
Well, because the drink was cold, he suddenly stood up. “ahh!!” Siempre, magugulat siya, unexpected eh. grabe, if you could only see his face, nakakatawa talaga! although what he did was really annoying. I hate cocky guys! Their brain is just full of plain crap!   
  
“bastos ka ha! >:(”   
  
“oh, I’m bastos!? ??? Then what do you call yourself then, huh!? >:(” this guy thinks he’s the king or something! how come no one is hearing this, when there are a lot of people in this place right now!? ???   
  
After saying that, I started walking away.   
  
Pero hindi pa ako nakakalayo, I felt that somebody’s behind me.. kaya naman, I began walking faster.. and faster… until I found myself running, running towards the other side of the beach. And I had a choose a dark and empty spot to run into. Oh great! :-\   
  
And because I suck at running, naabutan nya ako. It’s the guy from the bar! He held my arm and faced me towards him. “alam mo ikaw, pahihirapan mo pa ko eh!”   
  
I tried to let myself go from his grip. “let go of me you idiot! >:( :-\” hindi ko kaya, he’s too strong for me. :-\   
  
“wala ka ng ligtas ngayon! 8)”   
  
Oh no. I’m in big, big mess. “I said let go of me! >:( :-\” please tell me this is not happening to me?! “somebody help me!” I screamed on the top of my lungs. Somebody… anybody!   
  
His grip was getting tighter and tighter and his face getting nearer and nearer to me. oh no.. this can’t be happening to me. no way.. my body started shaking uncontrollaby and my heart began beating faster, as if it’s about to explode from my chest.   
  
  
When I realized that I could no longer do anything else, I just closed my eyes.. “ahhhh!!!!”   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“bitawan mo siya.”   
  
  
  
  
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Mga thirty minutes na siguro ang nakakalipas mula nung umalis siya dito. thirty glorious minutes, dahil ngayon lang ako nakaramadam ng katahimikan sa buong araw na to. Magkaron ka ba naman ng kasamang daig pa ang 7-11 kung magsalita, 7-11 dahil bukas at hindi masara ang bibig, hindi ka ba naman ba mabibingi?   
  
Inayos ko yung mga gamit ko, since we’re staying here at least for a week, dapat ilipat ko na sa cabinet yung mga laman ng bagahe ko. napailing na lang ako ng pumasok ako sa banyo, pano kase, wala pa nga kaming isang araw dito, parang dinaanan na bagyo itong lugar na to. Her things are everywhere!! Yung make-up nya, yung damit nya, nakakalat lahat! Ganito ba ang mga babae? Makalat sa gamit? It’s weird how they come out very neat and presentable, yun pala yung pinagiwanan eh sobrang kalat. >:( ???   
  
At eto pa, akalain nyo bang lumabas siya ng banyo ng naka two piece lang? is she out of her mind? She’s going to the beach with that? Eh hindi naman part ng hotel na to yung beach, maglalakad pa siya papunta don. Hindi ba nya alam na kabastos-bastos yung suot nya? Makita lang siya ng mga taong wala sa matinong pag-iisip dyan eh baka kung ano pang gawin nun sa kanya. maraming loko loko sa ganitong oras, dahil maraming nagpaparty, at dahil sa maraming nagpaparty, maraming nagiinuman. Natural, mga lasing na yung mga tao, kapag nakakita pa yun ng babaeng nakakasilaw ang kutis na naglalakad sa beach, eh hindi malayong pag-iisipan nila yun ng hindi maganda. >:(   
  
Yan ang problema sa mga laking America eh, mga walang pakialam! >:( >:( >:( Ang akala nila, dahil sa ganon yung nakalakihan nila eh ganon din dito, oh kahit sa ibang bansa. Palibhasa, sanay na siya mga ganyang klaseng bagay, masyadong liberated kasi, parang hindi Pilipino kung magkikilos! >:( Ano na bang nangyare sa nakagisnan ng mga babae na Maria Clara? Hindi naman lahat ng lalake malinis ang intensyon sa babae, lalo na’t half naked pa.   
  
At hindi lang yun ah, she even assumed I was checking her out! >:( ??? ang conceited talaga nya kahit kailan. Bakit ko naman siya titignan, eh muka nga siyang hostes dun sa suot nya. Napagkamalan pa nyang hostess yung sinabi ko, eh hindi naman. ang sabi ko hostes, yung parang GRO, hindi yung naghohost ng party o kahit ano. Kahit na ba maganda nga ang legs nya at kutis labanos siya eh, hindi nya dapat yun pinapakita sa buong mundo! Nako, basta! Kapag may nangyare sa kanya, talagang lagot siya saken! >:( >:( >:(   
  
Teka? Bakit ba ko nag-alala? Eh ano naman ngayon kung mapahamak sya diba? ??? :-\   
  
Sira, Jeremy, kapag may nangyare sa kanya, lagot ka sa Daddy mo. Yun lang yun. At kapag nangyari yun, napatunayan mo lang sa sarili mo na wala kang binatbat. :-\ :-[   
  
Hindi na nga ako nakapag concentrate sa binabasa ko eh, pano, tumawag yung lola nya, kinakamusta kame. Hindi daw nya kase ma-contact yung apo nya. Yung apo nyang wala ni konting pagka conservative!   
  
I didn’t know what tell her, so I told her the truth. Bakit ko ba siya pagtatakpan diba?   
  
“eh lola, nagpunta po siya sa beach eh.”   
  
“siya lang mag-isa?” ang tanong naman nya, natural, eh kung wala ako sa beach, malamang mag-isa lang siya nagpunta dun. Self-explanatory naman yun eh.   
  
“pagod na ho kase ako, magpapahinga na nga ako, sa katunayan.”   
  
“nako, eh hijo, baka kase maligaw yun oh baka naman kung anong mangyare dun, hindi naman sanay si Iris dyan sa lugar na yan eh.”   
  
Hindi sanay? Eh kung magkikilos nga siya eh parang daig pa nya ko kung makaasta dito. “marami naman pong tao, hindi naman siguro yun maliligaw.”   
  
“baka naman pwede mo siyang hintaying makabalik bago ka matulog..” halatang nag-aalala siya sa tono ng boses nya. “tapos pakitawagan mo na lang ako kapag nandyan na siya ha.”   
  
Inaantok na ko eh. kaninang alas-cuatro pa ko ng umaga gising! “oh sige ho, tawagan ko na lang kayo mamaya.” Binaba ko na yung phone, bahala na kung magising ako sakaling bumalik ang mahal na Prinsesa.   
  
Maya maya naman, nagring ulit yung phone ko..   
  
Oh great, it’s my Dad. :-\ ang bilis naman atang nakaabot sa kanya?   
  
Kaya sinagot ko naman kagad. “yes dad?”   
  
“nasan si Iris?” ano ba to? Bakit ba lahat ng tao on the look out for her? Gano ba siya ka-importante at parang lahat ata eh dapat asikasuhin siya? Because as far as I know, kame ang kailangan nila sa business, not the other way around. >:(   
  
“at the beach.”   
  
“all by herself?” sabi na eh. ako na naman ang mapapahamak ng dahil lang sa kanya. “bakit hindi mo sinamahan?” bakit ko sasamahan, ano ko? Bodyguard?   
  
“pagod na ko eh, nadelay yung arrival namin dito, ang haba ng seminar.. wala pa kong tulog.” Pakiramdam ko any minute babagsak na yung mga mata ko eh. “tsaka Dad, nandito kame para magseminar hindi para magparty.” Nilabas ko yung schedule na ginawa nya para samin, “next week pa ang bakasyon diba?” totoo naman, nakasulat dito eh.   
  
“I know that, pero hindi ba’t binilin namin siya sayo?”   
  
“eh dad, I need to rest, maaga pa kame bukas.”   
  
“hindi. Sundan mo siya ngayon din.”   
  
“but— :-\ >:(”   
  
Hindi na nya ko pinatapos magsalita, “son, that’s an order.”   
  
Kaya napakamot na lang ako bigla sa ulo ko, Naman!! “yes sir.” >:(   
  
Pagkababa ko ng telepono, dinial ko naman yung number nya, hindi naman nagring, pero may naramdaman akong nagvibrate sa may tagiliran ko. pagkabunot ko..   
  
oh great, kaya naman pala hindi siya macontact, nandito yung telepono nya. Kaya tumayo na ko kagad. I took my jacket from the closet, medyo malamig kase. tapos lumabas na ko para sundan ang mahal na Prinsesa. Hindi ba yun nilalamig sa suot nya? I mean, basically she’s just wearing underwear… right? ???   
  
Pagkatapos kong tanungin yung receptionist sa lobby, dumeretso ako dun sa resort nila. kaya naman pagkadating ko don, hinanap ko na siya kagad ng makabalik kame kagad sa hotel para makapagpahinga na ko dahil pagod na ko talaga.   
  
Yung resort kase parang divided into different areas. May area para mag swimming sa beach, maglaro ng volleyball, area para sa mga bata, at may bar area, para sa gabi, for everybody who wants to party.   
  
Siempre dahil sa gabi na nga at lubog na ang araw, tumuloy ako sa bar. Yun lang naman yung may tao eh. so I looked for her here and there, pati nga yung bar mismo, pinuntahan ko. malamang umiinom yun, kahit underage pa, laking America eh!   
  
But I didn’t see her anywhere. San naman kaya nagsusuot yung babaeng yun? ???   
  
Kaya naman tinanong ko na yung bartender, dahil kung dito lang sya nagpunta, siguro naman nakita siya kahit papano.   
  
“excuse me,” tinawag ko yung bartender, “meron bang babae..” hmm ano bang itsura non? “about this tall,” pinantay ko yung kamay ko sa may baba ko, para sa description, “long hair, maputi, speaks English..” tinignan lang nya ko, nakikinig ba to? “maganda? ???” halos masuka suka na ko nung sinabi ko yun.   
  
“ah! si Miss Iris! yes sir..” nako yun lang pala eh! “nandito po siya kanina, kaya lang umalis, may nangungulit po kase.”   
  
Huh? Sinong nangungulit? “sino? ???”   
  
“lalaki po, tinatanong kung anong pangalan nya, mukang nakainom eh.” sinabi nya, habang gumagawa sya ng drinks para sa ibang customers. “natakot ho siguro si Miss Iris, kaya tumakbo.”   
  
Ano!? Naku kapag minamalas ka nga naman oh! “san tumakbo? ??? Bakit hindi mo tinulungan? ???”   
  
“eh sir.. :-\” yumuko siya, “pasensya na ho, hindi ko ho nahabol eh. :-[” tapos nagturo siya, “pero dun po siya nagpunta.”   
  
Sinundan ko ng tingin yung tinuro nya. Nako naman! Sa lahat ng lugar na pwede nyang takbuhan, bakit dun pa sa walang ilaw? Sinabi ko naman kase na wag magsusuot ng ganon eh, napakatigas ng ulo! >:( >:(   
  
“oh sige, thank you.” tumakbo na ko papunta dun sa direksyon na tinuro ng bartender.   
  
San na kaya yun? Nakaabot na ko hanggang sa may dulo, pero ni konting anino nya, wala akong makita. Para namang kasing hindi ginagamit ang utak eh, tatakbo na nga lang, sa walang tao pa na lugar.   
  
So tinuloy ko lang yung paglalakad ko hanggang sa makarating ako sa pinakadulo. I looked here and there, wala talaga. nasan na ba kase yun? Baka naman nakauwi na yun, at naghahanap lang ako sa wala? ???   
  
Pabalik na sana ako sa hotel, ng may marinig akong dalawang tao na parang nag-aaway. Hindi na sana ako makikialam, kaya lang parang pakiramdam ko eh dapat na makinig ako.   
  
Ang sabi kase ng lalake, “alam mo ikaw, pahihirapan mo pa ko eh!” kaya naman kahit na alam kong hindi ko yun business, sinundan ko san nanggagaling yung boses na yun.   
  
Lalong napabilis yung paglakad ko ng marinig ko na… “let go of me, you idiot!” si… si Iris yun ah!! :o   
  
“wala ka ng ligtas ngayon!” ang sabi naman ng lalake. Teka.. ano bang nangyayare? Anong ginagawa nya sa kanya? ???   
  
“I said let go of me!!” pinakiramdaman kong maagi kung san nanggagaling yung boses, I know for sure si Iris yung narinig kong sumigaw.. “somebody help me!!” sumigaw sya ulit.   
  
Kaya tumakbo nako, hanggang sa makaabot ako kung nasan sila, hawak siya ng lalake sa balikat, at alam kong hindi maganda ang eksenang ito. Sus naman! Mapapaaway pa ata ako sa lagay na to eh.   
  
She was helpless, malaki kase ang katawan ng lalake. Tapos nilapit nya yung muka nya kay Iris, “ahhh!!” loko to ah! >:(   
  
“bitawan mo siya!” sinabi ko, habang tumatakbo ako papalapit sa kanila.   
  
Tumingin naman silang dalawa saken, si Iris, may mga luha na ang mata, “Jeremy.. :-[”   
  
at yung lalake, well.. mukang naghahamon ng away. Pero hindi pa rin niya inalis yung mga kamay nya sa balikat ni Iris. Sinabi ng bitawan eh! >:(   
  
“hindi mo ba ko narinig? ??? Ang sabi ko bitawan mo siya! >:(”   
  
Bumitaw sya, hahawakan nya sana yung kamay ni Iris, ng makatakbo naman siya papunta sa likod ko, at humawak sa bewang ko ng sobrang higpit. “Stiffie.. help me! :-\”   
  
Kaya lumapit samin ngayon yung lalake, halatang naghahamon na siya ngayon ng away. “wag ka nga makialam dito! >:(” tapos hinila nya yung kamay ni Iris papunta sa kanya. “Maghanap ka ng ibang babae, wag yung akin!” ang sabi naman ng lalake. Anong akala nya sa mga babae? Laruan? ??? >:(   
  
“loko ka pala eh! >:(” tinuro ko rin sya, sabay hila ulit kay Iris papunta naman saken. “kasama ko siya, baka ikaw ang dapat maghanap ng iba! >:( 8)”   
  
Nagiba naman ngayon yung expression ng muka ng lalake. Mabuti naman kung ganon, dahil kung nagkataon eh baka kung ano pang mangyare. Hindi pa naman ako marunong makipag-away.   
  
“pa..pasensya na pare. Wala naman kasi siyang kasama kanina eh.” sabay kamot ng ulo nya, “akala ko nag-iisa lang.”   
  
“pare hindi laruan ang mga babae.” Yun na lang ang sinabi ko. hindi naman talaga dapat na binabastos ang mga babae eh, regardless of who and what they are. “sa susunod na lapitan mo pa siya, magtago ka na, dahil hindi mo magugustohan ang gagawin ko sayo. >:(”   
  
“sorry ‘tol.” tinignan ko lang siya ng masama, habang sinusuot ko kay Iris yung jacket ko.   
  
Hindi na ko sumagot sa sinabi nya, instead, hinila ko na tong si Iris papalayo. Habang naglalakad kame pabalik sa hotel, hindi ko napigilan ang sarili ko. “sinasabi ko na nga ba eh! ayaw mo kaseng makinig saken! >:(”   
  
Hindi sya sumagot.   
  
“diba ang sabi ko sayo, wag kang magsusuot ng ganyan? ??? Ang kulit mo kase, kaya ayan, tignan mo kung anong nangyare sayo! >:(” tuloy tuloy pa rin kame sa paglalakad, hawak hawak ko pa rin siya sa kamay nya,. “ano bang mapapala mo sa pagsusuot ng mga ganyan ha? ??? >:(” I continued talking, pero sya tahimik lang. yan, ganyan lang, dapat tahimik. “eh pano kung hindi kita sinundan? ???” pano nga kung hindi ko siya sinundan? Siguradong mapapagalitan na naman ako nito. “eh di kung ano ng nangyare sayo! Palibhasa kase, gagawa ka ng kalokohan, tapos idadamay mo pa ko. pwede ba sa susunod kung gusto mong magwala, gawin mo dun sa wala ako? para hindi ako napapagalitan ng dahil sayo! Tsaka, pwede ba, sa susunod, kung lalabas ka, dalhin mo yung telepono mo!? >:( ??? :-\”   
  
Mula sa elevator, hanggang sa nakapasok na kame sa room namin, hindi pa rin siya nagsasalita. I don’t know if this is a good thing that she’s not talking, pero on the other hand, hindi ko rin nagustohan yung mga sinabi ko sa kanya.   
  
Eh ano namang magagawa ko diba? Natural lang naman na magreact ako ng ganito eh… right? I mean, kase kapag may nangyare sa kanya, kargo de konsyensya ko pa yun.   
  
When we got settled inside the room, binitawan ko na yung pagkakahawak ko sa kamay nya. At siya naman, naupo dun sa may kama, with her head down. Muka siyang bata na nabuko sa ginawa nyang kalokohan. And right now, she looks like she’s on a time out.   
  
Kaya naman tinawagan ko muna ang mga dapat tawagan, sila Daddy pati yung lola nya, para sabihin sa kanila na nandito na siya. Hindi ko na sinabi yung nangyare, dahil baka mag-alala pa yung mga yun, at siempre, baka pagalitan lang ako.   
  
Pagkatapos kong binaba yung phone, tumayo ako sa may pintuan ng kwarto. Nakapamewang lang ako nun, at nakatingin lang sa kanya. habang siya naman, mukang hindi ata gumalaw sa kinakaupuan nya. hindi ko alam kung matutuwa ba ko sa katahimikan na to, o mag-aalala ako, dahil mula ng makilala ko siya, hindi natigil ang bibig nya sa kakasalita? ??? :-\   
  
So I decided to ask her. “oh? ??? bakit ang tahimik mo? ???”   
  
Hindi pa rin siya nagsasalita. Ano na naman ba ito? Bagong pakulo nya? ??? >:(   
  
“huy! Kinakausap kita.”   
  
Tahimik pa rin. “tinawagan ko na ang lola mo, hindi ko na sinabi sa kanya yung nangyare, kaya—”   
  
Bigla naman siyang nagsalita. “sorry. :-[” She said, but her head is still down.   
  
“sorry ka dyan. Eh kung napahamak ka? ??? Anong sasabihin ko sa lola mo, ha? ??? >:(”   
  
“sorry, Jeremy. :-[” Nakatingin pa rin siya sa baba. teka? did she just call me Jeremy? :o ??? hindi naman niya ako tinatawag sa pangalan ko ah? ???   
  
“sorry ka ng sorry, palibahasa kasi kayong mga taga ibang bansa, akala nyo kung sino kayong umasta dito!” bakit ko ba nasabi yun? Eh basta. “sa susunod na mangyare yan sayo, pababayaan na kita, bahala ka sa buhay mo! >:( :-\”   
  
She sniffed.   
  
Then she slowly lifted her head up.   
  
Sa nakita ko sa muka nya, hindi ko alam kung…   
  
Basta, hindi ko mapaliwanag. ang alam ko lang eh bigla kong naramdaman na nagrelax yung muscles ko sa forehead. pero mabigat ang pakiramdam ko. Kase… her eyes are clouded with tears. Tapos yung mga kamay nya na nasa lap nya, nagsheshake. ??? :-\   
  
She’s scared. kitang kita ko sa mga mata nya.. And I felt bad all of a sudden. :-\   
  
Tatabihan ko sana sya sa kinakaupuan nya ng bigla naman siyang tumayo at tumakbo papunta saken. she tiptoed and…   
  
She hugged me, TIGHTLY… :o tightly, to the point that I could not breathe. But for some reason, I didn't want her to let go. :-\   
  
“thank you.. :'(” she sniffed. “thank you Jeremy.. no one’s ever saved me like that.. thank you… :'(”   
  
nabigla ako nun, kase naman.. :-\   
  
“promise ko sayo, I’ll be a good girl now.. :'(” sinabi nya habang nakayakap pa rin saken. “hindi na ko makulit, I'll behave.. I promise... :-[ :'(” then she rested her head on my chest..   
  
Upon hearing those words, and feeling her head on my chest, I felt a light feeling within me, and sooner than I thought, I found my arms wrapped around her…   
  
there was a sudden chill down my spine, pakiramdam ko lahat ng buhok ko sa katawan eh biglang nagtayuan.. ngayon ko lang ulit ito naramdaman.. ever since…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Ever since Tricia… :-[ :-\   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Ever since Tricia… :-[ :-\   
  
  
Sino ba si Tricia? Tricia was the perfect girl, everybody liked and adored her, she was smart, polite, talented, well dignified, always had a smiling face, and most of all she was my girl. What we had was something really very special.. :) :-\   
  
Well… tatlong taon na ang nakakalipas.. three years since Tricia left me.. at hanggang ngayon, masakit pa rin. sa mga hindi nakakaalam, malamang iniisip nyo na napakababaw at sobra kong dinidibdib yung pag-iwan nya saken, dahil parang iniwan lang niya ako, nagkaganito nako. Oo, nagbago ako, sa dating masiglahin at palangiti kong muka sa kung sino man ako ngayon. Mababaw ba? ??? :-\   
  
I wish it was. Believe me. :-[ :-\   
  
She left me, but not like any other stories, na iniwan ako para sa iba, we fell out of love, she fell out of love, hindi pabor sakin o sa kanya ang mga magulang namin, at kung ano ano pa.   
  
What’s very hard about it is that she did not fall out of love with me, she did not leave me for another man, our parents are in good terms with both of us, and everything was perfect. Everything was in place.   
  
Lahat na nga nakaplano na eh, na pagkatapos namin mag-aral, magtatrabaho kame pareho, tapos magpapakasal kame, mamumuhay ng tahimik, ako at siya.. kasama ng mga magiging anak namin. I planned my future with her, and I looked forward to coming home to her from the day we get married onwards.   
  
Until one day, we were on a picnic by the beach, gustong gusto nya kase ang dagat eh, lalo na yung maglalaro sa buhangin… hindi maaalis sakin yung araw na yun, because that should’ve been the day I’d kneel down before her, with a ring on my hand and ask her to be my wife after everything else has been put to place…   
  
But she turned me down.   
  
Hindi dahil sa hindi nya ako mahal, o hindi tama ang panahon, she just… she just didn’t want me tied to her forever. Anong klaseng rason yun diba? As an initial reaction, talagang nafrustrate at nasaktan ako sa sinabi nya, para narin naman nya kasing sinabi na hindi ako karapat dapat na mahalin siya. Nainis ako nun sa kanya, that I even walked out on her, pano kasi, hinanda ko ng husto ang sarili ko para don, pagkatapos hindi nya tatanggapin? ??? :-\   
  
Sinundan nya ko non habang naglalakad ako papalayo. Nagpapaliwanag pa nga siya nun eh, but everything went still all of a sudden, basta ang naalala ko, yung waves lang ng dagat yung naririnig ko. pagkalingon ko, nakita ko siya.. nasa buhangin. Walang malay.   
  
Hindi naman na bago sakin yung natutumba sya bigla, dahil talagang sakitin at mahiluhin sya kahit na noon pa. kaya nga hindi ko siya dinadala sa mga masisikip na lugar, because she’s going to faint, for sure. pero nung nawalan siya ng malay, it alarmed me. First time lang kasi yun nangyare.   
  
So I rushed her to the hospital where she could get checked. Nagtaka ako nun, because a normal check up only lasted for a couple of minutes, not an hour or more.. but hers.. hers lasted not just hours.. but days.. even months.   
  
Kahit na ilang beses kong tanungin yung doctor tungkol sa kalagayan nya, hindi nya sinabi. Kahit si Tricia mismo, walang sinabi sakin. Ang sabi lang nya, anemic daw siya kaya dapat laging nagpapacheck up. Pero kahit na yun yung lagi nyang sinasabi sakin, hindi pa rin ako napalagay.. my sister’s anemic, and she did not get checked that often.   
  
Hindi ako napalagay dahil may nagbago, she was distant to me, kadalasan mainit ang ulo at ayaw akong makita.. parang may hindi siya sinasabi sakin. In fact, everyone was distant to me. It was as if they were hiding something from me.   
  
2nd year anniversary namin yun, naghanda ako ng dinner para saming dalawa, pero hindi siya sumipot. Ni kahit isang tawag, hindi man lang nya nagawa. Sa galit ko, sumugod ako sa bahay nila, only to find out that she wasn’t there. She hasn’t been there.   
  
She had been in the hospital.   
  
Kinausap ako ng mommy nya non, at siya ang nagsabi sakin ng lahat.. lahat lahat na hindi ko kinaya.   
  
Well, it turned out that my instincts were right. They were hiding something from me. SHE was hiding something. She had leukemia. She had it ever since she was a child, but they were able to cure her when she was younger. Bumalik lang, at hindi na ito naagapan. Pakiramdam ko nung mga panahon na yon eh gumuho na ang buong mundo ko. seriously. And to make this heartbreaking matter worse, the doctor said she’ll be lucky to even last for a month.   
  
Isang buwan na pakiramdam ko eh dumaan lang ng napakabilis, like lightning. Hindi ko na lang namalayan.. isang araw, wala na sya… at ako? There was nothing I could have done to stop her from leaving… :-[ :-\ :'(   
  
Yes she left me, but she did it while holding my hand and telling me how much she loves and will always love me. :-[   
  
And as a return, nangako ako sa kanya at sa sarili ko na wala na kong ibang mamahalin kundi siya.. kahit na may dumating pa na bago.. KAHIT NA SINO. Walang papantay kay Tricia.   
  
Kahit na.. kahit na si Iris.   
  
Si Iris na nakayakap sakin at kayakap ko rin ngayon... :-[   
  
Ano bang ginagawa mo, Jeremy? Di ba nangako ka kay Tricia? Bakit nagkakanyan ka ngayon? Mali ito. Maling mali.   
  
Tama, mali.   
  
But if this is wrong, then why do I feel right?   
  
Kaya bigla akong bumitaw sa pagkakayakap ko sa kanya. napalakas pa nga ng konti eh, as she was pushed away a little. “uhm.. sorry. :-\” Wala na akong ibang masabi, “uhmm..” I closed my eyes, “ma.. m..matulog ka na.” tapos binuksan ko ulit yung mga mata ko.   
  
She just looked at me as is if she were lost. Really lost. At habang nakatingin naman sya sakin, may isang luhang pumatak galing sa right eye nya. Agad ko namang iniwas yung tingin ko sa kanya, dahil.. ewan ko. nagugulohan ako. hindi ko kayang tignan sya, lalo na yung mga mata nya.. those eyes that gave me this feeling.. a very awful but weird in a good way feeling.   
  
A good feeling that got me looking at her eyes again.   
  
I know I said this is the first time I’ve felt this way since Tricia, it’s true. Sa dinami dami ng babae na nakasalubong at nakasama ko mula ng mamatay si Tricia, hindi ko ito naramdaman. but this one’s a little different than that. I’ve never been so glued to a girl’s eyes before, not even Tricia’s. ngayon lang, sa mata ni Iris. I never realized how beautiful and different her eyes are. Her eyes are in grayish-brown tone…I don’t know, it’s hard to describe. her pupils are brown, and her iris’ are kinda gray.. or light brown?.. kaya siguro Iris ang pangalan nya.. kung yun yung dahilan, then her name suits her well.   
  
Siguro napansin nya yung pagtitig ko sa mga mata nya, “what’s the matter? ???” she asked. “why are you staring at me? ???”   
  
I cleared my throat, sabay binawi ko ulit yung tingin ko sa kanya. “ano ka ba, gabi na. maaga pa tayo bukas, kaya dapat matulog ka na., baka malate ka pa ng gising bukas, mapahamak pa ko ng dahil sayo. 8) :-\” Bigla ko na lang iniba yung usapan. tama yan, Jeremy.   
  
“oh..” tumingin siya sa baba, “okay.” then she turned around and started walking away. “well I’m just gonna clean up.” Sinabi nya ng mahinahon, on her way to the bathroom. ang sarap pala ng feeling ng hindi nya ko sinisigawan no? ??? sobrang nakakapanibago. :)   
  
ano ba Jeremy, tama na yan sinabi eh!!! >:( :-\   
  
Wala na kong nagawa nun kundi batukan ang sarili ko. I really did. Kung may nakakita siguro nun, matatawa. Sino ba naman taong nasa tamang pag-iisip ang babatok sa sarili nya diba? alam nyo na, baka sakaling bumalik sa matinong pagiisip yung utak ko. naweweirdohan ako sa sarili ko, hindi rin ako mapakali dito, kaya umalis na muna ako at pumunta sa labas.. para magpahangin.   
  
Mga isang oras din akong nawala nun bago ako nagdecide na umakyat na sa room. Wala lang, I just wanted to clear my head from things, mga bagay na maaaring sumira sa pag-iisip ko, pati na rin yung pangako ko.   
  
I do keep my word, that’s a fact.   
  
when I entered the room, I heard music playing, classical music to be exact. nakikinig pala siya ng classical music? hindi halata. hindi siguro ito nakakatulog ng walang music, katulad ko. ayaw na ayaw ni Tricia yun eh, kasi pano raw ako nakakatulog ng hindi tahimik ang paligid.. ako rin, hindi ko alam kung bakit. ewan ko. talagang ganun eh, hindi ako makakatulog kapag sobrang tahimik.   
  
I found myself smiling at the thought of just knowing that there’s someone who likes the same thing as I do… :) :) :)   
  
Naghanda na ako para matulog. So when I was all settled to go to bed, pumunta na ko sa kwarto. Dun na lang ako siguro sa couch matutulog, dahil malamang eh nasa kama yun. Pero pagpasok ko pa lang sa kwarto, madilim na. but I found the bed empty. Nasan siya? ??? ??? ???   
  
I looked all over the place and I finally found her… sleeping in the couch. Bakit dito sya natutulog at hindi dun sa kama? Beside the nightstand, I found a note.   
  
‘the bed is yours so you could have a good night sleep. This is all I could think of to compensate for what happened. I’m sorry for all the trouble.’   
  
And here she lies in the couch, sleeping so quietly.   
  
“why are you doing this? ??? :-\” sinabi ko ng mahina, “sana magsungit ka na lang palagi.. don't be nice, you might just ruin everything… :-\ :-[ :-\”   
  
After saying that, tumalikod na ko at nahiga sa kama.   
  
  
Next day.   
  
“Stiffie..” nakaramdam ako ng tapik sa left arm ko, “wake up.. 6:30.” My eyes are too heavy to open up. Umaga na kase ako natulog. “Stiffie! >:(” lumakas ng konti yung pagkasabi nya. “bahala ka, we’re gonna be late, sige ka.”   
  
“5 mins.” Ang sabi ko naman.   
  
“okay, I’m gonna go take a shower. Pagkatapos ko dapat awake ka na ha. :D”   
  
Tinaas ko yung kamay ko na parang nagwewave sa kanya. “yeah.” Nako, sigurado ako, matagal maligo yan, ganyan naman ang lahat ng babae, diba? ::) Kaya naman bumalik ako sa pagkatulog.   
  
Maya maya naman… “hoy!!” nagising naman ako bigla. “hello? Wake up!” she continued tapping me all over the upper part of my body. “STIFFIE!!! >:(” at sumigaw siya ng pagkalakas lakas, na nagising hindi lang ang buong katawan ko, kundi yung buong floor, malamang! :o :o :o   
  
“ano ka ba!? ??? >:(” siempre, nagulat ako eh.   
  
“didn’t I tell you to be awake after I take shower? ???” nakapamewang na siya. “tapos nako, you’re sleeping parin?” ba, parang nag-iba ata ang ihip ng hangin? ??? “get up, we’re gonna be late! >:(”   
  
“bakit ba nagmamadali ka? ???” tinignan ko yung oras, it’s 7:15 pa lang, eh yung seminar mamaya pang 9:00. wala namang breakfast ngayon kasama ng mga investors, dahil kahapon yun. Ano bang meron at nagmamadali to? “9 pa yung start ng seminar, ano ka ba, ang aga mo naman masyado?”   
  
“duh? I know that. 8)” Tinaasan ako ng kilay. Nako, something’s telling me na back to the old Iris-Prinsesa-ng-mga-maarte na naman ito. Akala ko ba magpapakabait na siya? Diba yun yung sinabi nya kagabi? ??? Bakit parang hindi naman sya nagbago at naging ‘good girl?’ Eh drawing lang pala yun eh! “didn’t you say not to be late last night?” oo nga sinabi ko yun, eh hindi pa naman kame late ah? “eto oh, I’m already up and ready, tapos ikaw you’re slacking your ass off ???? What kind of a..” she did the quotes sign in the air, “professional person are you? ??? 8)” aba? At ako pa ang tinanong? ???   
  
Kaya naman tumayo na ko, “oo na. ang dami mong satsat” at naligo.   
  
  
Conference hall.   
  
Medyo kakaiba yung seminar namin ngayon, unlike yesterday na puro speakers lang, today’s actually a day for the investors. Marami silang nandon, different kinds of investors from all sorts of business. eto na nga yung sinasabi ni Dad na kailangang i-impress. We were grouped by each company we’re coming from. The interaction started with self-introduction, what company we represent, at kung anong position namin.   
  
“Jeremy Valdez, marketing and general manager of the newest telephone company, the M.V. Telecoms.” At nakipag-shake hands ako dun sa kausap ko.   
  
“nice to meet you, Jeremy, I know all about your business background.” Ang sabi ng investor. Sa totoo lang, he looks incredibly young to be a vice-president of a company. Sa muka nya, hindi malayong konti lang ang age cap namin. “I’m Randolph Leroy from MCI.” Oh, so this is Mr. Leroy, the French investor my Dad was talking about! Tapos humarap siya kay Iris na nakaupo sa tabi ko, “and you are?”   
  
“Iris Martin, sales and advertising manager of M.V. Telecoms.”   
  
“nice to meet you, mademoiselle. :)” He kissed her hand. “so tell me, how are you related to Josephine Martin?”   
  
“elle est ma mère. :)” El-e what? ??? ano daw? ??? Did she just speak French? Wait, she speaks French?! ??? :o   
  
Well, whatever she said, mukang natuwa naman si Mr. Leroy. “impressive, you speak my language. :)” She smiled at him. “votre mère est une bonne amie à nous.” [your mother is a good friend of ours] at nagnod siya, “that’s why I asked, because you look so familiar to me.”   
  
“ohh.. yeah, I kinda remember you, too.” Okay? ??? para naman akong invisible dito, at silang dalawa lang ang nag-uusap. Hindi naman ito chikahan time eh, business time ito, kaya dapat business ang pinaguusapan.   
  
“ohh oui, oui, now I remember.”   
  
“really? ???”   
  
“we were introduced at a party..in Hollywood.” She wrinkled her forehead, hindi nya ata alam kung anong pinagsasabi nito. “the one you arrived late at?” nagisip pa siya lalo, “it’s one of those…socialite gathering they call it.”   
  
Nung sinabi naman yun ni Mr. Leroy eh parang nag-light yung face ni Iris. “oh that’s right! :D” she clapped her hands softly, “Randy, right?” kilala nya?   
  
“oui, bien, est ce ce qu'ils m'appellent travail d'extérieur mais vous pouvez m'appeler cela, si vous aimez” [well, that’s what they call me outside work. but you can call me that, if you like.] Ano ba to, speed dating? Eh parang nagdedate na silang dalawa sa lagay na to eh! at ako naman, parang poste dito. Kaya ayokong nagpupunta sa mga seminars eh! >:(   
  
“cool. grand pour vous revoir, Randy. Petit monde, n'est-ce pas?” [great to see you again, Randy. Small world, isn’t it?] yeah, and it keeps getting smaller and smaller! “oh. ::)” napansin nya siguro na nakakairita yung pag-uusap nila na silang dalawa lang ang nagkakaintindihan. “Jeremy here is very good in managing a business.. actually, we will be working closely with each other.” Then she looked at me, “isn't that right? ;)”   
  
“right. 8)” Hay sa wakas at nakapagsalita din ako. akala ko matutuyuan na ko ng laway eh. “we have sample proposals for you to look at.” Inabot ko sa kanya yung samples na dala ko from my office.   
  
Tinignan nya ang mga ito, at hindi sa pagmamayabang, alam kong na-impress sya. Of course, gawa ko yan eh. 8) :D “I’m interested.” kitams!? 8)   
  
Teka, sandali, san ba siya interesado, sa investment proposal na hawak nya...   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
o kay Iris na tinitignan nya? ??? >:( ???   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
He hugged me back when I hugged him. Don’t ask me, I have the same question too. Why did I hug him in the first place? Considering the facts that he consistently yelled and made me look like a fool on our way back… yes he saved me from that maniac and that’s something I owe him a lot for. Hmm. I probably deserved to be yelled at. That’s a given.   
  
But why did he hug me? why did I hug him? WHY DID I HUG HIM SO TIGHTLY, THAT IT WAS INCREDIBLY WORTH SEIZING THE MOMENT FOR!?   
  
Basta all I know is that I felt so bad and scared of what happened earlier and… oh I got nothing!! It was just mere anxiety, that’s the reason behind that skintight, invulnerable hug.   
  
Vulnerable or invulnerable? Ahh! What the heck, Iris?! ???   
  
“uhm.. sorry. :-\” He let go of the hug with a little push. Okay? what was that for? A second ago, he was hugging me like he didn’t wanna let go, what happened now? “uhmm..” he closed his eyes, bakit? “ma.. m..matulog ka na.” do I look like the grim reaper or what? ???   
  
Alright, not that I’m being conceited or something, but he stared at me… at my eyes for so long, that I thought he’s a narcissist, because you know, he can see his reflection through them.. He looked at my eyes as if he was examining them very intently. Ewww!? Why’s he doing that?   
  
… not that I don’t like it. ::)   
  
Well, quite frankly, it bothered me… in a bizarre way. No one’s ever stared at me like that before. I mean, yes I do get stares, nauseating stares, that is. pero his stare was a lot different from the usual ones I get, as it was more of a complimentary gaze, that chills went down my spine. Ohh this is crazy! He’s crazy! :D ???   
  
So I decided to break the silence.. and the staring! “what’s the matter? ???” I asked. “why are you staring at me? ???” yeah, that’s a good question to ask.   
  
He cleared his throat, parang na-distract ata siya eh. “ano ka ba, gabi na. maaga pa tayo bukas, kaya dapat matulog ka na., baka malate ka pa ng gising bukas, mapahamak pa ko ng dahil sayo.” He said, without even stopping to take in air. Oh gosh, he really was distracted! Haha! ;D   
  
“oh..” I looked at the floor, kase naman, natatawa ako eh, I’m afraid that I might bust a laugh tapos maoffend pa sya. “well I’m just gonna clean up.” I said in a very mellow way. what? I owe him something, it’s not bad to be on the down low once in a while. And besides, I promised him I’m gonna be a good girl now. I meant that literally. 8)   
  
I took a shower after that very awkward moment. Unlike my usual shower times, I only spent about 30 minutes on this one. While I’m in the bathroom taking a shower, what happened earlier this evening came across me. I just thought, I could’ve been raped you know? And ewww! Raped by an ugly and hideous-face maniac! If he hadn’t come and ‘rescued’ me, although he didn’t really do anything but talk, baka kung ano na ang nangyare sakin. I feel so embarrassed tuloy, kase diba sinabihan nya ko not to wear clothes like that? Eh ano bang malay ko, I thought this place isn’t any different from LA, where it’s not attracting-in-a-bad-way to wear swimsuits like the one I wore. I hate being wrong. I hate being the one put in the humiliating spot!!   
  
I hate… I hate him. >:(   
  
Okay, no I don’t. ;D   
  
But then I realized something, a certain similarity.. how he yelled and pulled me all the way up here is almost as if David was doing it. Not to be in the negative side, I thought what he did in the beach was so kind-hearted of him and all, but it just reminded me of how David is… and how much I hate him. Pero hindi naman, mas grabe si David eh. tsaka hindi ko hate si Jeremy. He’s cool, masungit nga lang. he has this vibe though, like he’s hiding something. Pero ano kaya naman yun? ahh! Ewan! Why am I stressing over something that is none of my business? Basta concentrate na lang ako sa pagligo ko.   
  
But I am curious. :-\ ::)   
  
So after my quick shower, lumabas na ko para matulog. Actually no, I was planning to fix him a sandwich or coffee or whatever, siempre para naman hindi nya isipin na bad ako noh. Kaya lang, when I stepped out from the bathroom, wala sya sa room. Where did he go? ???   
  
I waited for ten more minutes for him to come back, kaya lang sobrang inaantok na ko eh, I was gonna call him, but then I saw a pen and paper on the nightstand.   
  
Anong susulat ko?   
  
‘sorry for tonight..’   
  
Nyek. Sorry for what? ??? SCRATCH.   
  
How about..   
  
‘thank you..’   
  
Hmm.. nah. Thank you is a big word to say. SCRATCH.   
  
Wait, I just realized that there’s only one bed.. I know it’s big, and probably too big for us, but come on.. we can’t sleep in one bed?! Pero if we can’t sleep here together, one has to take the couch.. errr. Fine. I’ll take the couch. But only for tonight! Since I said I’ll be good. And plus.. kawawa naman siya, hindi pa yata siya nakakatulog ng maayos eh.   
  
Kaya eto na lang…   
  
‘the bed is yours so you could have a good night sleep. This is all I could think of to compensate for what happened. I’m sorry for all the trouble.’   
  
Oh diba? not too thankful, but good to fit the appreciation. Tonight lang yan, because tomorrow, I’m fighting for the bed! Mwahah. Alright, that’s good enough. I left the note on the nightstand. Good night!!   
  
  
Next day.   
  
I woke up at 6:15 in the morning, by a phone call. >:(   
  
Oh great, who’s this, and why this early? “hello?” There was static on the line, so I thought of going out to the terrace to get more reception. “hello? Who’s this?”   
  
“hey, Princess.” Just who I thought it would be. >:( How did he get my number? “your mom gave me your number so I can call you..”   
  
“why? ??? >:(”   
  
“nothing, so I could check on you..” check on me my ass!!!! Errr. Early pa lang sira na araw ko! “so how have you been?”   
  
“been great until now. >:(” Now, why must he spoil my day?   
  
“how come?” ang slow nya kahit kailan!! >:( Arrghhh! I don’t have time for this right now, so I hung up on him. he called back by the way, but I didn’t pick it up.   
  
I stayed in the terrace for a couple or more of minutes. Tapos when it was getting hot, and it really was hot, pumasok na ko sa loob. Nakita ko si Stiffie, natutulog pa, he looks so kawawa. Haha. He sleeps like a child, though, yung naka-curl up yung knees nya.. baka naman nilalamig siya? ??? ;D   
  
I must’ve been standing here long enough that I started realizing I’m already staring at him. eh kase.. bakit ganon? his facial expression changes every time? I mean, I know even when he’s asleep, I could still see the wrinkles in his forehead and all, pero once in a while, his face loosens up and kinda just relaxes. Nyahh. I don’t know.   
  
I want to know.   
  
I gently tapped his arm, “Stiffie..” he reacted to it, pero his eyes were still closed. “wake up.. 6:30.” I looked at him, bakit ayaw nya gumising?! Nakakainis naman. “Stiffie! >:(” nilakasan ko ng konti yung voice ko. “bahala ka, we’re gonna be late, sige ka.”   
  
“5 mins.”   
  
“okay, I’m gonna go take a shower. Pagkatapos ko dapat tapos ka na ha.”   
  
He waved his hand up in the air and said, “yeah.” Pero naka close pa rin yung eyes nya. So I took a shower na nga. After that, I got ready, put on my make-up and everything else. Pero siya? Ayun. Tulog pa rin!!!   
  
“hoy!” he opened his one eye, “hello? ??? Wake up!” and I tapped him all over the top part of his body.. muscular pala siya ha ::). “STIFFIE!!!”   
  
Hahaha. Look at him, he suddenly sat up! “ano ka ba!? >:( ???”   
  
“didn’t I tell you to be awake after I take a shower? Tapos na ko, you’re sleeping parin?” he just gave me a blank stare, “get up, we’re gonna be late!” woah, wait, did I just say that? ??? This is so unlikely of me.   
  
“bakit ba nagmamadali ka? 9 pa yung start ng seminar, ano ka ba, ang aga mo naman masyado?”   
  
Oo nga noh? Shoot. I thought the seminar’s at 8! “duh? I know that. 8)” Pretend na lang. hehe. “didn’t you say not to be late last night. eto oh, I’m already up and ready, tapos ikaw you’re slacking your ass off? What kind of a..” I threw the quotation signs in the air, “professional person are you? ??? 8)”   
  
“oo na, ang dami mong satsat.” Then he stood up, and scratched the back of his head.   
  
  
Conference hall.   
  
It’s the second day of the week-long seminar, and I’ve been told that today’s the day with the investors. Kakainis. >:(   
  
“Jeremy Valdez, marketing and general manager of M.V. Telecoms.” He shook hands with… wait, he’s cute! And… he looks familiar! ??? :D   
  
“nice to meet you Jeremy, I know about your business background. I’m Randolph Leroy from MCI.” MCI? Okay, he definitely registered in my head. “and you are?” I didn’t notice he was looking at me na pala.   
  
“Iris Martin, sales and advertising manager of M.V. Telecoms.”   
  
He took my hand and kissed it, “nice to meet you, mademoiselle.” Oh, so he speaks French..and not only is he an average cute person, but he’s a cute French man! “so tell me, how are you related to Josephine Martin?” he knows my mom?!? Ahh!! Nevermind. Anybody who knows my mom just turns me off. Hulaan nyo kung bakit. hmph! >:(   
  
So I decided to answer him in French. “elle est ma mère. :)”   
  
There was a sudden light in his face. Cool. “impressive, you speak my language. :) votre mère est une bonne amie à nous. that’s why I asked, because you look so familiar to me.”   
  
“ohh.. yeah, I kinda remember you, too.” I do, but I don’t know exactly how and where. Hmmm.   
  
“ohh oui, oui, now I remember.”   
  
“really? ???”   
  
“we were introduced at a party..in Hollywood.” a party in Hollywood? I don’t remember going to a party there? He must’ve noticed the puzzled look on my face, that’s why he decided to elaborate more. “the one you arrived late at? it’s one of those…socialite gathering they call it.”   
  
Socialite gathering? Ohhh!! That party! Remember when my mom and I had this argument about this party, she calls it.. the one I arrived wearing ‘a-not-so-classy-outfit’ … well, yun yun. Now I totally remember. “Randy, right?”   
  
“oui, bien, est ce ce qu'ils m'appellent travail d'extérieur mais vous pouvez m'appeler cela, si vous aimez”   
  
Well, in that case, this world is really small. Akalain nyo nga naman.. “cool. grand pour vous revoir, Randy. Petit monde, n'est-ce pas?” tapos I swung over to Jeremy, who by the way looks like he’s about to have a heart attack or something. Galit na naman to. Ehh! What’s new pa ba? “Jeremy here is very good in managing a business.. actually, we will be working closely with each other.” I looked at him and kinda smiled.   
  
“right. 8)” tapos may nilabas syang envelop from his suitcase, “we have sample proposals for you to look at.” he handed Randy the papers.   
  
And after a few moments of reading the material, “I’m interested.” yung face ni Stiffie oh, he looks so proud, but then it changed. Ewan ko kung bakit. tinignan pa nga nya ko ng masama eh! >:(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
he’s weird talaga!! >:( ::)   
  
2nd part. ;)   
  
  
  
Well, the whole day pretty much was like this, may rotation lang, every 30 minutes or so para magkaron kame ng chance to talk to other investors in the room. Okay naman, a lot of them were really interested in the proposal Jeremy prepared for them. Actually, meron na ngang mga excited to sign contracts eh. And one of them is Randy. Good, at least I know one of our potential investors, diba? it’ll be easy for me to make business strategies when I have an ace, right? ::) :D   
  
The seminar ended at 3:00 pm. actually all throughout the day, hindi ako pinapansin ni Jeremy. Why kaya? ??? Did I do something again? ??? hindi ko naman kase sya ma-gets eh. there are certain instances na he doesn’t want me out of his sight, and minsan naman, he pushes me away. there are times he looks at me differently, and other times, he looks at me as if I am a big burden to him.   
  
So what, Iris? He’s a big burden to you, too!   
  
Eh bakit ba ganon? why can’t we just get along? I mean, we fight over petty things anyway.   
  
“Stiffie..” I calmly said when we got upstairs. He took off his coat and started undoing his tie.   
  
“bakit? ???”   
  
“I want to go the beach.” Ayoko ng malate sa sunset noh!   
  
He turned around and faced me, “sige pumunta ka don, para mabastos ka na naman! >:( :-\” okay? what’s up with the attitude? ???   
  
So I walked towards him and stomped my feet. “but..but I want to see the sunset! >:(”   
  
“gusto mong makita yung sunset? ???” I nodded. “eh di tignan mo dyan. >:(” he pointed the window, “dyan oh, sa bintana.”   
  
Okay? how am gonna be able to see the sunset through the window? ??? “eh gusto ko by the beach, so I can take a picture of it.” Tapos nilabas ko yung camera ko.   
  
“ang dami mong arte, alam mo yun? ??? >:(” he’s so stingy talaga! “kung gusto mo ng picture,..” he faced his laptop to me, “ayan. Go search it up, and print it!”   
  
“but I want to take a picture of it.. :-[”   
  
“at ano namang gagawin mo sa picture? ???” he raised his eyebrow, hello? Ano bang ginagawa sa picture? Eh diba pinopost! “you’re not going anywhere alone.”   
  
Ganun!? “if it bothers you a lot, then..” I paused, sasabihin ko kaya? Sige na nga! “well, I was wondering maybe you could accompany me.”   
  
He looked at me with surprise, “ano? :o ???” but he took his eyes off me after a split second. “pagod na ko. >:( :-\” he said, while taking his shoes off.   
  
Anong pagod? Eh wala naman siyang ginawa kanina but sit and talk eh, so how’s that tiring, diba? “sasamahan mo lang ako eh..” tapos lumapit ako sa kanya, “come on, Stiffie. We’re not gonna take long, promise. After the sun sets, babalik na tayo dito. :)”   
  
“wag ka ngang makulit, I said I’m tired, okay?” bakit ba nya ako lagi sinusungitan?? Last night was okay na nga eh, bakit ngayon, masungit na naman siya? ???   
  
“fine. >:(” I crossed my arms, “if you don’t want to come with me, I’ll just go alone.” Reverse psychology!! Hahah! Pero parang hindi naman nya ako pinapansin eh. as he sat on the bed and began reading the newspaper. “did you hear what I just said? ???” I asked, “I said I’m going alone.” Hindi pa rin nya ako pinansin, “hello!? ??? Are you deaf?”   
  
“I’m not deaf.” He said, while reading his newspaper, “I’m just ignoring you. 8)” tuloy parin yung pagbasa nya, ako naman, I could not believe what I just heard. Me? si Iris.. I’m being ignored?! Hell nahh!! He did not.. he did not just say that!! “basta hindi ka aalis.”   
  
“why can’t I go?”   
  
“because I said so.”   
  
“why? ???”   
  
“bakit ba ang kulit mo? ???” I could tell he’s starting to get annoyed. Good!!   
  
I looked at him in a silly manner, “because. 8)”   
  
“kapag sinabi kong hindi ka aalis...” He looked up, “hindi ka aalis.”   
  
“bakit nga? ??? >:(”   
  
“dahil sinabi ko! >:(” he raised his voice. “end of discussion, Iris.”   
  
“ewan ko sayo, bahala ka. >:(” Hmff!!!! So I sat back down and watched the sun as it slowly set. Aww.. good bye sun! huhuhu. I’m sad.   
  
Hindi kame nagpansinan, nakakainis naman kasi sya eh, he’s such a party pooper. Come on, we’re on vacation, there’s a beach outside, there are parties going on all over the place, and look what we’re doing? NOTHING! >:(   
  
Damn, it must be so hard to date a guy like him, sobrang boring nya, I wonder if he gets bored of him being boring?!   
  
“I’m hungry.” I said after a very long silence.   
  
“call for room service.”   
  
“I want to eat at a restaurant, Jeremy.”   
  
“ano bang difference non? ???” anong difference non? Malaki! “pareho lang naman yung pagkain, lalagyan mo pa ng kung anong kaartehan.”   
  
“I wanna get out of here.” ang sabi ko naman.   
  
“tsk! Ang kulit mo! >:(” seriously!? Bakit ba gusto nya dito lang?? “just call for room service, dahil ayoko ng lumabas.”   
  
“I’m not forcing you to come with me, I could just get food, you know?”   
  
“eh hindi ka nga lalabas ng walang kasama! >:(” he said in a very irritated way. “ang daldal mo, alam mo ba yun? Pwede ba, kahit isang oras lang, wag kang magsalita?”   
  
Huh? “but I’ve been silent for so long already.” Totoo, I feel like my mouth is running out of saliva or something!   
  
“pwede ba, Iris.” He closed his eyes for a second then, “can’t you see I’m busy?” anong busy dyan? ??? Eh he’s reading the paper lang naman? “ang dami ko pang gagawin, wag kang magulo.” I could sense the exasperation in his voice. “call for room service.”   
  
“err!!! I’m hungry Jeremy! >:(” he sighed loudly that I got all shaky inside. Eh kase naman, kung tignan nya ko parang gusto nya kong i-murder eh! “you do it!” I pointed the phone. “you call for room service! >:( ”   
  
He lifted the receiver up and got the menu from the nightstand, but before doing that, kinamot nya muna yung head nya. “here, I’m gonna call for room service, para manahimik ka na dyan. >:(”   
  
So he ended up calling for room service. Hehhhe. But really though, What is this guy!? Puro work na lang siya, no wonder he’s such a loner, and not to mention, a general pain in everyone’s butt!   
  
“ano bang gusto mo?”   
  
Hmm what do I want? I’m in the mood for… “I want sinigang na pork. :D”   
  
“what? anong sinigang na pork? ??? sinigang na baboy!” whatever you call it, basta that's what I want! “wala yun dito sa menu.”   
  
“then request for it. 8)”   
  
“I can’t do that. bakit ba naghahanap ka ng wala? ??? >:(” Why can’t he? I do it all the time… “iba na lang.”   
  
“eh gusto ko nga yun eh! >:(”   
  
“wala nga dito! >:(” he pointed the menu, “oh ano? meron?” wala nga. Pero diba, pwede mo naman sabihin sa chef yun?   
  
“I only want sinigang na baboy for dinner, if you’re not gonna get that for me, hindi na lang ako kakain. :-[”   
  
“eh di wag. >:(” Tapos binaba nya yung phone. Is he for real? He’s really gonna let me starve to death here!? I’m so pissed off right now. >:( >:( >:(   
  
And you know what happens when I get pissed right? “hindi mo na nga ako sinamahan sa beach, pababayaan mo pa kong magutom! What a heartless jerk you are!! If I die of hunger today, it’s your entire fault! >:( :-[ >:(”   
  
Nagulat siya sa sinabi ko, as his facial expression went from angry and annoyed, to soft and almost teary. “what did you say? ??? :-[”   
  
“ang sabi ko,” I translated it in tagalog, “kapag namatay ako, kasalanan mo! Kase pinabayaan mo ako!”   
  
“you’re .. you’re not gonna die… I won’t let you… :-\” what?! he stood up and put his shoes on. “alright. sss…ss…stay here, I’ll be back.” His voice was shaky. He was terrified; I saw it in his eyes.   
  
“wait, where—” before I could finish what I was going to say, he was already out the door. Okay? talk about manners!! Where’s he going now? Ayaw nya kong palabasin tapos siya aalis? That’s so unfair!! Ano kayang problema non? Was there something I said? That’s so odd… ???   
  
Anyway, while waiting for him to come back, I decided to take a shower first. kase plano ko, since he left me naman, aalis na lang ako. ako na lang ang bibili ng sinigang na baboy! Hmmf! A very simple thing, ayaw pa nya kong pagbigyan. He wants me to shut up right? Well, right now, sinigang na baboy is what’s gonna shut me up.   
  
After ko maligo, siempre nagbihis na ko diba, but then by the sink, I found his planner. Okay, I don’t want to be nosy or intruding, because it’s so unlikely of me to be like that, but seeing his planner made me feel so curious. I don’t know why, I just found myself opening it.   
  
It’s not an extraordinary planner, as it was just the usual one I see that most people have. Nakalagay don lahat ng schedule nya for the this week, for next week, next month.. in fact he has the next two years already planned out! oh my. I continued flipping through the pages and when I got to the last one, I saw a picture.. a very pretty and amiable picture..   
  
It’s a picture of a girl…   
  
Nung nakita ko yun, I could not explain how I felt.. basta ang alam ko, hindi masaya yung feeling. Who’s this girl? wait…   
  
He has a girlfriend? ???   
  
How come I’ve never seen or heard of her? ??? Sino siya? ??? What’s her name? ??? how old is she? ??? Where’s she from? ??? how long have they been going out? ??? does he love her? ??? Does she love him? ??? where did they meet? ???   
  
Why am I asking these questions!? It’s probably due to the fact that I’m just hungry. And this is how it is when a person’s hungry diba, kung ano-ano na lang ang iniisip. Right, that’s what’s up.   
  
I closed the planner and kinda tossed it away from me. Why am I feeling so bad about this? So what if he has a girlfriend? I don’t care, why would I care? Tss.. my deepest sympathy to the girl, kase yung boyfriend nya, no life!!   
  
I stepped out of the bathroom, and took my purse from the closet. I was about to go to the door, when I smelled something.. something very familiar that it made me hungrier. I followed the scent, which was by the way, coming from the mini-kitchen and found him, sitting by the dining table with food on it. It’s not just any other food, because what’s on the table is the same food I asked for a while ago.. sinigang na baboy. Alright!! :D ;D :D ;D   
  
I stood there, I was surprised, I tell you. kase hindi ko naman na expect that he would really buy me this food. I mean, I know it’s a lot of trouble to find this at this time, but still, he found a way to bring it to me.. just so I could eat.. aww. My heart melted. Really. ::)   
  
“here’s your sinigang..” he finally said.   
  
Actually, hindi ko alam kung anong sasabihin ko, kase nga I didn’t expect it. “you.. you went out to buy me this? ???”   
  
“yes.”   
  
Now I feel sorry. Bad kasi ako eh! “why’d you do that? ???”   
  
“because.. :-\”   
  
“because? ???”   
  
“ang sabi mo diba mamamatay ka kapag hindi ka nakakain nyan? :-\” okay, I was exaggerating at that time and he took it seriously? This guy!   
  
“so? Not that you care.. you probably want me dead anyway. ::)” I rolled my eyes.   
  
“that's not funny, okay?! >:( :-\” He just stared at me. may dumi ba ko sa face? ???   
  
He took a deep breath, then he stood right in front of me…   
  
“don’t say that again, Iris…”   
  
“say what? ???” what did I say?   
  
Before I was able to ask him what, he held my hand, closed his eyes and said..   
  
“don’t ever mention anything about you dying, or death in general..   
  
  
because… :-\   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
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“--- because I can’t afford to have another loss… :-\ :-[”   
  
“huh? ???” that’s what I said, pano kase, I don’t understand what’s he’s saying noh?! I know it’s in English, but.. oh you know what I mean! ::) “why are you saying that?”   
  
After a long silence, “because.. :-[” okay? ???   
  
“because? ???”   
  
I’m sensing there’s more to that ‘because’ reason he said, but on the other hand, something is telling not to ask any further. Ewan ko, siguro kase this is pertaining to the picture I saw in his planner. Pero, bakit? ???   
  
“Listen Iris.. :-[ :-\” he held my hand, but didn’t look at me, kase sa floor siya nakatingin. Ano bang meron sa floor that he loves looking at it all the time? “I’m just..” he sighed, “I’m just very sensitive when it comes to death and dying. :-[”   
  
“why? someone died? ???”   
  
“no.” he said in a very serious manner, “I mean… I can’t tell you right now.. :-[”   
  
“why not? ???”   
  
“I don’t want to talk about it. :-[” Then he looked to his side. “pasensya na. :-\”   
  
I don’t know, I’m normally a very inquisitive person when it comes to topics like this, but this time, I was contented with what he said.   
  
So I changed the subject.. :-\   
  
“oh sige if you say so.” Umupo na ako sa chair so I can eat. Dahil yung sinigang baka lumamig diba!? ::) ;D   
  
He followed me naman, tapos he served me the food. “kain ka na.”   
  
“thanks. :)” I smiled at him. “aren’t you gonna eat? ???” I asked. Kase naman, isang plate lang yung nasa table eh..   
  
“no thanks, I’m not hungry..”   
  
“but I don’t eat alone..” sinabi ko lang yun, but in reality, I’m used to eating by myself. Something is telling me that I touched a very sensitive side of him by mentioning the ‘D’ word. Death, I mean.   
  
Mabait talaga sya ha, kase he ate with me. :)   
  
But even though he did that, I still felt the animosity between us. It felt really awkward as it was like there’s a huge barrier between the two of us. I mean to say, we know each other nga, and we’re together every single day, but other than that, wala kaming alam sa isa’t isa. Hindi ko naman sinasabi na we should, kase as far as I know, this is purely business only, and I don’t have any intention to keep it out of that.   
  
The sinigang was good, by the way. Actually, we were quiet the whole time we were eating. Not that he really ate, but it was so kind of him to join me. Anyway, pagkatapos namin kumain, we went to bed na.   
  
Believe me, I was willing to share the bed with him, it’s big enough for both of us anyway.. but he chose to sleep on the couch instead.   
  
“sa couch na lang ako matutulog..” he said, while getting some stuff from the closet, “sayo na yung bed.” Tapos kumuha siya ng pillow from the bed at inayos nya yung couch.   
  
Nagulat ako. it’s so unlikely for him to be nice to me. dahil usually, masungit siya diba? “are you sure?” I asked.   
  
Tinuloy naman niya yung pagayos nya sa tutulugan nya. “yeah, hindi naman ako masama para patulugin ka sa couch eh.” really? Eh sa couch nga ako natulog last night, did he forget about that? “and last night, hindi na kita ginising kase mahimbing na tulog mo eh, palilipatin sana kita sa kama.” Ohh.. I see. after saying that, humiga na siya.   
  
“you could.. uh.. you could have half of the bed... :-X”   
  
“it’s alright, okay na ko dito.”   
  
“okay, well..” I pulled the covers so I could get in bed, “uh..goodnight, Sti—err. Jeremy. :-X” Hindi ko napansin, he was sleeping na pala..   
  
Well, that’s what I thought. Because after a few moments.. “Goodnight, Princess.” Huh!? :o ??? Am I hearing things or what? did he.. did he… did he just call me Princess? ???   
  
  
Next morning.   
  
I woke up the next day feeling fine. Really.. don’t ask me, I don’t know what’s up either. I am not a morning person, and typically, I’m in a bad mood every time I wake up.   
  
Well, not this time.   
  
Una kong tinignan yung couch, kase baka tulog pa siya, gigisingin ko sana. But he wasn’t there as I found a very neat couch, para ngang walang natulog don eh. where could he be?   
  
So I got up and stretched for a little bit tapos hinanap ko na sya sa buong room. I looked in the kitchen wala naman siya, pati sa bathroom, wala rin, sa terrace.. hmm. nothing. Where is he? Kukunin ko sana yung phone ko to call him when I found a note beside my bed. Wala naman ito dito kanina ah?   
  
‘I’ll meet you downstairs, don’t be late!’   
  
Yun lang yung nakalagay sa note. Why didn’t he wake me up? ??? That’s odd. I looked at the time right away. Shoot!! It’s quarter to ten, and the seminar is at 9!!!! :o >:(   
  
My phone rang. “hello? ???”   
  
“kakagising mo lang?”   
  
“huh? ???”   
  
“you just woke up?”   
  
“yeah! you didn’t wake me up, that’s why! and--- :-X”   
  
He cut me off. How rude! I was still talking you know? “okay.”   
  
“but still, you knew I was going to be late if I am not awaken! >:(”   
  
“that’s okay. just get here as fast as you can.”   
  
“what? ??? >:(”   
  
“basta, I’ll meet you down here okay?” then he hung up on me.   
  
Wait!! What!? Arrr!! That jerk!!! No wonder he didn’t wake me up, kase gusto nya ako malate!!! But why is his voice so mellow? Ahh!! Whatever, he still wants me to get in trouble! >:(   
  
So I took a shower and got ready as quickly as I could. grabe. I can’t believe I’m in a hurry right now! I didn’t even have time to fix my hair, or dry it at least!   
  
And as expected of course, I walked in the conference room with all eyes on me. but something is weird here, because these faces are not familiar to me. alright, what’s going on? Kase I found a group of people seated in a circle with a person in the middle. Hindi naman ganito yung set up ng seminar ah? ???   
  
“may I help you?” sinabi saken nung speaker.   
  
“uhm.. I’m not sure what this is, but I’m here for the business seminar? ???”   
  
“oh.. I’m sorry, this is not a business seminar.” It’s not? ??? tinignan ko naman yung room number, this is the same room we were in yesterday, and the other day.. and the day before that.. is there something going on here that I don’t know about? am I forgetting something here? ???   
  
“alright, thanks. I must be in the wrong place then.” Lumabas na ko ng room then I went straight to the informations desk to ask what the heck is going on here.   
  
After asking the lady in there, she looked in the schedule of events for the day and said, “sorry ma’am, there’s no scheduled business seminar listed here for today..”   
  
“huh? But I thought it was a week-long seminar? ???”   
  
“yes ma’am, but it was cancelled today.” Then she faced the monitor to me, “nagkaproblema po kase sa venue.” Ganun?   
  
I just gave her a weird stare. “so you mean to say..” I paused, I realized this person wouldn’t care to know what goes around here. ::) “nevermind, thanks anyway.” Then I turned around to go back to the room. And just when I was about to head to the elevator, may tumabi sakin.   
  
“hey, you made it.” alright, the jerk's here. It’s him. >:(   
  
“YOU! >:(” I yelled out, then I pointed him, “why didn’t you tell me the seminar’s cancelled for today? I had to hurry down here so I could make it in only to find out it was cancelled?! >:( >:( >:(” I continued talking, “look at me, I look like sh1t right now, my hair isn’t blow-dried, I have no make-up on and my clothes ar---”   
  
“you look fine, Iris. :)” What!? and what's with that look in his face?? ??? “you look just fine.”   
  
“what are you talking about? do you even hear what you’re saying? Are you trying to be funny on me? Bulag ka ba? tignan mo ako. I'm a big mess!!! >:(”   
  
He looked at me all over. Why’s he doing that? “no you don’t.” then he smiled at me, “mas maganda ka pala pag wala kang make-up. :)”   
  
Okay, kanina I was so certain I’d be angry when I see him, but now… but now…   
  
I’m suddenly not.   
  
Why am I not mad at him? I mean, I should be, shouldn’t I? ???   
  
“so, what were you trying to do? Set me for something or what? ??? >:(” I placed my hands on my waist and stood as firmly as I could. “and why are you dressed like that? ???” he was wearing a white polo shirt with jeans…. And slippers! I just noticed, hindi siya naka-suit today. Whoa, wait a minute.. This is the first time I’ve seen him not wearing those boring and dull outfits!? ::) ??? And this is definitely the first time I’ve seen his toes! First time, kase kahit nasa room kame, naka-socks siya eh. Ano bang meron? ???   
  
“you like it? :)” why is he being weird? “wala lang, I just thought.. since today’s seminar is cancelled… :-\”   
  
“what? you thought what? ???” yeah, what was he thinking? “wait, you knew about the seminar being cancelled today? ???” err!! This schmuck’s got all this planned! >:(   
  
He nodded. “oo, diba sinabi kahapon?” yeah? I tried to think back to yesterday, pero I don’t remember hearing about it. “hindi ka siguro nakikinig. ::) 8)”   
  
Ohh.. yeah! Now I remember. Sinabi nga nung speaker kahapon before we left, today’s event is cancelled due a misunderstanding in setting up the venue! Stupid Iris!! Arrgghh I feel so embarrassed tuloy! “ano ka, nakikinig ako noh!?”   
  
“eh bakit hindi mo alam na walang seminar ngayon? ??? ::)”   
  
“ewan ko!”   
  
“sus, nag-uulyanin ka na ata eh. :D” ano? ???   
  
Tumawa lang siya. Is he insulting me with that laugh? “Whatever. I’m gonna go back to the room and get back to my sleep.” I turned my back on him and started walking to the elevator. Just when the elevator door opened..   
  
He grabbed me by the arm and said.. “sandali.” I looked at his hand that is hooked to my arm.   
  
“what? ???”   
  
“since we have the rest of the day.. I was thinking..” he began stuttering. Omg, look at this guy!! :D “la..la..l.l..labas tayo? ??? :-\” sinabi nya yun with hesitation pa ha.   
  
“la-bas? ???” I repeated what he just said because I didn’t understand what he meant by that. I mean yeah I know what ‘labas’ means, but.. oh what the heck, I have no idea what he’s talking about at all!   
  
“I mean, if it’s okay with you, let’s take a tour of the city.. diba kase ever since we got here, hindi naman tayo nakalabas ng hotel na to? I heard there are a lot of nice places here you might want to see and take pictures of.. :)”   
  
“I thought we’re not supposed to do that until next week?”   
  
“wala naman tayong gagawin ngayon, so might as well make the rest of the day useful.” You know what, he does have a point.. instead of just moping around that room the whole day, might as well make use of the free day, right? ::) ???   
  
He led me to the door, and by the way, his hand is still hooked to my arm. I don’t understand why that is, in all honesty. “ang sabi ng receptionist..” he took out a piece of paper from his pocket and showed me a tourist guide of the city. “maraming maganda dito, we could visit and take pictures.. so ano?” he looked at me, “what do you think? ??? :-\”   
  
Tinaasan ko siya ng kilay. “you’re going to a tour with me?” is he really going to?   
  
“yeah..” he raised both his eyebrows tapos binalik nya yung paper sa pocket nya. “And then afterwards we could watch the sunset.. :)”   
  
Talaga lang ha? “where? ??? By the window? ??? >:(” isn't that what he told me to do yesterday!? >:(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“no, by the beach.. ;)” I stood there totally clueless of what's happening to him. Why's he being nice to me all of a sudden??   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Huh? :o ??? ohh noo?! Hold up!! Is he doing what I think he’s doing? ???   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Did he just ask me out? ???   
  
  
  
  
  
  
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Morning after the “sinigang-na-pork” night. ;D   
  
  
  
  
Maaga ako nagising ngayon. Mahirap palang matulog sa couch, kase hindi ka makagalaw. I’m not saying na hindi ako nakatulog, dahil sa katunayan nga, mahimbing ang tulog ko kagabi. Don’t ask me, dahil pati ako nagtataka. I mean, simula ng mawala si Tricia, I never had a good night sleep. Lagi ko kasi siyang naiisip. At lagi rin akong malungkot. :-[   
  
This was I for three years… three long years… :-[ :-\   
  
And I thought I was going to be like this forever.. I actually pictured myself for the next ten years still longing for Tricia..   
  
Well, I am.. but not as strongly as I used to. Bakit ganon? ??? :-\   
  
..until last night. Well, apparently, last night changed the whole way of my thinking. Nung narinig ko si Iris na sinabing mamamatay siya kapag hindi siya nakakain, kahit na alam kong she didn’t mean it that way at alam kong nagiinarte lang siya, iba ang dating sakin. It was almost as if Tricia was saying it.. and I felt really bad. Kaya nga nagmadali akong bilhan siya ng sinigang na “pork” nya eh, even though I had no idea where to get it. It was like taking orders from a real Princess. Well.. she is a Princess… And Tricia was a Princess.   
  
Hindi ko alam kung bakit ako nagkakaganito simula nung dumating si Iris.. pakiramdam ko may nagbago saken.. I mean, alam kong maraming tao ang nasusungitan sakin, or how I carry myself might seem too strong for some people, at hindi ako talaga palangiti since.. you know.. dun ko naramdaman ang pagbabago saken. Sinigang na pork eh noh. Hay, Iris talaga. ::)   
  
I suddenly find myself smiling here and there..   
  
Which I never did, for the longest time.   
  
Ewan ko. Alam kong sinabi ko na hindi sya yung tipo kong babae dahil nga sa ugali nya, at napatunayan ko naman yun. Hindi nga sya ang tipo kong babae… pero kahit na ganun na ang inisip ko sa kanya, parang may nagsasabi sakin na she’s not what I think she is.   
  
Masungit siya, she talks non-stop, her clothes are everywhere, she’s a major whiner.. and she is a brat, a very spoiled-rotten brat. And I thought to myself, there’s no way she and I would get along even for just one day. But why do I find myself smiling at the thought of these things? :) ???   
  
Katulad ngayon, nakangiti na naman ako. Tinitignan ko kase sya habang tulog sya eh. Sabi ko sa inyo eh, she looks so different when she’s asleep, para siyang batang walang kamuwang-muwang sa mundo. Who would think that someone who sleeps quietly as this is actually a monster when she’s awake? ::) ???   
  
Ano ka ba Jeremy! Ano bang ginagawa mo? Why are you looking at her like that? Hindi mo siya dapat magustohan, dahil hindi mo siya gusto.   
  
Hindi ba talaga? ???   
  
No. of course not.   
  
Hay nako, masisira lang ang ulo ko. Hindi ko naman talaga siya gusto eh. I don’t want to break my promise to Tricia. Nakikipagkaibigan lang ako sa kanya.. dahil tama naman siya eh, we fight over petty things, at hindi naman kame mga bata para lagi na lang nagaaway.   
  
Wala naman sigurong masama kung makipagkaibigan ako diba? and I’m sure she won’t mind either. We’re not gonna lose anything if we stop the fighting and become friends. Actually, magiging masaya pa nga ako nun eh..   
  
Since maaga pa naman, exactly 6 am, naghanda na ako para lumabas. When I remembered, na wala palang seminar ngayon dahil nagkaproblema sa venue. Apparently, the conference room was reserved prior to the seminar week and they weren’t able to sort it out. Okay na rin yun, boring naman kase kapag nasa seminar kame eh. Alam ko na naman lahat yun, technically, I’m just here for Iris, she needs the training. Maliban sa boring yung speaker at yung mga pinaguusapan namin dun, nakakabwiset din tignan yung Randy na yun na panay ang lapit at tabi kay Iris! >:( :-\   
  
Oh! Baka iniisip nyo na nagseselos ako ha ::)! Ngayon pa lang, sinasabi ko na sa inyo na hindi. Nakakairita lang kase nakakadistract. I mean, we were told not to mix business with pleasure, and he should know it, since he comes from a very big company. Isa yun sa mga policies ng mga kumpanya eh.   
  
Anyway, while I was taking a shower, I had an idea for today. I certainly don’t want to waste a free day, kaya naisip ko, naisip ko lang naman ha.. maybe we could take a tour of the city.. diba? I mean, wala namang harm yun.   
  
Kaso, ilang beses ko na siyang ginigising, eh hindi naman magising gising. Hanep naman sa pagkamantika matulog itong babae na to! Akalain nyong halos ibalibag ko na siya sa kama para gisingin, hindi parin nagising!? ??? Eh samantalang ako, tawagin lang ako sa pangalan ko, gising na ko eh. Oh well, sayang, yayaain ko pa naman sana siyang magbreakfast sa baba.   
  
Di bale na lang..   
  
I sat by the bed “’Ris.. wake up..” I tried waking her up one more time.   
  
She hid underneath the sheets, “mmmffshfsmfmm” ano daw?   
  
Hay nako, this is probably my third time waking her up or was it fourth? Wag na nga. Kung kelan naman ako nasa mood para lumabas, saka naman ganito. Sa bagay, okay lang, sanay naman akong kumain mag-isa. Ako na lang ang baba para magbreakfast.   
  
Iniwanan ko na lang siya ng note.   
  
‘I’ll meet you downstairs! Don’t be late!’   
  
at lumabas na ko sa kwarto namin. Nasa elevator na ko ng maalala ko yung sinulat ko. Teka sandali, I’ll meet her downstairs? ??? Bakit? don’t be late? ??? For what? ???   
  
“excuse me, Miss..” I went to the informations desk to ask something. “do you, by any chance have a tourist guide?”   
  
“yes sir..” binigay nya sakin yung guide, “here you go sir.”   
  
“salamat.”   
  
Hindi naman siguro siya aabutin ng tanghali para magising diba?   
  
I hope.   
  
  
2 and a half hours later.   
  
Well, ano nga bang ginawa ko for the past 2 - 3 hours? Naglakad-lakad ako sa labas, tapos nagbreakfast lang. tapos, ayun na. malapit ng mag 10 ah. Sandali nga, matawagan na ang mahal na prinsesa! ::) :D   
  
“hello?”   
  
“kakagising mo lang?”   
  
“huh?” naku, tulog pa ata ito eh! hindi nakakaintindi!   
  
“you just woke up?”   
  
“yeah! You didn’t wake me up, that’s why! and---”   
  
Eeepp eeppp epp! Tignan mo to, kakagising lang, wala ng preno ang bibig kagad? ??? ;D “okay” ang sabi ko na lang.   
  
She was quiet for a couple of seconds, and mind you, bihira lang ito mangyare! :o ;D“but still, you knew I was going to be late if I am not awaken!” ah. nabasa na nya yung note.   
  
“that’s okay, just get here as fast as you can.” Hala? Did I really say that?   
  
“what?” bingi ba to? Hindi ba nya narinig yung sinabi ko? ayoko ng ulitin yun no.   
  
Kaya ito na lang ang sinabi ko, “basta. I’ll meet you down here okay?” tapos binaba ko na yung phone. Siempre, alam kong nagtataka yun eh, baka magtanong pa ng kung ano ano, kaya binaba ko na lang.   
  
So ayun nga, like I told her, hihintayin ko siya dito sa baba. Pero sino bang niloko ko? si president Bush? As if naman dadating yun in a speed of light no? kaya naman naglibot libot muna ko, kahit hindi ko naman talaga hilig. Eh kesa naman masunog yung pwet ko dun sa lobby sa kakahintay diba?   
  
And I was right, after 40 minutes, teka? 40 minutes? Whoa. That’s a first. dumating na siya. Actually lumabas siya from the conference room, I’m sensing hindi nya alam na cancelled ang seminar ngayon. Tsk tsk. Ayan, sabi na nga ba eh, hindi nakikinig. Kasi naman si Randy kung ano anong tinatanong sa kanya kapag nasa seminar kame, at siya naman, ayun. Sumasagot!!   
  
She went to the informations desk, and after a while, naglakad siya papuntang elevator. Kaya naman, tinabihan ko na siya.   
  
“hey, you made it. :)”   
  
Nagulat ata siya saken. pero nung humarap siya.. whoa!!!   
  
“YOU! :o >:(” napasigaw siya, “why didn’t you tell me the seminar’s cancelled for today? I had to hurry down here so I could make it in only to find out it was cancelled?! >:( >:( >:( look at me, I look like sh1t right now, my hair isn’t blow-dried, I have no make-up on and my clothes ar---” hindi ko na siya pinatapos sa kung ano pa ang sasabihin nya, kase naman.. nagmomodel na dito sa lobby! Yung mga tao baka akalaing retarded pa sya. Haha.   
  
So I just smiled at her. “you look fine, Iris. :)” at siempre, dahil sa hindi ko nga nature ang magbigay ng compliments sa kanya, she gave me a puzzled look which I expected. “you look just fine.”   
  
“what are you talking about? do you even hear what you’re saying? Are you trying to be funny on me? Bulag ka ba? tignan mo ako. I'm a big mess!!! >:(” big mess? Ang mga babae talaga, ang hilig mag-exaggerate!   
  
“no you don’t.” hindi naman talaga eh. sa katunayan nga, mas maganda sya ng ganyan ang ayos.. all natural, ika nga nila. “mas maganda ka pala pag wala kang make-up. :)” napansin ko, ngayon ko lang pala siya nakita na walang make-up. I actually like it.   
  
Eh bigla namang magbago yung muka nya pagkasabi ko non, medyo nagblush pa nga eh, sus, if I know, kinikilig na to ngayon! “so, what were you trying to do? Set me for something or what? ??? >:(” she raised her chin up. Ah sus!! “and why are you dressed like that? ???” hala, sabi na nga ba eh, mapapansin nya yung suot ko. oo, nakajeans lang ako at naka white na polo ngayon. Bakit ba? I thought of a change.. it’s not bad, is it? Gwapo naman ako eh. diba?   
  
“you like it? :)” tinignan ko siya. “wala lang, I just thought.. since today’s seminar is cancelled… :-\”   
  
“what? you thought what? ??? wait, you knew about the seminar being cancelled today? ???”   
  
I nodded. “oo, diba sinabi kahapon? hindi ka siguro nakikinig. ::) 8)”   
  
Napaisip sya ng konti, tapos sabay taas ng kilay, “ano ka, nakikinig ako noh!?”   
  
“eh bakit hindi mo alam na walang seminar ngayon? ??? ::)”   
  
“ewan ko!”   
  
“sus, nag-uulyanin ka na ata eh. :D”   
  
Tumawa ako, pero siya hindi. Okay. joke lang yun, hindi nya ata na-gets. “Whatever. I’m gonna go back to the room and get back to my sleep.” then she turned around and walked towards the elevator.   
  
Tignan mo to, iwanan daw ba ako dito? “sandali.” hinabol siya at hinawakan siya sa braso nya. At siya naman, natural napatingin sa braso nya na hawak ko.   
  
“what? ???”   
  
“since we have the rest of the day.. I was thinking..” hala, why am I having hesitation? “la..la..l.l..labas tayo? ??? :-\”   
  
“la-bas? ???”   
  
“I mean, if it’s okay with you, let’s take a tour of the city.. diba kase ever since we got here, hindi naman tayo nakalabas ng hotel na to? I heard there are a lot of nice places here you might want to see and take pictures of.. :)”   
  
“I thought we’re not supposed to do that until next week?”   
  
“wala naman tayong gagawin ngayon, so might as well make the rest of the day useful.” hindi ako makapaniwalang nahihirapan ako ngayon sa pag-aya sa kanyang lumabas. We walked towards the door at nilabas ko yung tourist guide na hiningi ko sa receptionist kanina. Nagtataka siguro siya kung bakit ako mabait, wala kase siyang imik eh. “ang sabi ng receptionist.. maraming maganda dito, we could visit and take pictures.. so ano?” tinignan ko sya. “what do you think? ??? :-\” pumayag ka, ayokong mapahiyaaa!!   
  
Tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. “you’re going to a tour with me?”   
  
“yeah.. And then afterwards we could watch the sunset.. :)”   
  
“where? ??? By the window? ??? >:(” ang pilosopo naman nito eh! pinahihirapan ako!   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“no, by the beach.. ;)”   
  
Her eyes widened, parang batang pinagbigyan, alam nyo yun? ::) beach lang pala ang katapat nito eh! 8) alright! Hehe. But she didn’t give an answer, well, she’s probably thinking what the hell is going on here dahil sa hindi nga kame magkasundo tapos yayayain ko siyang lumabas?   
  
“okay! ::)” huh? Wait.. she said okay? meaning sasama sya sakin? “hello?! Are we gonna go now, or what? ???”   
  
“huh? ???.. ohh okay, tara.” Yun na lang ang nasabi ko. pano kase, nagpakahirap pa ko, dahil ako akala ko hindi siya papayag. Yun pala, banggitin ko lang ang beach, sasama sya kagad.   
  
“oh wait..” tumigil siyang maglakad. “I need to change my outfit.”   
  
“ano?” I can’t believe her. Okay naman na yung suot nya eh!   
  
“don’t worry, I’m not gonna wear a swimsuit.. I’m just gonna change into something more comfortable. ;)” Ah okay.   
  
“oh sige bilisan mo.”   
  
Umakyat na sya sa room namin, at gaya nga ng sinabi ko, binilisan nga nya. And then there goes our day..   
  
Marami kaming napuntahan. Sa museum, kahit hindi ako mahilig sa mga ganito, eh nagenjoy pa rin ako. siya din, ganun. Kitang kita sa face nya eh. tapos nagpunta kame sa isang fruit plantation. Tuwang tuwa naman siya, kase,ewan ko dyan, ngayon lang daw siya nakakita ng mga ibang prutas dito. Tapos we played golf. She’s not bad at all. Actually, she plays like a pro pa nga eh.   
  
Ang kulit nya, grabe, parang may kasama akong 10-year old na bata. I didn’t know we had so many things in common.. pareho kame ng hilig, pareho kame ng trip.. habang nagto-tour kame, wala na kameng ginawa kundi magtawanan at magkulitan. I had fun.. we had fun. :)   
  
And right now, nandito kame sa isang ice cream parlor, malapit sa beach..   
  
“so.. what’s your favorite ice cream? ??? :D” she asked me. habang nasa pila kame para bumili.   
  
“uhmm..” ano nga bang favorite ice cream ko? “vanilla.” Hindi naman kase ako madalas kumain ng ice cream eh, malay ko ba sa ibang flavors.   
  
“no kidding?! :o :D” hindi pa ata siya makapaniwala ah? “me too! :D” pareho kame? “two vanilla ice creams, please :)” sinabi nya dun sa tindera.   
  
“talaga? ???” ako ngayon ang hindi makapaniwala. Come on, a girl who likes adventures like Iris, malamang maraming alam na flavors ng ice cream.. tapos vanilla? ???   
  
“yeah, I like it plain.. no mix of anything.” Tapos she took a bite of her ice cream. “mmm. Yummy. :D” Tapos ngumiti sya.   
  
There’s really something about that smile of hers na kapag ngumiti siya hindi ko maalis yung tingin ko. ewan ko kung bakit, I don’t see anything special about it. Siguro kase kapag ngumingiti sya, nakikita ko yung dimples nya sa ilalim ng mga mata nya, over her cheek bones. Gets nyo ba? Basta, it looks different. Beautiful different. :)   
  
Tignan nyo to, kung kumain ng ice cream, parang akala mo mauubusan sya. Just a few moments ago marami pa yung nasa cone nya eh, tapos ngayon, malapit ng maubos? ??? ::) Eh ako nga wala pa sa kalahati eh. Unbelievable. “hinay hinay lang, baka mabilaukan na bigla. ;D”   
  
She just made a face. “ohh! 5:30 na!” she stood up and took my hand, “let’s go, the sun is about to set. :D” At hinila nya ko palabas ng ice cream parlor.   
  
The beach is just across the ice cream place. Nagmamadali talaga sya para maabutan yung sunset, imagine nyo, tumatakbo siya sa kalsada na hila hila ako? Eh kung masagasaan kame? Sira ulo talaga itong babaeng to.   
  
Nung nakarating na kame sa beach, agad nyang tinanggal yung tsinelas nya at tumakbo sa buhangin…. Parang… parang si Tricia.. ganyan na ganyan siya, laging sabik sa beach.. sa buhangin, at sa dagat.. :-\ :-[   
  
“Stiffie!! Let’s gooo!! :D” ang sigaw naman nya habang tumatakbo siya. May pa-wave-wave pa syang nalalaman ha., at walang pakialam sa mga tao sa paligid nya. Well, she sure is having fun. “woohooo!! :D :D :D”   
  
Ako naman. Eto, nakaupo lang dito. Call me kill joy, pero hindi ko talaga hilig ito eh. kahit naman na noon pa. ano bang meron sa beach na espesyal, eh yun at yun lang din naman ang nakikita mo?   
  
“hoy ano ka ba? ???” hindi ko napansin, she was right in front of me. tumango lang ako at siya naman, umupo sa tabi ko. “are you okay? ???” tinanong nya ko, pero nakatingin siya sa dagat.   
  
“oo naman. :-\”   
  
“eh why are you quiet? ???” she asked. “aren’t you enjoying the beach? The sand.. the sun..? ???”   
  
Pano ko naman maeenjoy, eh all I could think of when I see these things is Tricia, and how much I miss her.. lalo lang ako nalulungkot. :-[ “nageenjoy din.” I said softly, “I just don’t like thinking.. that’s all. :-[”   
  
“thinking about what? ???” ano bayan, ang hina na nga ng pagkakasabi ko eh, narinig pa pala nya?   
  
“wala.. mga bagay-bagay. :-[”   
  
“like what? ???” humarap siya saken, “don’t tell me it’s about work? ??? ::)” I just looked at her. “oh my God, Jeremy.. do you even know what fun is at all? ??? ::)”   
  
“siempre naman alam ko… :-[”   
  
“yun naman pala eh, why do you always have to stress yourself then?” hindi naman ako nasestress dahil sa trabaho no... okay maybe I am. “you’re young, you should enjoy your life, not dread it. Sige ka, when you get old, you’re gonna look back to this and say..” she mimicked an old man’s voice, “I should’ve enjoyed my youth..” natawa naman ako dun sa ginawa nya. Komidyante din pala siya noh?   
  
“’Ris.. :) :-\” tinignan lang nya ko na parang nagtataka siya sa tinawag ko sa kanya. ewan ko, pero kase mas gusto kong tawagin siyang ‘Ris’ wala lang, para unique. “pasensya nga pala kung lagi kitang nasusungitan ha.. :-\ ”   
  
From a very curious stare, nagsmile sya when she heard my apology. “okay lang. ako din, pasensya ka na ha for my behavior ha, it’s just that I don’t really like being bossed around.”   
  
“hindi naman ako bossy ha? ???” hindi naman diba?   
  
“hindi bossy? ???” Tumawa siya ng malakas, “yeah right!! :D” tapos binalik nya ulit yung tingin nya sa malayo.   
  
“hindi naman talaga ha. I just mean business kaya paminsan napagkakamalang bossy ako.”   
  
“that’s why you’re boring, and dull.. ::)” boring ako? “you’re too business-minded and that’s not good.”   
  
“how so? ???”   
  
“ano ka ba? girls don’t like guys like that noh?! Boring yun! walang fun!”   
  
“nasanay lang ako siguro ng ganon… :-\”   
  
“you know Jeremy..” humarap siya ulit saken. “you’re a deep person.”   
  
Ano daw? “what? ???”   
  
“you wanna know why I call you ‘Stiffie’ ? ???” oo nga bakit nga ba?? ???   
  
“bakit?” tumigin naman ako sa kanya.   
  
“because you’re no fun. You’re so serious all the time.” Ang sama ha! I’m no fun daw? “you’re a pleasant person.. but you know what I think of you? you’re this guy who is surrounded with huge and impenetrable walls..”   
  
Hindi ko siya maintindihan. “what are you talking about? ???”   
  
“I don’t know, you just seem to have a very dark aura. And whatever’s causing that, let it come out, Jer. Don’t fight it. ;) :-\” Nung sinabi nya yun, bumigat bigla yung pakiramdam ko. alam nya yung nararamdaman ko? because she said it like she knows what I’m going through.. at bihira lang ang mga taong nakakakita ng totoong ako.. at sa totoo lang, siya ang unang taong nagsabi nito saken ng hindi alam kung anong pinagdadaanan ko. “enjoy, Jer.. Enjoy ka.. :)” her eyes were filled with concern.   
  
I looked at her and smiled. I’m smiling again.   
  
ano bayan, para naman akong eng-eng dito, smiling out of nowhere.   
  
“oh look!! :D” tinuro nya yung araw. “sunset na!! :D” yung ngiti nya oh, abot hanggang tenga.. “it’s so beautiful!”   
  
“yeah.. it’s perfect.. :)” yun na lang ang lumabas sa bibig ko.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Uhmm… Jeremy… ???” she waved her hand in front of my face.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“the sunset is over there… ??? ::)” sabay turo nya sa dagat. ooopppss. :-X   
  
  
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“the sunset is over there… ??? ::)” sabay turo nya sa dagat. ooopppss. :-X   
  
Jusko naman! Badtrip nahuli pa nya kong nakatingin sa kanya! pucha gusto kong batukan ang sarili ko ngayon talaga. :-X   
  
“ah. oo nga. :-X” Yun na lang ang nasabi ko.   
  
She crossed her arms and raised her eyebrow. “why are you looking at me then? ??? ::)” hala ano ba to!?   
  
“huh? ??? .. ano.. uhmm.. :-\” think fast, Jeremy! “kase ano.. uhh.. :-\”   
  
“kase what? ???”   
  
“ano.. may.. may dumi ka sa mukha. :P” How lame!?   
  
“really? :o Where? ???” ano ba Iris, sakyan mo na lang kase yung sinasabi ko eh!! pahihirapan mo pa ko nyan eh! >:( ;D   
  
“ayan oh.” kaya hinawakan ko na lang yung pisngi nya. Syet. ang lambot. :D   
  
“oh, thanks. :)” Nagsmile siya saken na parang natataka sa kung anong kaabnormalan ang ginagawa ko ngayon. at binalik nya yung tingin nya sa sunset.   
  
“gu…gusto mo ng drinks? ??? :-\”   
  
she looked at me na parang hindi siya makapaniwala na nag-ooffer ako sa kanya. “oh sure.”   
  
Kaya pumunta muna ako sa may bar para kunan siya drink. Gusto nya ng margarita diba, kaya yun yung kinuha ko. – virgin margarita nga lang. ;D hehe. Di ko siya bibilan ng alcohol ever, baka kung ano pang mangyare dito eh, kargo de konsensya ko pa ::). Ako naman, isang bote ng beer ang kinuha ko. Di naman kase ako madaling malasing kaya ayos lang. isa lang naman.   
  
Pagkatapos kong magbayad, bumalik ako kung nasan siya nakaupo at pinapanuod yung sunset. Binigay ko na sa kanya yung drink nya and she just smiled like she was saying thank you.   
  
Tahimik kame for a few minutes, hanggang sa lumubog na yung araw.   
  
So I decided to break the silence. “are you always like this? ???”   
  
“like what? ???”   
  
“like this.. tahimik kapag sunset.” Napansin ko kase na sobrang namamangha sya sa sunset eh.   
  
“uhmm.. yeah, pretty much..” ganun?? Bakit kaya?   
  
“uhm.. can I ask you something?”   
  
she took a sip of her drink, at siguro.. sigurado pala na napansin nya na virgin drink yun. Sumimangot lang sya saken ng pabiro “sure, ask away. You’ve already asked a question, anyway. ::)” She rolled her eyes in playful manner as she buried her feet in the sand.   
  
Oo nga naman. “why the sunset?”   
  
“what do you mean why the sunset? ???”   
  
“ewan ko, halos lahat kase ng taong kilala ko, mas gusto nila yung sunrise eh.” well, she gave me a puzzled look. Bakit ba? eh totoo naman.   
  
“I’m not a morning person 8), and usually..” napaisip naman siya, “well, usually.. :-\” she was quiet for a bit. “actually, I don’t know. ???”   
  
Ano daw? Tama ba yung narinig ko? “hindi mo alam? ???” that's odd?   
  
She shrugged her shoulders, “that’s a question I really don’t have the answer to. Basta ang alam ko lang, everytime I see the sunset, I feel peaceful :) .. like, I’m retiring for the day.. you know what I mean? ???” she looked at me. Sa totoo lang, hindi ko maintindihan yung sinasabi nya. “I get tired with my everyday activities.. :-\ and the only time I know I can rest is when the sun sets… it’s a silly thing, I know. When I was little girl, I would look forward to the sunset.. kase meaning nun, no more extra-curricular-mostly-based-on-business activities for me. :-\ :)” and then she made an annoying face. “my mom told me so when I was little.” then she mimicked her mom’s voice, at nilagay nya sa bewang nya yung mga kamay nya. “Princess, when the sun sets, you may rest. ::)” Then she spoke with her normal voice, “I was worse than a robot you know? :-\ At least a robot gets freakin’ charged when it’s low in battery.. me? man.. I actually got trained to maintain a smile on my face. >:(”   
  
After hearing what she had said, medyo naliwanagan ako sa ibig nyang sabihin, and truth be told, alam ko yung ganong pakiramdam.. yung gagawa ka ng isang bagay na hindi mo naman gusto.   
  
“ahh…” I slightly nodded my head dahil nga sa nag-aagree ako sa kanya. “bakit, lagi ka bang pagod? ??? Eh…” tinignan ko siya mula ulo hanggang legs, kasi diba yung paa nya nasa buhangin. “muka namang relaxed ka lagi eh.. I mean, you seem like the person who never worries.. ::)”   
  
“yeah. True.” See. “I seem to be that kind of person. :-\” She added, “but I’m not.” Huh?   
  
“ano? ???”   
  
she sighed. “everybody thinks I’m this rich, spoiled brat Bellaire Barbie who gets everything she wants without even asking for any of it..” tapos nilaro nya yung sand, “I do get what I want, and that’s what I hate. :-\” Ganun? Bakit ganon? Parang may hindi tama dun sa sinabi nya? Sino bang taong hindi matutuwang makuha ang lahat ng gusto nya diba? Buti pa nga siya eh nagagawa nya lahat ng gusto nyang gawin. Samantalang ako? Sus. In my dreams.   
  
“what do you mean? ???” ang tanong ko naman sa kanya. “don’t you like that? ???”   
  
umiling siya, “no. of course not. >:(” Tinuloy pa rin nya yung paglalaro nya sa buhangin, but this time, may hawak na siyang stick na napulot nya kanina habang nagtatatakbo siya at ginamit nya itong pang-drawing ng kung ano ano sa sand. “because that means I have to do what my mom wants me to do.. you know, I do this, she gives me that kind of thing.”   
  
“so is that why you said you hate being bossed around? ???”   
  
“oo. Kase all my life, or at least as far as I remember, I’ve been following orders from my mom. Ngayon lang ako nakastand up sa kanya and lay my conditions before doing what she wants eh..”   
  
Naiintindihan ko siya, dahil pareho kame ng situation..may konting pagkakaiba nga lang. dahil siya nakukuha nya ang gusto nya, at ako? I never get what I truly want. Kahit naman na nood pang bata ako. oo pasaway ako nun katulad ni Iris, pero underneath that exterior, robot parin ako pagdating sa daddy ko. baligtad pala kame eh, siya ngayon lang siya nagkaron ng freedom kahit konti, at ako naman, ngayon ako nagkulong. Dati kase pasaway ako masyado.   
  
“I understand what you’re saying.. :-\”   
  
“you do? ???” nag-nod ako. "how come?"   
  
“I’ve lived under strict rules ever since I was able to speak and understand.”   
  
“I can tell. ::)”   
  
“hindi nga ako marunong humindi pagdating sa daddy ko eh. Yes dad lang ang alam ko..” ang bigat tuloy ng pakiramdam ko. :-[ I just realized that I haven’t really talked about this to anybody. Ngayon lang. at sa hindi ko maipaliwanag na dahilan, sa kanya pa, kay Iris na ang tingin ko ay walang alam kung hindi ang magshopping at kung ano pang kaartehan ang meron dito sa mundo.   
  
“I didn’t know we have the same shii— ” nagulat ako dun. Kaya napatingin ako sa kanya ng di-oras. And when she realized that I was doing that because of what she’s about to say, eto naman ang sinabi nya. “--stuff going on in our lives.” Buti naman hindi nya tinuloy. Hindi kase maganda sa babae ang nagsasabi ng bad words. “but unlike you, I was brave enough to lay down my conditions.. you know what I mean? ??? 8)”   
  
“lucky you.” Yun lang ang nasabi ko. Mabuti pa siya, matapang.   
  
“why couldn’t you do the same thing too?” bakit nga ba?   
  
“hindi pwede eh. :-\” Tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. Bukod naman kase sa hindi ko makahindi, ginagawa ko rin ito dahil kasama ito sa pangako ko kay Tricia – na magpapakatino ako at susunod ako sa daddy ko :-[. “it’s always been like that with my dad.”   
  
“you’re weird, ::)” tapos natawa siya ng konti, “you’re the only guy I know who couldn’t stand up on his own two feet. ;D 8)” Aba, at ininsulto pa ko? “I mean, don’t get me wrong, because between you and I, dapat ako ang nagcocomplain of not having a voice when it comes to what I want.. not you. you’re a guy, and guys have the say to almost everything.”   
  
Alam nyo, tama siya.   
  
“you know what I really hate? ???” she added. At ako naman, tumingin ako sa kanya. “I know what I want and I say what I want…”   
  
“and you hate that? ???”   
  
“hello? ??? I’m not done yet. Ikaw naman, singit ka ng singit eh! ::)” natawa ako dun. Tignan mo to, we’re having a serious one on one talk about our lives, tapos nagpapatawa pa. hay.. Iris talaga! ::)   
  
“sorry. Go ahead. ;D”   
  
At tinuloy naman nya yung sinasabi nya. “so yeah, as I was saying, I know what I want and I say what I want.. but I never get it. :-\” Huh?! That’s odd? Judging how she carries herself at sya na rin naman mismo ang nagsabi na spoiled siya eh.. pati, sinabi din nya na kapalit ng gusto nya yung gusto ng mommy nya. “never do, well.. like I said, not until I say yes to my mom first. in the beginning I thought it’s useless that I get to have my own say when I have to compromise first and all that stuff, but then I thought it’s better than getting nothing at all, right? ??? :-\”   
  
“yeah I guess.” Maswerte pa nga siya eh.   
  
“yeah, kung ikaw, you live by the rules, ako I live by conditions and compromises. 8)” She slightly smiled then, “not good, by the way. it sucks because everything must always go under negotiation. :-[”   
  
Still.. I admire her for a say. Kahit she ends up doing what she’s told, at least may nagagawa sya na gusto nya.. kahit konti. And plus, wala namang magulang ang gustong ipahamak ang anak diba? yan ang sabi ni mommy saken, kaya nga buo ang paniwala ko na para sa ikabubuti ko yung lahat ng paghihigpit ng daddy ko.   
  
Kahit na medyo nakakahiya dahil nga sa kalalaki kong tao, sunud-sunuran ako sa tatay ko, um-oo na lang ako. tama naman kase. “yea, precisely.”   
  
“have you always been like this with your dad? ???” she asked, “I mean, lagi kang oo lang sa daddy mo?”   
  
Napaisip ako non, dating back to when I was young, mula nga sa magkaisip ako, yes dad lang ang alam ko. basta ang natatandaan ko lang nun, sa school lang talaga ako nakakahinga ng maayos. Kaya nga makulit ako pag nasa school eh. I don’t get to do that at home.   
  
Narealize ko na medyo matagal na pala akong nakatunganga kaya sinagot ko yung tanong nya. “oo, in fact, everyone at home is scared of my dad.” Nung sinabi ko yun, parang naliwanagan na siya dun sa tanong nya.   
  
“what about your mom? Is she like that too?”   
  
Si mommy? Nako, walang ni isang bakat ng kabagsikan ang mommy ko. sa katunayan nga, sobrang pasensyosa sya eh.. maraming mali sa relationship nila ni daddy, pero tignan nyo, magkasama pa rin sila. All because of my mom. “hindi.. my mom’s really nice. We get along perfectly. She’s the only one who maintains our home.. siya lang ang kakampi ko sa bahay.”   
  
“oh…you’re a mama’s boy pala. ;D” She grinned. Sabi na eh, pero okay lang, lahat naman ng tao yun ang iniisip. So what if I’m a mama’s boy? Hindi naman ako mama’s boy talaga, I just love my mom more. ;D Hehe.   
  
“eh ikaw? How’s your relationship with your parents? ???” pagkasabi ko nun, nag-iba bigla yung timpla nya. May sinabi ba ko? ???   
  
But then after a while, at pagkatapos nyang huminga ng pagkalalim-lalim, eh sinagot na nya yung tanong ko. “well, let’s see…” kinamot nya yung chin nya. aba, mukang mahaba at seryosong kwento ito ah? “I’ll start with my mom.” Tinanggal nya yung mga paa nya sa buhangin at inayos nya yung pagkakaupo nya. “my mom’s okay, but she nags like a crazy wife all the time. And like your dad, she’s a major control freak.. according to her, I do have to carry a good image at all times, meaning, I have to act a certain way.. you know? ??? ::)” actually, naiintindihan ko siya. “she wants to discipline me, and yet she buys me whatever I ask for, hence the title..” she did the quotation sign, “spoiled brat. I mean, I don’t deny it naman eh, I really am spoiled. 8)” Tumingin naman sya ngayon sa dagat. “Sometimes I don’t understand her, kase minsan she’s nice to me, tapos we act like we’re best friends pa nga eh, other times naman we’re so distant to each other.. and we fight a lot. ang sabi nga ni lola ko, we’re like cats and dogs eh. ::)” then she smiled. ang cute ng smile nya… “but don’t get me wrong, I do love her, I just don’t like how she makes me do things I don’t like or not in favor of.. because in the long run, we’re all that each other have.”   
  
Anong ibig nyang sabihin don? Ano yun? “and your dad? ???” ang tanong ko naman.   
  
At siya naman, napaharap siya sakin ng di-oras. Para bang may sinabi akong masama at napatingin siya sakin ng ganon.   
  
“oh.. I don’t have a father. :-\ >:(”   
  
“huh?” pano nangyare yun?   
  
“well, I suppose that I had one before.. but I never met the dude.” She said it calmly. “it doesn’t matter, I don’t even have any intentions of meeting him at all. >:(”   
  
“bakit naman? Aren’t you curious to know who he is? ???”   
  
“no, why would I be curious? ??? >:( he was never there for me anyway.. I don’t need him, never did. As a matter of fact, I hate him. >:(” tinignan ko lang siya nun. Nakakapagtaka naman dahil sinabi nya ang lahat ng yun ng diretso. “he left us when I was still a baby.. when I grew up I would always envy my friends because they had fathers.. and I didn’t. :-[” she looked down, “makulit ako eh, I never stopped bugging my mom about him until one day she told me the whole story.. the whole story that changed the way I see and think about him.” tapos nag-iba yung expression ng muka nya.. :-\   
  
“uhmm.. :-\” yun lang yung nasabi ko. hindi ko naman kase alam kung meron ba kong dapat sabihin o wala.   
  
Pero siya, tuloy tuloy pa rin ang pagkukwento nya.. “he wasn’t at all a good husband to my mom.. they always fought back then and one time, things got a little off hand, he hit my mom.. >:(” huminga sya ng malalim. Ah..kaya pala.. “so they got a divorce and that’s it.. I grew up without knowing who the other reason why I’m here at all. It’s not like I need him anyway, my mom provided me with everything I needed.. more than that pa nga eh.”   
  
Sa sinabi nyang yon, nakaramdam ako ng konting kaba.. kase naman, the whole time na magkasama kame, ngayon ko lang siya nakita na ganito ka seryoso, ni hindi nga ngumiti o tumawa man lang.. which tells me this is a sensitive side of her that I should no longer try to explore. :-\ :-[   
  
ang hirap palang mag-generate ng conversation, lalo na kapag wala ka talagang masabi.. so I just caressed her back.. you know, to comfort her. Muka kasing masyadong malalim itong pag-uusap namin ngayon eh. Hindi pala biro ang pinagdaanan nya.. no wonder why she has an attitude.   
  
Tumayo na ko non, and extended my hand to her. “let’s go.. :)”   
  
She took my hand pero bago yun, tinignan nya muna ako. “let’s go where?”   
  
“basta, ;)” I smiled at her.   
  
“where are we going? ???”   
  
“just trust me okay? :)” tingin ko talaga makakabuti sa kanya kung dalin ko siya sa lugar na iniisip ko ngayon. I mean, after all, nakatulong din yun saken. dito ko nilabas lahat ng galit at sama ng loob ko sa mundo noon eh.. nung nawala si Tricia. :-[   
  
I grabbed her hand and walked towards the other side of the resort.. paborito ko itong lugar na to dito sa resort nila eh.. dahil na bukod sa private siya, walang tao, walang ingay and most of all..   
  
“wow!!! :D” see? told ya.   
  
“you like it? ??? ;)”   
  
“what do you mean do I like it? ???” nanlaki yung mga mata nya. “I love it! :D It’s so beautiful.. and peaceful..”   
  
Talagang maganda tong lugar na to, it’s an overview of the whole beach. At dahil sa gabi na ngayon, kitang kita mo yung mga iba’t ibang klase ng ilaw sa all over.. para kang nasa langit, looking down on God’s creation ang dating. Basta, maganda talaga.   
  
“how did you know about this place? ???”   
  
“simple lang, pero hindi na yun importante. What’s important right now is that you find this place beautiful.. exactly the way I found it, the first time I was here. :)”   
  
“thanks for taking me up here, made me feel better. :)”   
  
I looked at her and she looked at me, too. Her eyes were a little teary, bakas na bakas yung kalungkutan, pati na rin yung disappointment…   
  
Ngayon ko lang napansin, hindi lang pala ang mga mata nya yung maganda sa muka nya.. but her lips.. her lips that make me want to touch and kiss them…   
  
How come I’m feeling so weird right now? ??? :-[ I’ve never been so drawn like this.. hindi naman ako lasing, isang bote lang naman ng beer ang nainom ko.. kakaiba ang pakiramdam ko, parang wala akong nakikita sa paligid ko kung hindi siya at kung gano ko sya gustong halikan ngayon.   
  
Well, sabi nga nila, what the mind tells, the body does..   
  
"uhmm.. Iris.."   
  
"hm? ???"   
  
I don’t know how it happened, because no matter how hard I tried not to do it…   
  
  
It still happened.. it seemed like the right thing to do at the time..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I kissed her..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
and she kissed me, too..   
  
  
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After telling him a bitter part of my life, which by the way gave me this sudden lonely and angry feeling, he extended his arm to me. :-[   
  
I never thought I could share this part of my life with someone else when I’ve remained hesitant to let this out ever since then…   
  
“let’s go.. :)”   
  
I gave him a blank stare, tignan mo to, I just shared a very serious matter to him about me, para namang wala siyang care eh. teka nga, why am I expecting for him to care anyway? Eh hindi naman kame close.. not even a bit..   
  
Kaya I asked him. “let’s go where?” I’m so curious and hesitant, but I reached out to his hand. Ano ba yun? I’m having doubts na nga, sasama pa ko? I don’t understand why I’m acting like this at all.   
  
Although he knew I was skeptical, he still smiled at me.“basta, ;)” san ba kase nya ako dadalin eh? ???   
  
So I insisted more. “where are we going? ???”   
  
“just trust me okay? :)” I don’t know why, but even though I have a bad feeling about this, a part of me still wants to trust him.. bakit ba? siguro kase he gave me an assuring smile.. like he’s telling me things will get better if I do go with him.   
  
.. and I want to make things better .. :-[   
  
Pero kahit naman na nakasmile siya when he said that, hindi pa rin ako convinced masyado, as he seemed to be hiding something underneath that expression of his. I wish I knew what it was.. hindi ko kase sya mabasa at all eh.   
  
Hawak nya yung kamay ko while we were walking to wherever he’s taking me. actually, I was behind him. until we reached this place where no people are visible anymore. And on top of that, the place where we are right now is kinda dark, too. Okay? a dark place with nobody? Where are we and what is he up to?!? ??? ??? ???   
  
It was a hill.. a not so dark but an inhabitable place.. it feels kinda weird and scary at the same time being up here. kase you have no idea what’s going on around you eh. sobrang quiet ng place, away from civilization.. I could hear the beetles na nga eh. it’s very creepy. Although the ocean waves are still within earshot.. part pa siguro ito ng resort.. I guess? Ahh! I don’t know!? ??? :-\   
  
Natatakot na ako eh, pero he kept on walking until we reached the very end. Anong gagawin nya? Is he going to push me down this cliff? ??? Papatayin nya ko? oh noooo!?!? :o ??? ???   
  
I was so scared that I even closed my eyes for a second.. but then I realized, if I survive this, wouldn’t I want to know the place where he attempted to kill me? kaya I opened them again.. I was about to scream for help when I saw something I have never imagined existed in this place ever.. ::) :D   
  
“wow!!! :D”   
  
It’s an overview of the whole beach.. lights, landscapes, architectures.. ang ganda!! Oh my God..   
  
“you like it? ??? ;)” he asked me.   
  
Are you kidding me?! this place is off the hook! “what do you mean do I like it? ???” I said with my eyes very wide open. “I love it! :D It’s so beautiful.. and peaceful.. how did you know about this place?”   
  
“simple lang, pero hindi na yun importante. What’s important right now is that you find this place beautiful.. exactly the way I found it, the first time I was here. :)”   
  
Well, however he found out about this place, I still appreciate the thought of me being taken up here.. “thanks for taking me up here, made me feel better. :)” even though I said that it made me feel better, hindi naman maaalis saken na maging sad din at the same time, kase naman, I just talked about a part of my life that I’ve been trying to hide to others ever since I could remember. It’s like opening a can of worms for me, dahil I’m really in nuisance to talk about this kind of affair to anyone… not even my own mother. :-[ :-\   
  
He stood there right in front of me, staring as if he knew exactly what I’m going through.. maybe he does, maybe he doesn’t.. but nonetheless, I felt his all out concern with just one look coming from those eyes.. :-[   
  
Those eyes that gave me a sudden chill down my spine. Oh crap. Why am I feeling this? :o ???   
  
And next thing I know.. his face was half an inch with mine. :o I knew something would happen as his face was getting nearer and nearer by the moment.. and sooner than I thought, more than what I could comprehend in my mind…   
  
His lips touched mine.. :o ::)   
  
Nagulat ako nun, pano as far as I know, he and I have only passed the “strangers” stage, diba? what I mean by that is kase before diba we fight non-stop every time we’re in the same room? Wala naman kame sa room, pero kahit na, that’s no exception at all. Why is he doing this? Tipsy kaya siya kaya parang he lost his balance that’s why his lips landed on mine, or what? ??? ::)   
  
Wala naman ako nagawa but close my eyes as he was kissing me. at first, hindi naman ako gumagalaw, wala nga ako reaction eh, well, besides the fact that what he just did is very odd..   
  
And then I got this weird, tingling feeling again. it was as if it was telling me I have to do something, like kiss him back maybe? but I was controlling myself in doing so, kase naman, hindi naman right yun.   
  
Kaya lang, I guess my body did not listen to my brain, as I tiptoed a little bit, put my hands around his neck and kissed him back…   
  
… A kiss with a certain feeling I never really had. :)   
  
Bakit ganon? I felt like I’ve known him for so long that I’m very much comfortable being with him right now.. eh samantalang ngayon lang naman kame nagkakilala? how bizarre is that?! ???   
  
Then, without further notice, he suddenly let go.. napush pa nga ako ng konti eh! what the heck!?   
  
“ssss…ssoorryy. :-\” Sorry? ???   
  
“huh? ???”   
  
Before I could say anything, he turned around and walked away from me. ang sama nito, iniwan ako dito? ??? >:(   
  
At siempre, being the natural curious person that I am, I ran after him to the hotel room. Grabe, ang bilis naman nya maglakad! I was already short of breath by the time I got inside. Sya naman, dumeretso siya sa bathroom and locked himself in there for about 10 minutes or so.   
  
So I waited for him to come out and tell me what just happened down there. I mean, why did he kiss me and then take off after?   
  
Lumabas na siya, finally. “hey! >:(” sumigaw ako across the room.   
  
At siya naman, well, he went straight to the kitchen and got a drink from the fridge. Okay? talking about manners? Kinakausap, hindi naman sumasagot!? >:( ???   
  
Kaya pumunta na lang ako nung nasan siya. He was turned around from me so I tapped his shoulder so he could face me. “hey, what happened down there? ??? >:(”   
  
He bowed his head down, alright, I guess he’s not gonna tell me!? “hoy, I’m talking to you!? >:(” ang sabi ng mommy ko, never yell at someone, but what the heck!? Screw the freakin’ manners! Para naman kasing deaf itong kaharap ko ngayon eh!?   
“hello? Are you even listening to me? >:(”   
  
Hindi pa rin siya humaharap saken, pero.. “so..ss..sorry.. :-\” his voice was shaking.   
  
“that’s right, you should say sorry! >:(” I yelled a little bit, “that’s not a cool thing to do.”   
  
“i know.. pero hindi naman ako nagso-sorry dahil umalis ako bigla eh.. :-\” huh!? ???   
  
“what?”   
  
“about the kiss :-X... it’s highly unusual for me to do that.. :-\ ” I crossed my arms nung narinig ko yun. is that an insult or what? “mali yun, hindi ko yun dapat ginawa..”   
  
I guess he’s right. Mali naman talaga yun, we’re not in the right status to do that, pero siya naman ang nauna eh! I kissed him back because it was a natural reaction… or is it? ???   
  
Whatever!! That’s still wrong; he didn’t have to leave me alone down there.   
  
So I decided to play it cool.. kahit na curious na curious ako what that was for. I let out a small laugh. “sus, yun lang pala eh. ::)” I shrugged my shoulders a little bit, “relax, Stiffie.. ::) it was just a kiss.. it meant nothing to me okay?” I raised an eyebrow, at siya naman, parang nagulat dun sa sinabi ko. “I’m sure it meant nothing to you, too.”   
  
Nagsalubong yung eyebrows nya after I said that, pero he shifted his view to another place. “ahh., oo.. :-\” tapos tumawa siya ng konti. “nabigla lang ako, pasensya na. 8)” ganun?! So I was being sarcastic when I said it must’ve meant nothing to him, totoo pala! How rude! >:( “you’re right, I didn’t mean anything. 8)”   
  
“alright then, just wanted to clear things out before I go to bed. 8) >:(” After saying that, I turned around and walked towards the bathroom to take a shower. Habang nasa loob ako, I couldn’t help but think. I know it’s not in my nature to think, but right now, I seem to be very curious of something, kahit na how many times I tried to tell myself that it was a meaningless kiss, I couldn’t get myself to agree with it. Kase, hindi naman yun mangyayare dahil we were both caught up in the moment diba? there must be a deeper meaning to that. In fairness ha, he’s not as bad as I thought he would be! When I was done cleaning up, lumabas na ko. Ayun siya, sa couch may binabasa sa laptop.   
  
As soon as I came out of the shower.. “matulog ka na.” he said.   
  
“but I’m not sleepy yet.” Sinabi ko while drying my hair with a towel. “it’s too early.”   
  
It’s only 8:30 pm. I wouldn’t normally be sleepy at this time, pero sa tingin ko naman, kung hindi ako matutulog, I’m gonna be bored lang dito, may kasama nga ako, hindi naman nagsasalita. No use din yung may room mate kapag si Stiffie yung kasama. Hay! Even if I wanted to talk to him some more, or maybe try to explore the reason why we kissed, I couldn’t.. as he already shut himself out of this.   
  
I was about to go to bed when my phone rang. Wow!? :D ??? My phone actually rang? Kaya agad ko naman kinuha ito from the night stand.   
  
“hello!? :D ” medyo excited pa ko nun.   
  
“hey Iris, it’s Randy.”   
  
“Randy? ??? Oh hi Randy! :D” then I stood up and sat on a chair. “what’s up?”   
  
“well, I was wondering, since tomorrow’s the last day of the seminar…” he paused. “maybe you’d like to go out for some drinks tonight?”   
  
“oh..” I looked at Stiffie, who’s by the way eh parang wala naman care sakin. Eh kase naman, nakatingin pa rin siya dun sa laptop nya. “can I call you back, I just have to do something quickly.”   
  
Pagkababa ko ng phone, I thought about what Randy said, go out for drinks? It isn’t that bad naman, considering the fact that I got drunk not so long ago and I ended being hit up by some dude I don’t even know. Randy seems to be a nice person naman, actually, gentleman nga siya, hindi tulad ni Stiffie na lagi na lang ako sinusungitan at not to mention, walang care sakin. >:(   
  
Eh, kung tutuusin, baka magdry lang yung bibig ko dito if I stay here, kase I know naman na walang mangyayare samin ni Stiffie. Wala, ganito lang, hanggang tingin lang. kase naman siya eh, why did he have to be nice and then kiss me? na curious tuloy ako bigla. Ewan. ??? >:(   
  
Tapos ngayon, susungitan na naman niya ako? ano kaya yun?   
  
Ahh!! Whatever, screw this, I’m getting a migraine!! >:( I’m going to have fun tonight! So I called Randy back and told him tonight’s on.   
  
I quickly went to the closet and grabbed an outfit. “anong ginagawa mo? ???”   
  
Nagulat ako nun, “what does it look like I’m doing? ::) Eh di getting clothes.”   
  
He continued talking, although his eyes were still glued to his laptop. “magbibihis ka pa eh matutulog ka lang?”   
  
“uhm. I’m going out. 8)” hinahanap ko yung grey sweater ko eh, nasan na yun?   
  
“where are you going? ???”   
  
“haven’t you been listening? ???” I faced him.   
  
“hindi ko ugali ang makinig sa usapan ng iba.”   
  
I rolled my eyes on him. “Randy called, and he wants to have a few drinks tonight. ::)”   
  
I went inside the bathroom to change, “and you’re going? ???”   
  
“why not?” I put my shirt and jeans on while talking to him. siempre, ako nasa loob ng bathroom at siya naman, nasa labas.   
  
“dahil gabi na.”   
  
I went out to put my earrings on. “so? ??? It’s normal to go out at night.” and looked at him through the mirror.   
  
“ewan ko sayo, bahala ka.”   
  
“okay. ::)” I got my purse that’s sitting on top of the bed and grabbed the room card in the counter. “bye.” Then I walked to the door and opened it.   
  
The door was already half closed when I heard him say something. “gabi na, lalabas ka pa, para kang hindi babae. >:(”   
  
Whatever he said, hindi ko rin naman naintindihan.. kaya umalis na ko.   
  
It’s not awkward naman to go out for a few drinks with Randy. He’s not a stranger to me anyways..   
  
I went down the lobby and found him waiting for me. I hurried up pa nga eh, kase sabi ko it’ll only take me five minutes to get ready, eh dahil sa nagtanong pa si Jeremy, natagalan tuloy. “oh good, you made it. :)” He said while looking at his watch.   
  
“sorry, took me long.”   
  
“it’s okay.” then he extended his arm, “shall we? ;)”   
  
We went to this bar near the beach. Actually, dapat dun kame sa beach pupunta, kaso wala lang, I don’t feel like going there eh.. especially when I didn’t like the first time I was there. Remember? Yung sinundan ako ng guy? Eeeww.   
  
While sipping on his drink, he looked at me.. “I honestly didn’t think you’d grant invitation for drinks tonight. :)”   
  
“really?” I took a sip of him as well. “how so? ???”   
  
“because of Mr. Valdez.” What?   
  
“Jeremy? ???” he nodded. I slightly let out a laugh; I don’t know why I did that.   
  
He looked at like with surprise. Okay? “well, I thought for a second he’s the type of guy who’s not going to let you out this late.. I mean, considering the fact that we barely know each other.”   
  
“oh.. well, I know you.. so it’s okay.”   
  
“he’s not strict at all, huh?” anong hindi strict? Kaya nga Stiffie eh! >:(   
  
“trust me, he is. ::) >:(”   
  
“so, he doesn’t get jealous or anything? ???” he asked, “you know, when you go out with other guys.. :)”   
  
What? “why would he be jealous? ???” nung tinanong ko sa kanya yung question na yun, he gave me a very puzzled look. Wait a minute.. something’s telling me we might not be on the same boat here?! :o ???   
  
We stared at each other as if we were trying to figure out one another. And then after that awkward silence he busted a question out of thin air.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“aren’t you guys a couple? ???” ano daw!?! :o ??? :o   
  
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“aren’t you guys a couple? ???” ano daw!?! :o ??? :o   
  
  
I was stunned when I heard that. Me and Jeremy? ??? A couple? :o Oh no no no no no! my eyes widened in surprise then I chuckled in a playful manner. “no, you got it all wrong.. Jeremy and I… we’re just… ::) :-\” we’re what nga ba? ??? are we friends? ??? I don’t think so? ??? :-\ But we’re not strangers. What are we? :o ??? “We’re just business partners.. that’s all.”   
  
“really? ???” parang hindi pa siya naniniwala. Eh totoo naman. ::)   
  
“why? ???”   
  
“nothing, he just seems like he’s your boyfriend.” I wrinkled my forehead. Eh kase naman, I’m confused. How’s that possible when he treats me like an airhead all the time? >:( “it’s cuz the way he looks at you at the conference room when your head is turned towards the speaker.. :)”   
  
“what do you mean the way he looks at me? ???”   
  
We seem like we’re not understanding each other right now, iba kase yung pinopoint out nya, and ako.. well, hindi ko gets. “never mind, I must’ve just mistaken his looks.”   
  
“oh.. alright, I guess so.. ???” I stared at the ring my drink made on the table.   
  
Siya naman, well, he continued talking. Don’t get me wrong, he’s not like David who talks non-stop about himself.. he’s actually talking about his hopes and dreams in the future, and how he wants to build his own business someday.. something he can call his own. And a big family daw since he's an only child.. Beyond that part, I wasn’t able to pay attention to him anymore because.. I guess my mind was shifted somewhere else :-\. He looks at me during the seminar? ??? si Stiffie? ??? But why? ??? :-\   
  
“—I hope this deal I’m cooking up with your mom works out. :)” nagulat ako when I heard that, see? halatang hindi ako nakikinig sa kanya.. there’s a deal? What deal? ???   
  
“a deal? ???” I know his family's a major investor, but what the hell is he doing investing in a starting business? diba?! ???   
  
“yes, in fact, I had a conference call with your grandmother and your mom a couple of days ago.. they want to consider MCI investing in MV Telecoms. ;)”   
  
Why would they want an investor at this point? I thought they want to establish an investor free business muna? Hindi ko maintindihan what they want to happen, first, my mom sends me over here without any information whatsoever, then my grandmother pairs me up with not to mention, one of the stingiest people I have ever come across with.. and then this? I completely have no idea what they want to happen.   
  
“why would they do that? ???” well, it’s not wrong to ask.. “my mom doesn’t think Jeremy and I can pull this whole partnership off or what? ??? >:(”   
  
Ngumiti lang siya saken, almost as if he’s saying that’s not what this whole thing is about.. or.. I don’t know. “no, it’s not that.. they just think a good investor like our company will be a good foundation for MV Telecoms. As you know, we have multi-million investors, and not to mention big time clients. :)”   
  
“and? ???” I’m sure there’s something else to this. I just know it.   
  
“and your mom's really proud of you :). other than that.. that’s it.. until you guys are in good shape.. and ready to stand by yourselves. But until then, consider MCI as a sister company. ;)”   
  
my mom? proud of me?!? yeah, sure. like that'll ever happen! >:( “wait, let me get this straight..” binaba ko yung drink ko so that my hands are free for gestures, “they built a company with a weak foundation?” he slightly nodded, parang agree siya dun sa sinabi ko. so totoo nga!? “and MCI will make it strong?” this time, nagsmile siya. “sister company? ???”   
  
“yes. And plus.. I’d really like to invest in your company, Iris.” He put an emphasis on YOUR company.   
  
Which gave me an idea that he’s not really interested in making business with the whole MV Telecoms, if you know what I mean.. “MY company?”   
  
“well, it’s half yours.. ;)” uminom siya ulit, “I’m investing in your share. :)”   
  
“how’s that possible? And why do you want to invest in MV Telecoms? … my part of the company?” pano nangyare yun? eh as far as I know, wala akong sariling company, and aren't I supposed to find us an investor? kaya nga nandito kame eh?! bakit ngayon, bigla na lang may investor na kagad?   
  
“your mom has a share in MCI.. as a matter of fact, 30% of MCI belongs to her. And I’d really like to invest because I believe your company will go places.”   
  
Whoa. And I thought I knew everything about my mother. “she didn’t tell me that.”   
  
“well, she is a major stock holder of MCI. That’s why the board is so supportive of her.”   
  
“so, is that why you're investing? because of my mom?” that's really messed up if he says yes.   
  
“no, of course not.. i have my special reason for doing that.. ;)” he winked at me again. “you're mom was surprised, you got a major investor to invest in your company.. ;) she didn't think you could do it, but hey.. you did! :)”   
  
“but I didn't? ???” hindi naman talaga eh, hindi ko naaalala na napapayag ko siyang mag-invest sa company.. kasi wala naman ako dalang papers, and proposals?! Jeremy had the proposals! and Randy was looking at them.. but they were sample proposals!? what is going on!? “they were sample proposals, Randy. ??? ::)”   
  
“I know, but the material is impressive. and you..” he paused. “I just couldn't resist.” ooookkkaaayyyy!? ???   
  
“I don't think so.”   
  
“trust me, you did. you have special skills, Iris. you definitely know how to use your assets. :)”   
  
even though I'd pay big money to someone just to explain to me what the heck is going on, I decided to act like I know everything about this business. sayang din yun. “I see.”   
  
“and considering the fact that you’re the heiress to all of her properties and businesses..” inextend niya yung arm nya. “Goodness. you’re a Princess, Iris :). You’re a lucky one to be a millionaire at a very young age. Who knows, maybe in the future, MCI and MV Telecoms will be one. ;)” Then he smiled at me.   
  
I just shrugged my shoulders. Wala naman akong care dun eh, whole life ko naman yung at stake dun, dahil simula pa noon, my mom has a total control over me. it sucks, I know. Kaya pala she wants me to be fluent in French, dahil ang home office ng MCI ay nasa Europe. >:( ::)   
  
Tsk! I knew there was a catch to that learning-French-will-make-you-productive-in-the-future effect ni Mommy!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
I didn’t realize we’ve been in this bar for so long.. by the time we got out, it was about past two in the morning na. uh-oh.   
  
“I’ll walk you to your room.” Ayaw ko sana eh, kaya lang he insisted. By the time we were by the door, nilabas ko na yung room card ko from my purse. Medyo tipsy pa ko ng konti nun, I had a few drinks din kase. I tipped over to my side, buti naman, he was there to catch me. “are you alright? ???”   
  
“I’m okay. thanks. :) :-[” Tapos nilagay ko na yung room card dun sa slot.   
  
“are you sure? ???” nag-nod lang ako, then I opened the door to get the lights. Randy was standing by the front step when…   
  
“do you know what time it is? >:(”   
  
“oh.. I didn’t know you guys share a room.” Ang sabi ni Randy.   
  
“I lost track of time. :-\”   
  
Instead of looking at me, he looked at Randy and spoke to him in Tagalog. Hello? Hindi naman siya nakakaunderstand ng tagalog eh!? “bakit ngayon lang kayo!? San kayo nanggaling? San mo siya dinala!? >:(”   
  
“I told you we were going out for some drinks tonight.. :-\ >:(”   
  
humarap siya sakin, “hindi ikaw ang kinakausap ko. Pumasok ka na sa loob. >:(” He pointed the inside. I just stood there, acting like I didn’t hear what he just said. Nah-uh, he’s not going to embarrass me in front of Randy, or any other people! >:( No way. “ano? Bingi ka ba? Ang sabi ko, get inside. >:(”   
  
“hey bro..” he tapped Jeremy’s shoulder, pero si Jeremy, he kinda docked a little. Something’s telling me he doesn’t really like Randy. Duh?! “sorry, I didn’t know you were waiting for her.”   
  
“next time, be time conscious. Nobody in a good state of mind goes home this late. >:(”   
  
“hey, that’s not right! >:(” I stepped up to him, “it wasn’t his fault I got here this late. and this..” I pointed the whole room. “this is not home >:(.”   
  
nilapit nya yung face niya sa akin. “don't be a smart ass on me, Ms. Martin. >:( diba ang sabi ko, pumasok ka na?! ano pang hinihintay mo? ???”   
  
“hey, I don’t want any trouble, I just walked her here to make sure she gets here safe.. she had a drink..”   
  
he faced me, “uminom ka!? ??? >:(”   
  
what’s so wrong about drinking? And since when did my mother come here and give me lectures of what and what not to do? He so sounds like my mom right now! “just a few. :-X :-[”   
  
“get inside! >:(”   
  
“Iris, you better get some rest.. I’ll just see you in the morning, okay? :-\ :)” after saying that, umalis na siya. Arghh! I feel so flushed right now! :-[ All because of this bastard who’s making my life a living nightmare! >:(   
  
I dragged my feet inside. Ang sama ng ugali niya! Err! This is what I hate the most, being treated like a freakin’ teenager! I’m not a teenager, and I’m definitely not a kid anymore para pagalitan lang like this! I hate him! I hate him!!!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
When I couldn’t hold it anymore, I slammed my hand on the counter. “you know, you didn’t have to embarrass me like that in front of Randy! >:(”   
  
“at sinong nagsabing pinahiya kita? ??? >:(” okay? Ladies, I’m right in front the king of sarcasm! “out this late? ??? Hindi ka na kailangan ipahiya, dahil ikaw na dapat ang mahiya sa ginagawa mo! That’s not how a lady with breeding is like!” tapos he walked to the other side of the room.   
  
I yelled across the room. “so I don’t have breeding, who cares?! >:(”   
  
He looked at me as if we wanted to strangle me, pero in a split second, he turned around and sat on the couch. “matulog ka na, let’s just discuss this tomorrow morning. >:( :-\”   
  
“whatever! >:(” I slammed the bathroom door. Naiinis ako sa kanya, to be really honest. Why’s he treating me like this? I’m clearly aware that we didn’t have a good start to begin with, pero to treat me like I don’t have feelings at all? That’s way out of line. Ano bang problema nya? ??? >:(   
  
I went outside and walked right towards him, tapos tumayo ako sa harap nya, hands on my waist. “you know what!? I want to discuss this right now! >:( Ano bang problema mo?! I told you I was going out with Randy earlier this evening and you said bahala ka.” He was just quiet.. more like ignoring me. Kaya I continued talking pa rin. “why are you tripping so much about this? >:( ???”   
  
“alam mo ba kung anong oras na? tapos lalaki pa ang kasama mo! >:(”   
  
“Hindi ko naman sinabi sayo to wait for me ha!? >:(”   
  
I could tell he was getting irritated. Tumayo siya and got himself a glass of water in the kitchen. “bakit, sino bang nagsabi na hinihintay kita? ??? Don’t feel too special, because you’re not. >:(”   
  
“what!? :o >:(” oh tell me he did not just say that!!! I followed him to the kitchen. He was just about to have a drink when I grabbed the glass he was holding. “alam mo, I don’t really know why your actions towards me are so odd, did I do something that made you hate me? Why are you treating me like this? Ano bang ginawa ko sayo ha!? ??? >:( :-\” hindi nya ko pinansin, instead, kinuha nya yung glass of water na nasa kamay ko at ininom yung tubig. “ano? ??? Why are you being a chicken now? ::) 8) Why don’t you tell me what’s up and get this over with for once!? >:(”   
  
he faced me, his face was filled with anger with matching… I don’t know. He looks weird right now. “you want to know what you did to me!? >:( :-[”   
  
“try me. 8)”   
  
“marami. Simula ng dumating ka, nagkaleche leche na ko. Lahat ng plano ko sa buhay nasira, dahil kailangan kitang alalayan at samahan! >:(” galit na siya nun. “pabigat ka lang sakin! >:(”   
  
“why? ??? >:( You think I like this whole partnership thing? You think I like being here? Instead of me having fun and enjoying my summer in California, I’m here! Doing something I’m totally not in favor of! >:( :-\” I pointed at him, kala mo naman siya lang yung nahihirapan sa situation nato eh. Akala nya madali lang ito sakin. I know nothing about this and yet my mother is pushing me in this. “it’s not my fault your such a pushover, and not to mention, a major daddy’s boy! >:( 8)”   
  
he held me by my shoulders, hindi naman masyadong tight yung grip nya, nakakagulat lang. “and you think this whole thing is a joke, right?” he looked at me straight in the eye, “after all, wala ka naman ginawa sa buhay mo kung hindi ang magpasarap diba? Ganyan ang mga katulad mo eh! wake up, Barbie. this is the real world! >:(”   
  
I let go of his grip, and walked towards the other side of the room. “quite frankly, yes! >:(” even if don’t really think it is, I just said it anyway. Ayaw ko lang talaga when people make stupid assumptions about me. What do they know about me anyway? WHAT DOES HE KNOW!? “I know you don’t like me, as matter of fact, I know you hate me. But what I don’t really get is that, why do you have to play your mood swings on me? And if in case you don’t know what I’m talking about, I’m talking about you being mean to me and then nice to me all of a sudden! >:( :-\ :-[”   
  
He walked to my side and grabbed me again only this time, nilapit nya ko sa kanya lalo. “alam mo kung bakit? >:( ???” he looked me straight in the eye. “dahil nagulo ang lahat ng dahil sayo! :-\ >:( :-[”   
  
“what are you talking about!? >:(” I yelled at him. And I’m not even gonna wonder if people start knocking here anytime soon, kasi naman.. we’re having this stupid argument at this time.   
  
“ginulo mo ang lahat! My business plans, my business proposals, nabago ang overview ko ng dahil sayo! Nasira ang lahat ng plano ko! >:( pati yung proposal na matagal ko ng tinatrabaho, tinurn down ni Dad ng dahil sayo!!! >:(” his face was about an inch and a half from mine at this point. I could clearly see how angry he is right now. “at higit sa lahat.. :-\” he paused. “pati utak ko, ginulo mo!”   
  
“I don’t understand you! >:(” i yelled at him even louder. “and don't you dare blame me for your failure! because you're already one even before I came along! >:(”   
  
binitawan naman nya ako and sat himself down on the bed. Tapos, he bowed his head down and buried his face on his hands…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“I broke a promise to someone because of you, Iris… :-[ >:( :-\”   
  
  
  
  
  
  
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I must admit, maling diskarte talaga yung ginawa ko kanina. Bakit ko ba siya hinalikan kase? ??? Ayan tuloy, nagkanda labo-labo na ang lahat. :-[ Umalis ako bigla, hindi ko alam.. siguro kase sa sobrang hiya ko, pakiramdam ko wala na kong mukhang maihaharap pa sa kanya. Baka nga iniisip nya ngayon na napaka manyak kong tao. Ah! Ewan! Malabo na nga, lalo pang lumabo nung hinalikan din nya ako. Bakit nya yun ginawa? ??? :-[   
  
Hindi naman sa tumakbo ako papalayo sa kanya, actually, hindi ko naman sinasadyang iwanan siyang mag-isa dun eh. Sus, si Iris pa? magpapaiwan? Hay. :-\ ::)   
  
Dahil nga sa nawala na sa tamang pag-iisip yung utak ko, sa hotel ako dinala ng mga paa ko. Ang tanga ko lang, kase gusto ko nga siyang iwasan muna para mag-isip ng magandang maisasagot kung sakaling magtanong sya, tapos dun ako pupunta sa lugar na malamang eh pupuntahan din nya?   
  
Sinara ko yung pinto sa hotel room namin. At wala pang isang minuto, she came barging in. pero bago pa man nya mabuksan yung bibig nya para magsalita, pumasok na ko sa banyo, and locked myself in for about ten minutes. Anong ginawa ko sa banyo? Wala, naghilamos ako at tinitigan yung sarili ko sa salamin. Tapos, nakita ko pa yung planner ko na naiwan ko dito kahapon nung naligo ako. Kaya binuksan ko ito and started flipping through the pages…   
  
“sorry, hun. :-\ :-[” Yun na lang ang nasabi ko pagdating ko sa last page.   
  
Hindi ko maintindihan ang nararamdaman ko ngayon. Ano ba ito? Guilt or shame? Probably both. :-[   
  
After ng matagal kong pagkukulong sa banyo, naisipan kong lumabas na, malamang eh umalis na yun, kase tahimik na. kaya safe na kong lumabas.   
  
Sumilip muna ko ng maiigi to make sure she’s not here anymore. “hey!” mali pala ako, hindi siya umalis, dahil nandun sya sa kabilang dulo, nakaupo.   
  
Eh wala naman akong magawa.. hindi naman ako pwedeng lumapit sa kanya kase nga… ewan ko.. bakit nga ba?! Kaya dun na lang ako dumeretso sa kitchen at binuksan yung fridge. Maya maya naman, nakaramdam ako ng tapik sa balikat ko. Tsk!   
  
“hey, what happened down there? ??? >:(” I felt her curiosity, dahil kung hindi nyo naitatanong, ganun din yung nararamdaman ko ngayon. Huminga lang ako ng malalim, pero hindi ako humarap sa kanya. “hoy, I’m talking to you!? >:(” I ignored her. Siguro pikon na pikon na siya by now, baka sakaling tigilan nya ako eh. Pero hindi… “hello? Are you even listening to me? >:(” medyo napakakas na yung boses nya kaya naman…   
  
“so..ss..sorry.. :-\” this is the second time I said sorry. I have nothing else to say but that.   
  
“that’s right, you should say sorry! >:( that’s not a cool thing to do.”   
  
wala na kong ibang maisip na pwede ko pang sabihin sa kanya. San ba ko magsisimula? Humarap ako sa kanya. “i know.. pero hindi naman ako nagso-sorry dahil umalis ako bigla eh.. :-\” hindi naman talaga. Nagsosorry ako dahil… alam nyo na. I feel like a very bad person right now.   
  
Bakat sa mukha na yung hindi pagsang-ayon sa sinabi ko. “what?”   
  
Okay, so maybe it was a vague response. Unfair naman kung hanggang dun lang ang kaya kong sabihin sa kanya. “about the kiss :-X... it’s highly unusual for me to do that.. :-\ ” hindi nga ako makatingin sa kanya ng diretso eh, I couldn’t look at her right now, lalo lang sumasama ang pakiramdam ko. “mali yun, hindi ko yun dapat ginawa..”   
  
Nagsalubong naman yung kilay nya. Hanep naman makatingin itong babaeng ito! Akala mo eh, mamatay ka kung tignan ka nya. Hay. See? This is what I’m talking about, kaya ayoko siyang tignan, makikita ko lang yung mga mata nya. Her eyes that got me in this mess to begin with. :-\   
  
After a quick while, the wrinkle in her forehead disappeared. Sabay shrug pa ng shoulders nya. “sus, yun lang pala eh. ::) relax, Stiffie.. ::) it was just a kiss.. it meant nothing to me okay?” ayun! Mabuti naman! Pero bakit parang mas lalong bumigat yung pakiramdam ko? so wala lang sa kanya yun?! I should’ve known. “I’m sure it meant nothing to you, too.” nakatingin siya ngayon sa mga mata ko.   
  
Eto na naman tayo sa titig eh! Iniwas ko nga yung tingin ko sa kanya, baka maulit ulit yung nangyare kanina sa baba eh. “ahh., oo.. :-\” tumawa lang ako ng konti – yung pilit na tawa. Hindi naman nya nahalata eh. “nabigla lang ako, pasensya na. 8) you’re right, I didn’t mean anything. 8)”   
  
“alright then, just wanted to clear things out before I go to bed. 8) >:(” is it just me, o may halong sarcasm yung mga sinabi nya? Nah.. can’t be. It’s just me.   
  
Tumalikod na siya pagkatapos nun. Kumuha siya ng damit nya sa closet at nagpunta sa banyo. At ako naman.. ayun. Umupo ako sa couch at tinaas yung mga paa ko. Kinuha ko yung laptop ko sa gilid at binuksan ito. Siempre, una kong nakita… picture ni Tricia.. :-[ :-[ picture nya kase yung nasa desktop ko. Wala na tuloy akong ibang nagawa.. kung hindi ang titigan ang mukha ni Tricia… :-[ :-[   
  
Maya maya, bumukas yung pinto ng banyo. Tapos na siyang maligo. Kaya ang sabi ko.. “matulog ka na.” without even looking.   
  
“but I’m not sleepy yet. It’s too early.” sinabi nya habang pinapatuyo nya yung buhok nya gamit yung towel. Naman! matulog na kase, papatayin ako nito sa awkwardness eh!! >:( :-[   
  
Nagring yung cell phone nya. Hm. Lola nya siguro yan, chinecheck na naman siya. Alam nyo paminsan, kakaiinggit din itong si Iris, dahil maraming nag-aalala sa kanya. eh ako? sus. Yung nag-iisang taong nag-aalala para sakin, nawala pa. :'( :-[   
  
Sinagot naman nya ito with excitement. “hello!? :D ” -- Randy? ??? Oh hi Randy! :D what’s up?” ano? Si Randy ba kamo? Yung alien na yun na kung makatingin kay Iris eh parang lalamunin nya ng buo!? ??? ??? Bakit siya tumatawag? Pano nya nakuha yung number ni Iris? Teka!? Bakit ba ko nagtatanong sa sarili ko?! ??? :o ???   
  
“ohh… can I call you back, I just have to do something quickly.” tapos binaba nya yung phone. Good decision!   
  
Hinagis nya yung phone nya sa kama tapos nagpunta siya sa closet para kumuha ng damit. Anong ginagawa nya? ??? Maliligo siya ulit? ??? “anong ginagawa mo? ???”   
  
Napatalon sya ng konti, haha ;D ;D. Nagulat ata. “what does it look like I’m doing? ::) Eh di getting clothes.”   
  
Tignan mo to, natural obvious naman na kumukuha siya ng damit eh, hindi naman yun yung tinatanong ko. “magbibihis ka pa eh matutulog ka lang?”   
  
Tuloy tuloy pa rin siya sa paghahalungkat sa closet. Mga babae talaga! >:( ::) “uhm. I’m going out. 8)”   
  
“where are you going? ???”   
  
She turned around and raised her eyebrow. “haven’t you been listening? ???”   
  
Siempre nakikinig! Eh malay ko ba kung anong sinasabi ng mokong na yun eh si Iris lang naman yung naririnig kong nagsasalita? ??? ::) “hindi ko ugali ang makinig sa usapan ng iba.”   
  
Inirapan pa ko. “Randy called, and he wants to have a few drinks tonight. ::)”   
  
What? eh gabi na ah?! “and you’re going? ???”   
  
Nung nakita na nya yung hinahanap nya, tumakbo siya papuntang banyo para magpalit. “why not?”   
  
Anong why not ka dyan!? “dahil gabi na.”   
  
Lumabas siya galing banyo at nagpunta dun sa dresser. “so? ??? It’s normal to go out at night.”   
  
“ewan ko sayo, bahala ka.”   
  
“okay. ::) bye!”   
  
Ibang klase talaga itong babaeng ito!! “gabi na, lalabas ka pa, para kang hindi babae. >:(”   
  
So ayun, lumabas na siya kasama nung alien na yun. ang hindi ko lang talaga maintindihan dito kay Iris.. hindi pa nya masyadong kilala yung tao, sasama siya kagad? Eh pano kung masamang tao pala yun tapos kung anong gawin sa kanya? eh di ako na naman ang lagot nito!? Palibhasa kase, she makes the mess, and now it’s by job to clean it up. Err!   
  
Yun lang nga ba ang dahilan kung bakit ang init ng ulo ko ngayon?   
  
“hun, sorry.. sorry talaga… :-[ :-[”   
  
It was roughly 8:30 pm nung umalis siya. It’s 10 pm right now and she’s not back yet. Ano bang ginagawa nun? a few drinks lang daw ha!? lagot siya sakin pagbalik nya! >:( >:(   
  
Mula kaninang umalis siya, hanggang ngayon, hindi pa rin ako umaalis kung nasan ako ngayon – sa couch, sa harap ng laptop ko. I don’t even know what I’m doing, let alone… understand myself lately. Bakit ba ko nagkakaganito? ??? ??? Siguro itutulog ko na lang ito. She’s probably on her way back. Yup, tama. She’s probably in the elevator right now.   
  
12:30 am ng magising ako. pano, yung telepono ni Iris, ring ng ring. Yung babaeng yun talaga, nag cellphone pa, hindi naman dinadala!? Sino bang tawag na tawag sa kanya.. and why this late!? I looked at the bed and found it empty. Anak ng! wala pa siya dito!? Eh a las doce y media na ng umaga!? >:( >:(   
  
Sa pang-limang missed call, I decided to get up and look who’s calling her. Eh kase naman ho, hindi ako makatulog. Ang lakas kase kung magring ng phone nya. Pagtingin ko sa phone, 7 missed calls, at 4 messages ang nakita ko, kaya tinignan ko kung sino, baka mommy nya o lola nya.. o kaya naman kahit na sinong taong importante ang tumatawag. Pag-open ko…   
  
1 missed call.   
Mom   
  
1 missed call.   
Lola   
  
4 missed calls.   
David   
  
Sender: Mom.   
I spoke to Randy, I’ve heard nothing but great things about you. I’m so proud of you. I miss u Princess.   
  
Sender: David   
I miss hearing your voice…   
  
Sender: David   
I hope you’re taking care of yourself over there. I miss you.   
  
Sender: David   
Hey…   
  
  
Sino si David? ??? sa pagpipindot ko ng phone nya, hindi ko namalayan.. I accidentally accepted a call from.. teka… Mom. Mommy nya? :o :o Anong gagawin ko!? :o ???   
  
“uhm.. hello?”   
  
“hello? Who’s this?”   
  
“uhm.. Ms. Martin? This is Jeremy.. Jeremy Valdez..”   
  
“Jeremy?” halatang nagtataka yung mommy nya. “oh.. hi hijo! Bakit ikaw ang sumagot ng phone ni Iris?”   
  
“she left her phone ma’am..”   
  
“tita.. call me tita hijo.” Her mom seems a pleasant person. “where is she?”   
  
“she went out with Mr. Leroy, ma’am.. err. Tita.” Napaka-awkward naman na tawagin yung mommy nya na tita. Hindi naman sa wala akong tita or what, pero kase.. isa pa lang ang natatawag kong tita, maliban sa mga kamag-anak ko talaga.. si Tita Rose.. yung mommy ni Tricia. :-[   
  
“you mean Randy? Why this late? Diba madaling araw na dyan?”   
  
“pabalik na po siguro yun.” yun lang ang nasabi ko. eh alangan naman sagutin pa yung mga tanong nya, eh wala rin naman akong maisasagot dahil ako mismo, hindi ko rin alam.   
  
“ah.. okay.. can you tell her when she gets back that I need to speak to her?”   
  
“sure tita, I will.”   
  
“so hijo.. kamusta naman kayo dyan? Is my daughter giving you a hard time?” ay sinabi mo pa!!! >:( ;D   
  
Pero hindi ko sasabihin yun. napaka unprofessional naman kase kung sakali. “no, tita.. actually, she’s alright, she’s getting the hang of it.”   
  
“oh, good! Ang sabi kase ng lola nya, medyo pasaway daw yang si Iris.. it’s good that you two are getting along.” Sus! Getting along daw? Eh halos maguho na nga ang mundo kung magtalo kame nun eh. “hijo, do me a favor.. ikaw na sana ang bahala sa anak ko muna.. pagpasensyahan mo na lang kung minsan eh pasaway yan.. ganyan talaga yan, very opinionated.” Hindi lang very, overly opinionated kamo! “but I do have great trust on your teamwork. kaya nga ikaw ang napili namin para sa project na to.”   
  
ano daw?! ??? :o “don’t worry ako na po ang bahala sa kanya.”   
  
“thank you hijo. Tell her we miss her here. lalo na si David.” there goes David again. sino ba yun? ??? boyfriend nya? ??? Boyfriend nya siguro. ??? :-\   
  
“sige po.”   
  
After hanging up, wala pang isang minuto, tumawag na naman yung David. ano ba yan, tawag pa ng tawag eh hindi nga sinasagot yung phone!? Naiinis ako, kase naman inaantok na ko, hindi naman ako makatulog. >:( >:(   
  
Isang oras na akong dilat, masakit na ang mga mata ko, masakit na rin ang katawan ko dahil sa kanina pa ako paikot ikot dito sa couch. 2:30 am na, wala pa rin sya? Tumayo ako at lumabas sa terrace. Tinignan ko lang yung sky. I hate to admit it, but I’m starting to worry about her. :-[ :-\   
  
“hello?” sinagot ko kagad yung phone ko, baka sya na yan eh.   
  
“hello, kuya!” it’s my sister. Aba, bakit napatawag ata ito ng ganitong oras sakin? Eh alam naman nyang madaling araw dito. ::) “gabi na ah, bakit gising ka pa!?”   
  
“wala, may hinihintay lang..” sus, yung hinihintay ko, hanggang ngayon wala pa.   
  
“ows? You’re waiting for someone at this time? Diba madaling araw na dyan? Are you sure that’s work related? Baka naman ano… uuyyy!!!” may pagka-alaskadora din itong kapatid ko na ito eh! ;D >:( ;D   
  
“ikaw talaga, tigilan mo nga ako.” sinabi ko sa kanya ng pabiro. “So, what’s up? May problema ba? bakit napatawag ka?”   
  
“wala. Just wanted to say hi.. yun lang.”   
  
“ah ganun ba. so how’s London?” ang swerte nya no? pa-london London na lang yan kapag bakasyon. Spoiled kase kay dad yan pati sa mommy nya. Mommy nya, hindi ko mommy. Magulo ba? okay. eh kasi ganito yan. Magkapatid lang kame sa ama. Pero wag ka, kahit half sister ko lang yan, higit pa sa buong kapatid kung magtratuhan kame. Bi-continental siblings kame, kase sa America sya lumaki, kasama ng mommy nya. Every year, umuuwi naman siya dito at dun sya sa bahay nagsestay. Actually, close nga sila ni mommy eh, para na rin daw nyang anak itong si Lara. :) :)   
  
“okay lang kuya, eto, shopping-shopping.” Sabi nga nila, girls will be girls. Hay, hindi ba sila nagsasawa sa pagshashopping?   
  
“shopping ka ng shopping para kang si…”   
  
“sino?”   
  
“ah, wala. Para kang babae.”   
  
“duh!? I’m a girl kuya, what do you expect?” tumawa siya. “ikaw talaga, comedian ka noh?”   
  
“alam mo, may kilala ako, katulad na katulad mo, wala ng inatupag kung hindi magshopping!” if in case it’s not obvious, I’m talking about the great Iris Martin na hanggang ngayon eh wala pa dito! >:( >:(   
  
“talaga? that’s good. we're gonna get along. So.. meaning ba nyan, may girlfriend ka na?” ano?! :o :o Nagulat ako dun ah. “alam mo kuya, I think it’s about time na para mag-girlfriend ka na noh!? May kilala ako.. nandyan siya ngayon sa Philippines. maganda siya..bes--”   
  
Bago pa nya ituloy yung description nung kung sino man yun, tinigil ko na siya. Ganito talaga itong kapatid ko na ito, simula noon, hanggang ngayon, wala ng ginawa kung hindi ang i-hook up ako sa kung sino sinong babae. Kaya nga pag nandito siya, naku! Sumasakit ang ulo ko! “anong girlfriend? Lars naman.”   
  
“just kidding, kuya. Ikaw naman, hindi ka naman mabiro eh!” tumawa siya ulit. “alam ko naman na magpapari ka!”   
  
“ikaw talaga.”   
  
“but seriously, kuya I really think you should find yourself a girlfriend already.. ang tagal na non noh? move on ka na kaya... ”   
  
“hindi ko naman kailangan ng girlfriend eh.. masyado pa kong busy ngayon.. and besides.. I have a promise to keep..” promise na nabali ko na.. :( :(   
  
“hay nako! ang drama mo!? sayang lang yung face kung hindi mo rin pakikinabangan! oh sya. whatever you say! kamusta na si Dad? Tsaka si tita Monica?”   
  
I can't blame my sister for getting pissed at me most of the time when it comes to this topic, alam ko na concerned lang siya sakin, at ang sabi nga nya, nasasayangan daw siya sa kagwapuhan ko. ;D ;D eh anong magagawa ko? ??? ??? “okay lang sila.. si Dad.. as usual.” And our conversation went on and on hanggang sa naramdaman ko na lang na may nagbubukas ng pinto. “ahh.. Lars, I have to go. Yung hinihintay ko nandito na eh. tawagan na lang kita bukas, hm?” at binaba ko na yung phone. Tamang-tama…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Ladies and Gentlemen: the Queen has arrived! >:( >:(   
  
  
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“do you know what time it is? >:(” nakapamewang pa ko nun.   
  
Siempre, ikaw ba naman ang sigawan out of nowhere eh talagang magugulat ka. Tumingin sya saken, as if she saw a ghost. And oh.. look who we have here. may kasama pala siya.   
  
“oh.. I didn’t know you guys share a room.” hindi ba obvious!?   
  
“I lost track of time. :-\” sinabi nya ng nakayuko.   
  
Pero hindi ko siya pinansin, instead, humarap ako kay Randy na mukang nagtataka kung bakit iisa lang ang room namin. “bakit ngayon lang kayo!? San kayo nanggaling? San mo siya dinala!? >:(” siempre, alam kong hindi siya nakakaintindi ng tagalog… kaya nga tinagalog eh!   
  
“I told you we were going out for some drinks tonight.. :-\ >:(”   
  
Aba.. at kailan pa naging si Iris si Randy? Sagot ng sagot.. sinabing pumasok sa loob eh, ang kulit!! “ano? Bingi ka ba? Ang sabi ko, get inside. >:(”   
  
Napansin siguro nitong alien na to kaya tinap nya yung shoulder ko. “hey bro..” anong bro?! anong akala nya, close kame!? “sorry, I didn’t know you were waiting for her.”   
  
“next time, be time conscious. Nobody in a good state of mind goes home this late. >:(”   
  
At siempre, hindi na ko nagtaka at sumabat itong si Iris. “hey, that’s not right! >:( it wasn’t his fault I got here this late. and this..” tinuro nya yung room. “this is not home >:(.” aba? At namilosopo pa?!   
  
“don't be a smart ass on me, Ms. Martin. >:( diba ang sabi ko, pumasok ka na?! ano pang hinihintay mo? ???”   
  
“hey, I don’t want any trouble, I just walked her here to make sure she gets here safe.. she had a drink..” ano kamo?!   
  
“uminom ka!? ??? >:(” okay, now I’m pissed. Eh kung may nangyare na naman dito? Ako na naman ang mananagot sa pagkarami rami nyang gwardya! At natural, isa na don ang tatay ko.   
  
“just a few. :-X :-[”   
  
“get inside! >:(”   
  
“Iris, you better get some rest.. I’ll just see you in the morning, okay? :-\ :)”   
  
Sinarado ko yung pinto pagkaalis nung mokong na yun at dumeretso sa lamesa, kung saan kame kumakain at siya naman nagpunta sa kusina. Hindi kame nagkikibuan.. until after a while, she slammed her hand on the counter. “you know, you didn’t have to embarrass me like that in front of Randy! >:(”   
  
“at sinong nagsabing pinahiya kita? ??? >:(” ang higit sa ayaw ko, yung nagdadahilan pa na kesyo ganito kung alam naman nyang mali siya. Di ba dapat manahimik na lang siya? “out this late? ??? Hindi ka na kailangan ipahiya, dahil ikaw na dapat ang mahiya sa ginagawa mo! That’s not how a lady with breeding is like!” bago ako tuluyang mapikon sa kanya, tumayo ako at nagpunta sa kabilang dulo ng room.   
  
“so I don’t have breeding, who cares?! >:(”   
  
“matulog ka na, let’s just discuss this tomorrow morning. >:( :-\” kesa naman sa kung ano pang masabi ko dahil mainit ang ulo ko, yun na lang ang sinabi ko.   
  
“whatever! >:(” she turned around and slammed the bathroom door. Hindi ba siya nahihiya?! Sa ganitong oras, nakikipagtalo pa siya? Hindi lang kaming dalawa ang naka check in dito sa hotel na to no!   
  
Pagkatapos nyang gawin ang kung ano man yung ginawa nya dun sa banyo eh sumugod na naman siya kung nasan ako… at nakapamewang pa! “you know what!? I want to discuss this right now! >:( Ano bang problema mo?! I told you I was going out with Randy earlier this evening and you said bahala ka.” I was just quiet. Ayaw ko siyang pansinin dahil nagiinit na yung ulo at baka sumabog pa ito dito. “why are you tripping so much about this? >:( ???”   
  
Bakit nga ba ako naiinis!? Ah! eh kase diba, late na siyang bumalik dito. Yun lang yun. at isa pa, yung bibig nya, walang preno!! “alam mo ba kung anong oras na? tapos lalaki pa ang kasama mo! >:(”   
  
“Hindi ko naman sinabi sayo to wait for me ha!? >:(”   
  
Naglakad ako papuntang kitchen to get a glass of water. Mauubusan ako ng buhay dito sa babaeng ito eh! “bakit, sino bang nagsabi na hinihintay kita? ??? Don’t feel too special, because you’re not. >:(”   
  
“what!? :o >:(” inagaw nya yung basong hawak ko. wala na ngang preno ang bibig, bastos pa. eh kung kumuha kaya siya ng sarili nyang baso no? “alam mo, I don’t really know why your actions towards me are so odd, did I do something that made you hate me? Why are you treating me like this? Ano bang ginawa ko sayo ha!? ??? >:( :-\” hindi ako nagsalita, instead, inagaw ko yung baso ng tubig na hawak nya. Aba, eh akin naman yun no. “ano? ??? Why are you being a chicken now? ::) 8) Why don’t you tell me what’s up and get this over with for once!? >:(”   
  
At ngayon ko na masasabing pikon na pikon na talaga ako. sumosobra na siya eh! “you want to know what you did to me!? >:( :-[” ano nga ba? ah basta!   
  
“try me. 8)”   
  
San ba nagsimula itong galit ko sa kanya? ah! sige, gustong nyang malaman ha! “marami. Simula ng dumating ka, nagkaleche leche na ko. Lahat ng plano ko sa buhay nasira, dahil kailangan kitang alalayan at samahan! >:(” totoo yun! “pabigat ka lang sakin! >:(”   
  
“why? ??? >:( You think I like this whole partnership thing? You think I like being here? Instead of me having fun and enjoying my summer in California, I’m here! Doing something I’m totally not in favor of! >:( :-\ it’s not my fault your such a pushover, and not to mention, a major daddy’s boy! >:( 8)” dire-direcho nyang sinabi ang lahat ng yan. Natahimik ako sa narinig ko. this isn’t just about business if that’s what she thinks.. it’s more than that. Enough for me to hate myself right now.   
  
Nagiinit na talaga yung ulo non na pakiramdam ko eh gusto ko ng manapak. But of course, I had to control myself. It’s not right to hit a girl pa rin. So instead of hitting her, I held her shoulders. “and you think this whole thing is a joke, right? after all, wala ka naman ginawa sa buhay mo kung hindi ang magpasarap diba? Ganyan ang mga katulad mo eh! wake up, Barbie. this is the real world! >:(” seriously, this girl really needs to see the real world. Hindi lahat ng tungkol sa buhay eh masarap at maganda.   
  
Tinanggal naman nya yung pagkakahawak ko sa kanya. “quite frankly, yes! >:(” see?! eh di lumabas ang totoo. Wala naman talaga siyang pakialam dito sa business na to eh. kaya nga akala mo kung sino kung makaasta. Palibhasa, wala siyang dapat na patunayan sa magulang nya kaya ganyan siya. “I know you don’t like me, as matter of fact, I know you hate me. But what I don’t really get is that, why do you have to play your mood swings on me? And if in case you don’t know what I’m talking about, I’m talking about you being mean to me and then nice to me all of a sudden! >:( :-\ :-[”   
  
To tell you honestly, nabigla talaga ako dun sa sinabi nya. May punto siya kung tutuusin.. totoo naman na paminsan, pakiramdam ko eh she’s very special to me.. and other times naman, ayun, tingin ko sa kanya, panggulo at malaking sagabal sakin. Bakit nga ba? with this thought, naalala ko bigla yung nangyare kanina.. sa baba.. dun sa may beach.. idagdag nyo pa yung picture ni Tricia na kulang na lang eh patayin ako sa guilt. :-[ :-[   
  
So I held her again, only this time, she was closer to me. “alam mo kung bakit? >:( ???” I looked at her straight in the eye. “dahil nagulo ang lahat ng dahil sayo! :-\ >:( :-[”   
  
Nagsalubong yung kilay nya.. “what are you talking about!? >:(” sinabi ng pasigaw.   
  
“ginulo mo ang lahat! My business plans, my business proposals, nabago ang overview ko ng dahil sayo! Nasira ang lahat ng plano ko! >:( pati yung proposal na matagal ko ng tinatrabaho, tinurn down ni Dad ng dahil sayo!!! >:(” kung tutuusin, talagang napakalaki ng atraso nya sakin. Yung mga obvious.. like work-related reasons.. plus one more ultimate reason behind this… “at higit sa lahat.. :-\ pati utak ko, ginulo mo!”   
  
“I don’t understand you! >:( and don't you dare blame me for your failure! because you're already one even before I came along! >:(”   
  
Hindi ko nakayanan. Sa tingin ko naman talagang hindi nya ko maiintindihan eh. dahil unang una, wala naman siyang alam sa nakaraan ko. kaya bumitaw ako sa pagkakawak ko sa shoulders nya at naupo sa kama. Sa sobrang sama ng loob ko ngayon, pakiramdam ko sasabog yung dibdib ko. :-[ :-[ ang hindi ko lang talaga matanggap eh ng dahil lang isang mali kong nagawa, ganito ang naging effect sakin. When all these years I had total control of myself… Pakiramdam ko, mababaliw na ko sa sobrang dami ng nasa utak ko ngayon. Ang masama pa nito, hindi lang trabaho.. maayos naman kase ang buhay ko noon eh.. noon nung wala pa si Iris. Hindi nga ako masaya, oo. Pero at least hindi ganito ang nararamdaman ko. Grabe, I never thought I would be in this situation. Situation kung saan isang pangako ang masisira ko. :( :(   
  
“I broke a promise to someone because of you, Iris… :-[ >:( :-\”   
  
Tricia.. forgive me… :-[ :-[   
  
“what the hell are you talking about!? what promise!? I told you Jeremy, don’t blame me for your misfortune! >:( >:(”   
  
“you don’t get it, Iris. :-[” Seryoso kong sinabi. I’ve never been this serious before.. I mean, oo lagi akong mukang seryoso, but have I really been serious..serious? nahh.. ngayon lang. “and I don’t expect you to know.. you don’t know anything about me.. about my past..”   
  
“what past!? >:( ??? So you mean to say, this is not just about that stupid partnership thing?” hindi ako sumagot. “or anything work-related? ??? ???” I didn’t respond again. “Geez man! Can you talk at all? You’re so giving me a migraine! >:( >:(” she said irritatedly. “is this about your dad? ???” bigla nyang tinanong.   
  
“alam mo bang matagal ko na tong hindi nararamdaman.. yung pakiramdam na parang sasabog yung ulo mo sa kakaisip… :-[ :-[”   
  
I heard her take a deep a breath. Nag-calm down, ika nga nila. mabuti naman, dahil talagang masakit ang ulo ko, at litong lito ako ngayon. And before I knew it, hindi ko napansin.. medyo napapaluha na pala ako.. at hindi ko rin namalayan, tinabihan na nya ko. “hey.. :-\” at hinimas yung likod ko. “are you alright? Sorry for yelling at you.. I didn’t mean to do that.. I know you’re just concerned.. :-\”   
  
“….”   
  
She sighed. “look, I may have so many questions right now about all of these things.. but hey.. it’s okay.” sinabi nya ng mahinahon. “and I know I can be a handful most of the time.. but only because you don’t tell me anything… so how am I supposed to act around you.. you know what I mean?”   
  
Nakayuko pa rin ako. ayoko ngang humarap sa kanya, baka isipin nya bading ako eh at nageemote ako ng ganito. “yeah.”   
  
Napansin ko na wala na siya sa tabi ko, pero hindi ko inaasahan na pupunta siya sa harap ko. okay, ako nakaupo sa kama ha. but she wasn’t kneeling down or anything, she was standing in front of me, naka-bend over lang.. tapos tinanggal nya yung mga kamay ko sa mukha ko.. “Truce? ??? :)”   
  
Tinignan ko lang sya nun at nginitian. Hay.. lalo lang ako nagugulohan. :-\ :-\   
  
  
  
Next day.   
  
Dahil sa last day na ng seminar ngayon, maaga kame natapos. Puro last minute lectures na lang kase at kung ano-ano pang hindi naman gaanong importante na. ang nakakapanibago lang, si Iris, tahimik the whole time we were in the conference hall. Well, we all know how she is… hindi titigil hangga’t hindi ka na nanglilisik sa galit. Pero kanina? Not only was she quiet, she was actually paying attention.. you know, like jotting down notes, asking RELEVANT questions, which is so unlikely of her. I can’t believe she changed to this overnight.. Anong nakain nya, at bakit bigla na lang siya naging… tao?! ;D ;D   
  
And as for me, I feel much better now than last night. siguro dahil sa nakatulog na ko ng maayos. At tsaka.. ewan ko, basta ang alam ko lang, nagsimulang gumaan ang pakiramdam ko nung sinabi nyang ‘truce’ na kame. Meaning.. okay na. I guess, wala ng awayan at bangayang mangyayari diba? I hope. Ang mahirap nga lang, feeling ko papatayin na talaga ako ng konsyensya ko.. alam nyo na. lalo na ngayon.. ngayon na okay na kame nitong si Iris..   
  
“so…” she said while gathering her stuff. San na naman kaya siya pupunta? “Randy and I are going out on a picnic today.. you wanna come? ??? :)” ano ko? third wheel? Alalay? Taga dala ng picnic basket nila habang naglalakad sila na magka-holding hands? wag na oy! >:( >:(   
  
“hindi na.” humiga ako sa couch. “I think I’ll just rest.”   
  
“hmm..” sinabit nya yung bag nyang pagkalaki laki sa balikat nya. “okay. I’ll just see you later when I get back then. :)” She smiled. “don’t worry, I won’t stay out late. I’ll be back at…” tinignan nya yung watch nya . “hmm… roughly at 7, okay?”   
  
“okay.”   
  
After nun, umalis na siya. Sa totoo lang, I wanted to ask her kung saang place sila magpipicnic pati kung ano bang lagay nila ni Randy ngayon. Wala lang.. I mean.. I don’t know. Not that I care, but… ah basta! :-\ :-\   
  
Hindi naman sila magtatagal siguro no? 4 pm pa lang.. and she’s going to be back by 7.. not bad. Sandali lang yun.   
  
As much as I wanted to get some sleep, hindi rin ako nakatulog. Hindi kase ako mapakali. Ano ba kasi ang nararamdaman ko eh? ano ba si Iris sakin? Wala naman diba? siguro natutuwa lang ako sa kanya, kase kahit na may pagka-“airhead” siya, airhead not in a bad way, na parang walang laman ang utak, airhead in a sense na parang wala lang sa kanya ang lahat.. gets nyo? Well, yun nga.. kahit na ganun sya, at least she’s having fun.. fun na nakakahawa na rin, kase kapag tumatawa siya, kahit hindi ko alam kung bakit, pati ako natatawa na rin. Ganun ba yun talaga? ??? ??? ewan ko kung ano ba ito, hindi naman ako ganito kay Tricia noon, so I guess it’s not what I think it is.   
  
I hope not.   
  
And before I knew it, 7 o’clock na.. and the odd thing about this is that I found myself looking forward to this time. I even waited by the door, for crying out loud!   
  
7:30, wala pa rin siya. Ano na naman kayang nangyari dun? At anong klaseng picnic ba yung pinuntahan nila? teka, bakit ba kase ako nagaalala? ??? ???   
  
Wala akong tiwala kay Randy, kahit na gano pa siya ka-presentable tignan at kung ano ano pang positive descriptions meron sya, I still think na may iba pa siyang pakay kay Iris.   
  
8:30 na, wala pa siya, so I decided to get out and look for them. I’ve been calling her, only to find out that she left her phone again, which got me worried even more. alam nyo sa susunod itatali ko na talaga sa katawan nya yung telepono nya! ;D ;D   
  
I went down the lobby and asked the receptionist if she had seen them. Ang sabi lang nya, they headed to the beach. Kaya naman dun na rin ako nagpunta. Konting lakad lang naman from the hotel, since the beach is just across the street. Pagpasok ko dun, siempre una kong nakita yung mga taong nagpaparty, since it’s night already, marami ng naghahappy-happy dito. Hinanap ko sila pero hindi ko sila nakita. Baka naman sa ibang beach sila nagpunta?   
  
But I kept on looking for them still. Until I found them in the corner.. sa may mga rocks. Malayo pa ko non but I could sense that something’s not right in this picture. Si Iris, nakalean dun sa may bato, tapos si Randy…. :o :o   
  
  
  
Nakahawak sa legs nya. >:( >:(   
  
What the hell is he doing!?!?!?! >:( >:( >:(   
  
  
Pagkakita ko pa lang nun, agad na kong tumakbo papunta sa kanila at tinulak si Randy papalayo kay Iris.   
  
“what the hell are you doing to her!?!?! >:(”   
  
Nagulat si Randy nun, at si Iris naman, biglang napatayo. “Jeremy! >:(” sumigaw siya.   
  
Tumayo rin si Randy. “hey man, it’s not what you think it is.. :-\”   
  
Lalo lang ako napikon dun sa sinabi nya, magdedeny pa, eh caught in the act na nga. “anong it’s not what I think it is, eh kitang kita ko kung anong ginagawa mo sa kanya. eh sira ulo ka pala eh! >:( >:(” tinulak ko siya ulit, while he didn’t even understand a thing I said.   
  
Nangdilim na yung paningin ko kaya lumapit ako sa kanya para sapakin siya. Pero bigla namang humarang si Iris. “Jeremy ano ba! >:(” she pushed me.   
  
“ano!? ??? ??? Pagtatanggol mo yan!? Eh binabastos ka na, nagpapabastos ka naman! >:(”   
  
Hindi nya ko pinansin. “I’m so sorry about this Randy, he must’ve just taken a few drinks that’s why he’s like this.” Tapos may binulong siya kay Randy. “it’s okay. just go. :-\ :-\”   
  
Sumunod sa kanya yung alien na yun at tumayo na para umalis. Ang sama pa ng tingin sakin. Sus! Basagin ko pa bungo nya eh! 8) >:(   
  
Nung nakalayo na siya, humarap sa kin si Iris. “and you! >:(” sabay turo sakin. “why did you do that!?” I didn’t speak, instead, I grabbed her by the arm at naglakad na pabalik sa hotel. “aray! :-[ :-[ Careful! :'( :'(” sinabi nya.   
  
When we got inside, binitawan ko na siya at pinaupo sa chair. Nakita ko yung braso nya, namumula na. hindi ko yun sinasadya. “what do you think you’re doing down there? >:( >:(” bigla ko na lang sinabi.   
  
Hawak nya yung braso nyang namumula. “what are you talking about!?”   
  
“don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talking about Iris! >:( >:(”   
  
“I tripped on a rock, he was just giving me a massage! >:( >:(” she pointed her ankle. Namumula nga. “and then you had to do that. Nakakahiya! He’s being kind na nga, ganun pa ginawa mo! >:( >:(”   
  
“eh hindi naman ankle mo yung hawak nya eh. I saw it with my two eyes, Iris. He was touching your legs! >:( >:(”   
  
“so!? ??? Alam mo, I don’t understand you! why all of a sudden you’re acting like a jealous and possessive boyfriend!? ??? ???” she stood up and looked at me straight in the eye. “you’re jealous aren’t you!? 8) ???”   
  
Ano daw?! :o Nagulat ako sa bigla nyang sinabi. Ako? acting like a jealous and possessive boyfriend!? Aba!!!!! >:( “ako? nagseselos? Ha!? ang lakas din ng tama mo no!? >:(” hindi ako nagseselos!!! kaya tumalikod ako sa kanya at nagpunta sa kitchen.   
  
but next thing I know, nakasunod na pala siya saken. “aminin mo na kase, kaya ka nagkakaganyan kase nagseselos ka! 8)”   
  
Hindi ko na napigilan ang sarili ko. kaya humarap ako sa kanya ng di-oras. the next words I said weren’t meant and supposed to come out at all..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Oo! Nagseselos ako! ano? Masaya ka na!? >:( >:(” her jaw literally dropped.   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
-- AFTER JEREMY SAID THAT HE BROKE A PROMISE... --   
  
I felt sorry for him for some reason.. :-\ I mean.. hearing him say those words really had a certain meaning to me. to tell you guys honestly, hindi ko naman gusto na paiyakin si Stiffie eh -- if he really cried. at first nga it was just for plain messing around. Gusto ko kase siya pagtripan because he’s pikon. Hehe. Pero when I saw how serious he was, I felt bad. :-[ :-X   
  
But when he said he broke a promise because of me… what is that!? ??? ???   
  
As much as I want to ask him further, hindi ko na ginawa. He had it for the night.. kawawa naman siya.. I’ve never really come across a guy who’s as sensitive as Stiffie.. someone who’s not afraid to show his real feelings… you know? It sounds gay and it’s funny, I know, but still… ah basta!! And besides.. I’m too sleepy to even argue with him right now noh! ::) ::)   
  
  
Ang gulo ko noh?   
  
Mas magulo sya!   
  
So I decided to call it a truce instead. I’m not that bad naman to make matters worse eh. by the way, when I said ‘truce’ he just smiled at me, pero alam ko he was still hurting. Ano ba kase yung past na sinasabi nya? Did something terrible happen to him? ano kaya yun? wait? Why am I all of a sudden so curious about his past? Business partners lang kame noh.. the only thing I need to know about his past has to be business related.. nothing more than that.. at tsaka… care ko ba dun diba? eh ano naman ngayon if he’s being miserable and hurting right now? Mabuti nga yun eh, para hindi na siya masungit!   
  
But why do I feel sad when he’s sad?? ??? :-\   
  
He certainly is a very mysterious person. Yung tipong, one day he’s all nice to you and then it changes a moment after. He sure is hiding a secret, I know it.. and it’s a deep, possibly dark secret I’d like to dig deep into.   
  
The next day wasn’t an ordinary day at all. Well, besides the fact that it was the last day of the seminar week, I decided to be good and behave na. ayoko na kasi siya bigyan ng headache eh, baka magdrama na naman siya. You know, I’m not really good at handling drama.. even in high school, where all the dramas are, hindi rin ako nakikisali dun. So what if they hate me? I’d laugh at them more. 8) 8)   
  
So ayun nga. Yung speaker nagsalita lang for a little bit, reminding us how a good partnership is supposed to be and how trust is an important component of it.. blah blah blah… can’t deny it, nagkainterest talaga ako dun. TRUST. Yeah, we should probably gain each other’s if we want this to work out. although, I must say, I’d perhaps find it more difficult to gain his than him gaining mine. And I suddenly thought, if I want to gain his trust, I’d have to break into that huge wall of his.   
  
Yeah, sure.. like that’s an easy thing to do.   
  
Hold that thought…   
  
How do you gain someone’s trust, by the way? ??? ???   
  
“so…” I said, while gathering my stuff. Randy had invited me for a picnic today. and of course I said yes, by the beach yun eh. “Randy and I are going out on a picnic today.. you wanna come? ??? :)” I was thinking of taking him with us, no bad intentions intended ha, I’m just worried lang, kase baka maging sad naman sya lalo kapag mag-isa lang siya eh. I think he might be suffering a minor depression, based on my observations.. I learned that from Psychology! Hehe. He was sitting on the couch that time, of course, in front of his oh-so-beloved-never-to-be-touched-by-anyone-else-particularly-me laptop. ::) ::)   
  
His facial expression changed quickly. Okay? Was it that bad? Kanina nakasmile pa siya eh. “hindi na.” humiga siya sa couch and lifted his feet on the arm rest. “I think I’ll just rest.”   
  
he didn’t even look at me for a bit. Okay, I guess it was a bad thing that I thought of taking him with us. “okay. I’ll just see you later when I get back then. :)” hindi ko na lang pinansin yung sinabi nya, he’s probably just really tired of the seminar. “don’t worry, I won’t stay out late. I’ll be back at…hmm.. roughly at 7 okay?”   
  
“okay.”   
  
hmf! >:( Nakakainis naman to, parang walang care. How come he didn’t ask me for details when he used to always gang up on me about those? ??? ???   
  
So, kung deadma siya eh di I guess ganun na din ako. After all, I told myself that I’m laying low already..   
  
I hurried up to the lobby where Randy’s waiting for me, nakakahiya naman kase if I make him wait again, kagaya nung dati. By the way, I’ve been thinking lately about my own self-being.. i don’t know, I just seem to be acting really strange for the past couple of days.. I mean, I know myself as much as others do.. alam nyo yun. But lately, it’s just been different. Ahhh! Whatever, I’m going to a picnic by the beach; I should be relaxing right now. 8) 8)   
  
When the elevator opened, I saw Randy, standing by the entrance door, so I ran towards him. “sorry, did I make you wait? :-\”   
  
He faced me but his hands were at his back. “oh.. no, I just arrived.” Then he handed me the bouquet of roses. Aww!! ::) ::) “for you. :)” he smiled at me. ohhh that gorgeous smile of his! Hehe.   
  
I gladly took the flowers from him. aww. And both of us started walking to his car. He’s so sweet talaga, he even opened the door for me. “thanks. But you didn’t have to..” siempre, as Lauren always tells me, ‘pakipot effect’ muna, whatever that really means. I mean, if you like the person, why not show it diba? wait, so I like Randy? :o ???   
  
Speaking of Lauren, I haven’t heard from her for a long time ha, the last time we talked was all the way in LA, before I left.. sira talaga yun, hindi man lang nagpaparamdam. And she even told me she’s gonna text me her brother’s address so I could finally meet him. not to date him or whatever ha, meet lang.. kase she always talks about him and how he’s like this and that… I’ve never met him before. And besides, I wouldn’t date my best friend’s brother.. even though she’s been trying to set us up for the past… 2 years? I bet you, that’s why she wants me to meet him.. gwapo daw kasi yun, and she describes him as ‘someone I’d fall in love with over and over again.’ I don’t know, it’s strictly a no-no for me.. that would be…. Weird!! :o :o Imagine, if me and her brother become a couple, and then when get married, me and Lauren would be officially sisters….in law nga lang. Come to think of it, it would be great, wouldn’t it? But nahhh… I’ve been informed that her brother is a major snob and a pain in the butt.. parang… si Stiffie. Ayoko naman ng katulad nya noh!! Tignan nyo nga, lagi akong inaaway, wala naman akong ginagawa sa kanya?! >:( >:(   
  
Hold on a second, why am I thinking of these things? me and Lauren’s brother? Tssss. I must’ve lacked sleep and the oxygen’s not going through my brain normally. I’m acting and thinking odd and fairly impossible things!!! >:( ??? :-\   
  
“hey.. you alright? ???” I felt a tap on my shoulder. Of course, nagulat ako. Shoot! I hadn’t noticed, my mind was flying somewhere else na pala. Hindi ko napansin, nandito na pala kame.   
  
He unloaded the picnic basket. “yeah. Sorry, I’m a little.. :-\” I waved my hand over my head, “woozy.”   
  
“woozy? ???” He wrinkled his forehead, “what’s the matter? :-\ ???” he handed me the bottled water. “here, have some drink.”   
  
I took the water from him and opened it so I could have a drink. “oh, don’t mind me, I’m just usually like this. ;) ;D” I slightly laughed. “many things here.” I pointed my head. “and I was just thinking about my best friend. :) :-\”   
  
“oh, Lauren? :)” he knows Lauren!? How!?   
  
My eyes widened in surprise. “you know her? ??? ???” this is interesting.. hm?   
  
“yeah, met her in London, before I came here.” is it me, or the world is just too small for my circle?   
  
“whoa. :o”   
  
“I know, right.. well..” busy na busy siya sa paglalabas ng food from the basket. “our company hosted a couple of seminars back there and she was one of those who attended it.”   
  
“I see..” he handed me a plate. “so you two got together and talked about stuff?” I asked. “I mean, that’s how you knew me before-hand, because of her, right? ???”   
  
“yeah we got together and talked about stuff.. Business stuff. But you? :) ;)” he grinned, “nah.. I knew you even before I met Lauren. ;)”   
  
What? how did that happen? I know we were introduced at a party in Hollywood, yung late ako dumating, tapos yung suot ko pa eh.. alam nyo na! pero hindi naman kame nag-usap nun eh… How could be know so much information about me kung hindi galing kay Lauren, diba? “what do you mean? ??? ???”   
  
“I’ve known you way back, Iris…” there was gleam in his face. “even prior to our introduction at the party.”   
  
Okay, now I’m confused. “huh? ???” so what’s he saying? I’m not following. “how did that happen?”   
  
“well, I guess a name would ring a bell to you..” he paused. “David Stewart.” ahhhh!! The ‘D’ word again! so he knows David, too!?!?! ??? :o >:(   
  
“oh.” So I made a disappointed face. “you know the dude. >:(” Nawalan na nga ako ng gana. I actually want to go back to the hotel right now.   
  
“yeah, we’re good friends.. :)” err! Nakakainis naman! bakit lahat na lang ng tao sa paligid ko kilala ni David!?!?! “and he talked non-stop about you that’s why I got to know you, before hand.”   
  
“I see.” I said with no interest at all. “well. What a coincidence, right? >:( ???” it must be, because who could have known, Randy and everybody I know are connected to each other?! Yeah, right.   
  
“yeah, and when he found out I’d be working with you, he asked me a little favor.” I took a deep breath. What the heck!? >:( >:( What favor!? “he had asked me to look after you since he’s not here to do that.”   
  
Ano ba yan!?!? “it’s not anybody’s responsibility to look after me, Randy. >:(” Nakakainis naman, you see, no wonder I have this spoiled-brat attitude! It pisses me off when people treat me like a kid with a lot of incapacities! If anyone had noticed, I’m already a grown woman; I can do things by myself. And besides, bakit ba ganyan si David? we’re not together anymore for him to show any kind of affection! “David and I are history now.” I said annoyingly. “he had his chance, he blew it. >:( >:(” Totoo naman eh.   
  
“that’s why he’s trying to make it up now, Iris. :)” Okay, that pissed me off even more. “but I can’t blame you for shutting him out of your life.” what does he mean? “I understand where you’re coming from, really.”   
  
Sure, do the reverse psychology to me, like that’s ever gonna work. >:( >:( “oh really? And where is that? ???”   
  
“I know David. It’s simple as that; he doesn’t give much value to something until it’s not his anymore.” He calmly said, pero medyo parang annoyed din siya. “I can’t blame you for being so cold to him.”   
  
Actually, what he said is true. So I calmed down as well. “so why are you still doing him a favor, then? ???”   
  
He looked at me and smiled. “Iris, I said he asked me for a favor… I didn’t say I’m doing him a favor. :) :)”   
  
Whoa. :o :o That froze me up.   
  
“so what do you mean by that? ???”   
  
“I’m not looking after you because he asked me to, it’s because I simply want to.” I just gave him a blank stare. Anong gagawin ko? ??? :-\   
  
Oookkkayyyy?! Where did that come from? Don’t tell me?? is he??   
  
He is, isn’t he!?!?! :o :o :o   
  
He laughed. I guess it’s because of my facial expression changing from time to time. Hindi ko kasi maintindihan yung sinasabi nya eh. “don’t worry, it’s not what you think it is..” wait, what!? he continued talking. “Iris, you’re a very pleasant person.. and I’m glad we’ve become friends and all that.. but I’m not about to ruin that just because I like you..” he paused. “I mean.. as someone close to being my….. :-\ I mean, someone I could trust. :)” he stopped at that. Grabe, ang cute nya talaga! by the way, I just think he’s cute, but I’m not up for anything, really. He noticed that I was a tad bewildered of what he’s trying to say. “let’s just put it this way..” he laid his hands on the blanket. “I like looking after you.. because…” he had a little hesitation, but after a couple of seconds, he decided to continue. “you’re distinctive. :)”   
  
“okay.” that’s all I managed to say. In other languages, though, I meant to say ‘aww. That’s sweet.’ And just melt right there.. but in English, okay is enough. Oh gosh.. I feel like blood has come up my head right now! This is one of those awkward moments where you blush like you’re about to explode, so to speak.   
  
Well, after saying that, I just pretended it didn’t mean anything to me, you know, like playing it cool and stuff. It shouldn’t mean anything, or should it?   
  
“let’s eat..” alright, so he played it cool, too. Kaya ayun, we went on with our picnic and didn’t pay much attention to what went out just earlier. Oh, and we even watched the sunset too! Wasn’t that romantic.. watching the sunset with a guy oozing with hotness!?! And not to mention, an incredibly close to being a perfect gentleman!?! Tell me ladies! ::) ::)   
  
And the rest of the afternoon and evening went on this way: we ate the wonderful, well-prepared meal he had in his cute picnic basket, we talked non-stop, we laughed, we exchanged funny stories, we… Well, we sure did have fun. Hindi ko na nga napansin na I passed the time I told Jeremy I’d be home by.   
  
By the time I realized this, it was already 8:15. shoot. An hour and 15 minutes late, lagot na! “oh!” I stood up right away. “I have to head back now, I promised Jeremy I’d be back by 7.. :-\ and…” I started to get anxious, eh kase naman, baka sigawan na naman ako nun noh!! “well, I passed the time already. So.. :-\” I gathered my stuff so I could go, “thanks for everything, Randy, I appreciate it. :) :-\”   
  
He stood up, too. “no problem, I’d be glad to do this more often.” And we both looked at the stuff on the floor, hindi pa kase nakakapagligpit eh. “don’t worry, I'll take care of all these, you go ahead.” Nagsmile na lang ako sa kanya. “sorry I couldn’t walk you back.”   
  
“oh that’s fine.” Nakakahiya na nga yung hindi ko siya tinulungan magligpit eh, nagsosorry pa sya.. hayyy. “I’ll just see you next time, okay?” he saluted me, tapos I turned around and started running.   
  
Hindi pa ko nakakalayo sa kanya when all of a sudden…..   
  
“awwwwwwwwwww!!! :o :-[” I fell flat on my face! Well, apparently, dahil sa pagmamadali ko, hindi ko napansin na may rock pala sa dinadaanan ko.   
  
At siempre, dahil sa ala-opera yung boses ko kapag sumisigaw, Randy heard me right away, at tumakbo siya papunta sakin kagad. “hey..” he stood me up, only to find out that my ankle.. ohh!!! My ankle’s killing me!! “what happened? ??? Are you okay? ??? :-\” hinawakan nya yung kamay ko, dahil sa na off-balance ako. “here let me help you.” instead of offering his arm for support, he carried me. whoa. :o   
  
“ouch! :'( ” He carried me! and I could feel his muscles, too! Wowwww!! He’s so… he’s so sweet.   
  
So ayun, he transported me until he saw this rock where he could lay me down. “here, sit here..” Pagkababa naman nya sakin, he lifted my left leg tapos tinaas nya ng konti yung pants ko. What’s he doing? ??? :o   
  
“what are you doing? ???”   
  
“I’m giving you a massage, now just sit back and let me handle this, okay? :) :)”   
  
“but? ???” ayoko sana eh, kaya lang he started massaging me already. Whoaaa. Does that feel good or what!?!? he really does know how take the pain away! Nagsmile ako sa kanya, “thanks, Randy. :)”   
  
He smiled at me, too. “you’re welcome.”   
  
“where did you learn how to do that? :)” I watched him while he slowly massaged my foot.   
  
“I used to do this a lot for my grandfather when he was still alive.” Nakaconcentrate pa rin siya sa pag mamassage sa ankle ko. “that does that feel good?”   
  
“yes.. :)” not only to my foot, but it feels good all through out.. aww. I really don’t feel the pain anymore, more like.. kilig na. hehehe.   
  
“hey, can I ask you something?” bigla naman siyang nagtanong.   
  
“sure, what is it?”   
  
He almost didn’t speak after I said sure. But then, after a while, he carried on with his question. “alright, I know it’s not my business to ask, but do you mind if I inquire you about your relationship with Jeremy? I know he’s not your boyfriend, but why do you seem to be very terrified of him? ??? :-\”   
  
So I almost choked with that rather random and odd question. Me and Stiffie? :o :o Oo nga, why am I terrified of him? “oh.. uhm. It’s because… :-\” I paused, “it’s because my mom and grandmother had told him to look out for me while I’m far away from home..” medyo naubo pa ko non. “he’s just doing what he’s told, which I’m giving him a hard time in doing so.” Ang hirap naman magexplain ng hindi mo alam!? ???   
  
“I see, but still though, it seems like he has you all tied up and such.”   
  
I chuckled a little, ako? tied up? Psshhh!! Please! “me? ???” I pointed myself. “I’m not tied up, I just don’t want to get in trouble, that’s all.”   
  
Sya rin, natawa yata din dun sa sinabi ko. I’m serious though!   
  
  
  
  
  
  
“so, do you like him? ??? :-\”   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“so, do you like him? ??? :-\”   
  
  
For some reason, I wasn’t surprised with his question, as it seemed like it was a natural thing, and a natural observation, too. “uhhmm… no.. :-\ :-\ of courseeeeee… ??? :-[ >:( not.” teka? Bakit parang nahihirapan ata akong magsabi nun?   
  
“you’re a funny girl, Iris. :)” Tumawa siya. Okay? I wasn’t being funny!   
  
So tinaasan ko siya ng kilay. Hmff!! Hindi porket masarap siyang magmassage, at over siya sa pagkacute, eh may right na siyang tawanan ako noh! “why are you laughing? ???”   
  
“nothing, it’s just that you seem guilty.. look at you! :D :D” he pointed his finger at my face, but it wasn’t an insulting point. “you’re as red as a ripe tomato! ;D”   
  
“I am? ???” hinawakan tuloy yung face ko. and based on the feeling, yeah.. I’m blushing. “oh shoot. I am!!” oh gosh, what an embarrassing moment! “how embarrassing! :-[ :-[”   
  
“it’s okay, everyone has an embarrassing moment. ;)” He winked at me. “so based on the sudden blush in your face, I think my question has just been answered.”   
  
Huh?! Pano nangyare yun? “it did? ???”   
  
“of course. Don’t worry, I’m not gonna rat on you.”   
  
“but no, that’s not what it means, though.. :-[ :-[” nahiya tuloy ako bigla!!   
  
“hey!” he tapped my foot. “If you can’t admit it to yourself right now, that’s alright, it’s your call.”   
  
“oh stop that!” pinalo ko ng konti yung shoulder nya, “I don’t like him!” how could i? eh ang sungit sungit sungit sungit non noh! “he’s not even my type--- :-X.” I almost choked again.   
  
“relax, I was just teasing you. :D ;)”   
  
But I continued talking still. “come on, tell me, how can I possibly like a guy who always looks so serious? He’s so boring, he’s so stingy, he’s rude, he treats me like sh1t, he’s always irritated by me, he’s such a jerk, and he’s a pain in the butt… big time pain! And…” I took a deep breath, while he, on the other hand, has given me his full attention. “—and I practically hate him… I hate him because he doesn’t really care about me, not even a little. :-[” ayan! Hmff. Naiinis tuloy ako!!   
  
I looked down at my foot he’s massaging. I realized he stopped massaging me na pala. “well, he sure looks like someone with a lot of hang ups in life.. but you know, he couldn’t be that bad.. :-\”   
  
I could not understand what just happened, what did I just say? What I was trying to say was… hold up! What did I want to say!? Oh my gosh!? “uhmmm.” Wala na kong nagawa but put my face on my hands. Nakakahiya naman kase noh!!   
  
“just so you know, you can always come to me with anything.. whether it’s business or personal thoughts..” he said. “and by the way, I don’t think he doesn’t care about you.. he does, he just doesn’t want to show it. :) :)”   
  
Truth be told, I think Randy’s such a sensitive guy.. buti pa siya, may care sakin. Hmff! I was gonna reach out and give him a hug when all of sudden……..   
  
“what the hell are you doing to her!?!?! >:(” somebody just pushed him away from me. when I looked who it was…. What the heck!?   
  
Napatayo tuloy ako ng wala sa oras. “Jeremy! >:(” errr!! This guy always puts me in trouble!!   
  
Randy stood up, “hey man, it’s not what you think it is.. :-\”   
  
But he didn’t listen to him, instead, “anong it’s not what I think it is, eh kitang kita ko kung anong ginagawa mo sa kanya. eh sira ulo ka pala eh! >:( >:(” tapos he pushed him again. aba!! How rude can this be!? >:( >:(   
  
So walked right into the middle and pushed him as well, “Jeremy ano ba! >:(”   
  
Nagulat siya because I pushed him away from Randy. So he faced me, and boy I could tell he’s flaming mad! “ano!? ??? ??? Pagtatanggol mo yan!? Eh binabastos ka na, nagpapabastos ka naman! >:(” anong binabastos?!   
  
Hindi ko naman pinansin yung sinabi nya. Ang bad nya talaga kahit kailan! He’s assuming things, hindi naman totoo. Instead of putting up a fight with him, I turned to Randy and helped him stand up. “I’m so sorry about this Randy, he must’ve just taken a few drinks that’s why he’s like this.” then I whispered this to him: “see, do you now know what I was talking about earlier? Total jerk, right!? >:(” tapos nagsalita na ko with my normal voice. “it’s okay. just go. :-\ :-\”   
  
And he gladly obeyed my command. Tumayo na siya after nun and walked away from us. And now, it’s just me and Stiffie. Ha! akala nya ha! what he did was so out of line! “and you! >:(” I said, while pointing straight at him. “why did you do that!?” rather than answering my question, he just stared at and then grabbed me by the arm. So now, I felt the pain in my ankle again! “aray! :-[ :-[ Careful! :'( :'(” this idiot! He literally dragged me back to the hotel! Huhuhh.. my ankleee!!!! :'( :'( :'(   
  
When we got inside the room, he tossed me to the chair. “what do you think you’re doing down there? >:( >:(”   
  
Pagtingin ko sa arm ko, nakita ko it’s red. “what are you talking about!?”   
  
“don’t act like you don’t know what I’m talking about Iris! >:( >:(” what? ano bang ginagawa ko?   
  
“I tripped on a rock, he was just giving me a massage! >:( >:(” kaya tinuro ko yung ankle ko para makita nya. “and then you had to do that. Nakakahiya! He’s being kind na nga, ganun pa ginawa mo! >:( >:(”   
  
But he didn’t seem convinced. “eh hindi naman ankle mo yung hawak nya eh. I saw it with my two eyes, Iris. He was touching your legs! >:( >:(”   
  
My legs? Oh come on, Randy wasn’t touching my legs! “so!? ??? Alam mo, I don’t understand you! why all of a sudden you’re acting like a jealous and possessive boyfriend!? ??? ???” I stood up and looked at him straight in the eye. ah ha!! I think I know what’s going on here. hmmm!!! So I thought of messing around with him. “you’re jealous aren’t you!? 8) ???”   
  
As soon as he heard that, his faced turned red, and his eyes were bulging with anger. “ako? nagseselos? Ha!? ang lakas din ng tama mo no!? >:(” tapos tinalikuran nya ko at nagpunta sa kitchen.   
  
He sure does have the guilty face! Hahahahaha!! I just love making him pikon talaga! I walked right behind him like a silly little kid who wants to make someone cry. “aminin mo na kase, kaya ka nagkakaganyan kase nagseselos ka! 8)” with matching tawa pa. oh my gosh, if you guys could only see his face right now!! I swear, you’d laugh like crazy style! ;D ;D ;D   
  
Alam ko naman na hindi siya nagseselos eh, and that he’s just pikon right now. I just love doing this to him, masyado kase siyang seryoso eh. tsaka, he owes me an apology noh! Hmff. Ikaw ba naman kaladkarin from the beach with so many people watching, hindi ka ba gaganti!? >:( >:(   
  
I thought I knew what was going to happen next, but I was wrong, because as I was standing there provoking him, he suddenly placed his hands on his waist and said these words that technically stopped everything around me, even my heartbeat, per se.   
  
He yelled at me, right in front my face. “Oo! Nagseselos ako! ano? Masaya ka na!? >:( >:(” I could not believe what I just heard.. did he just? Wait, is he? We both didn’t move at that point, actually, I felt like a fly could just fly in my mouth because it was wide open, in astonishment.   
  
I didn’t know what to do, it was such a bizarre spot to be in. ano bang ginagawa kapag sinasabihan ka na nagseselos sya? I mean, what am I supposed to do? I have no idea, at all!   
  
Eh alam naman natin how I am when I get nervous diba.. I laugh.   
  
“ha-ha!! 8) 8)” I clapped my hands and rolled my eyes on him. “nice one.”   
  
Rather than saying something in defense, he remained silent. After nun, bumalik na siya sa couch and rested his head on the arm rest.   
  
Bakit ganun? Hindi nya ko pinansin? Totoo kaya yung sinabi nya? If it was real and he was serious, he would have defended himself, correct?   
  
Kaya pati tuloy ako, nahawa na sa pagiging silent nya. I didn’t know what to do or say even, eh. feeling ko tuloy napahiya pa ko. huhuhu. Di bale, bukas ko na lang siya kukulitin. I went inside the bathroom to change my clothes, after that, nagdecide ako na humiga na muna and listen to my ipod, since si Stiffie eh… okay, tulog na pala sya. ;D :-\   
  
Ngayon ko lang napansin, even when he’s asleep, mukhang bothered pa rin yung face nya..bakit kaya ganun? Ano yun, kahit sa sleep nya, work pa rin yung nasa mind nya? Does he ever dream about… nice and happy thoughts? ??? :-\   
  
Nung hindi naman ako makatulog, I decided to take a look at my cell phone, 2 days ko na ata itong hindi natitignan eh. pano kase, I always forget to take this with me, I got used to my Mom always putting my phone in my purse.. eh now, wala naman si Mommy dito, that’s why I always forget.   
  
Well, anyway, so I took a look at my phone and checked who’s called and texted.. and so far, nobody important naman. only the usual callers-slash-texters. My Mom, my Grandma, si David. si Ella din may missed call, kaya lang, when I called her back naman the other time, we weren’t able to talk that much, busy kasi daw siya.. you know.. business. ::)   
  
Speaking of, matawagan nga yun, siguro naman, hindi na siya busy by now, it’s Saturday, she should be free.   
  
After a couple of rings, “couz!! :D :D” okay, somebody’s so excited! “bah, buti naman at nagparamdam ka ha!?”   
  
“wow, hello to you, too!” sinabi ko ng pabiro, tignan mo to, non-stop na kagad, I haven’t even said hello yet. “sorry, it’s been a very busy week eh.. but I’m glad the seminar’s finally over.”   
  
“oh that’s good. :D” I heard her flip a page. Oh gosh, don’t tell me she’s working this late? “so kamusta naman si Mr. Sungit?”   
  
I didn’t understand what she said, sungit? “Mr. who? ??? ???” pangalan ba yun ng isa sa mga investors? ???   
  
“si Jeremy!” ahh.. okay. “ano? Living nightmare ba?”   
  
“oh, no.. he’s fine. I guess the question is, am I making his life a living nightmare? ;D ;D” tapos natawa ako ng malakas. Si Stiffie, ayun, gumalaw siya, so I covered my mouth and silently stood up and went out the terrace.   
  
“anong ginagawa nya? Natutulog na? uy, balita ko, iisa lang daw ang room nyo ha!? so, tabi kayo matulog?”   
  
what? alam nyo, minsan talaga, although I understand tagalog perfectly, hindi ko maintindihan kapag si Ella ang nagsasalita, pano kase, dire-direcho siya magsalita eh! I mean, there’s always a ten seconds interval. “no, of course not! he sleeps in the couch, I sleep in the bed.”   
  
“ah sus! ::)” parang hindi pa siya makapaniwala. “eh pano yun? hindi ka man lang naawa dun sa tao, sa couch mo pinapatulog?”   
  
“eh that’s where he wants to sleep eh.” even if he wanted to get the bed, I wouldn’t let him have it, anyway.. ano siya? Hilo? ??? ???   
  
“so, you want him to sleep beside you?” talaga itong si Ella! ::) “sleep with you!?” then her voice sounded sillier, “sleep together?”   
  
“no! eeww! :o” I said defensively. “ikaw ha! ::)”   
  
“sus! Bakit ang defensive mo!?” she said teasingly, “aminin mo nga, the whole time you guys have been together in one room, ni minsan ba hindi ka naattract sa kanya? ???”   
  
Bakit naman niya tinatanong yun? my eyebrows met each other at this thought. Hindi naman ako naattract sa kanya no! eww. That’s just.. disgusting! :-X “why would I be attracted to him, he’s so boring, and on top of that, he’s not attractive at all.”   
  
“hay nako! Sige, sure.. whatever!” aba? Ayaw maniwala!? Eh hindi naman talaga attractive si Stiffie diba!? “baka mamaya nyan, malaman ko na lang.. nagkakadevelopan na kayo ha!”   
  
“ahh! Shut up, Ella! ::)” I said. I’m annoyed, but I’m not mad at her. Ganyan naman kasi talaga yan eh. ::)   
  
She just laughed. Apparently, hearing how annoyed I am amuses her. But then after a while, she stopped laughing na rin. Thank God! “ay, sya nga pala. May tumawag dito nung isang araw..” she paused.. tapos sumigaw siya ng konti.. “yaya.. sino nga yun ulit? Lauren? Ahh! Si Lauren!”   
  
Lauren!!! :D :D “talaga? :D” naexcite naman ako bigla nun. “what’d she say? What did you tell her? Did you give her my number?”   
  
“hey! Slow down! Hindi ko siya nakausap noh, si yaya yung nakasagot ng phone, sinabi lang nya sakin. But don’t worry, next time she calls, I’ll have her call you right away.”   
  
“yeah! You better!” sinabi ko sa kanya ng pabiro. “gosh I haven’t talked to her in such a long time..”   
  
“tatawag naman yun ulit. Ang sabi kasi na yaya, nasa seminar ka, and you’d be back in two weeks..”   
  
“but if ever she calls before I get back…”   
  
She cut me off even before I could finish what I was going to say. “oo! :D” that’s good, she knows exactly what I’m thinking! “anyway.. ano.. dali.. kwentuhan mo ko tungkol sa inyo ni Jeremy!!” bakit ba sobrang anxious siya marinig yung about kay Stiffie!?   
  
“what do I tell you, eh him and I barely talk to each other..” totoo naman noh, diba nga, I almost thought my mouth’s about to dry up? But then I remembered, we had some good times, too.. “well, there were some instances… ::)” I thought about those times we spent together – ng hindi nagaaway! “we took a tour of the whole city one time.. and then we watched the sunset together.. we laughed, we talked…”   
  
And there she goes again, hindi pa nga tapos sa story ko.. “uuuyyyyyyy!! Lovebirds!!”   
  
Hindi ko na lang siya pinansin. “kaya lang sobrang moody nya eh.. worse that I am on my rag! >:( Sometimes, he’s so nice to me.. and then a second after, he turns into a monster and just yells at me!” I said. “that guy’s got serious issues, girl.”   
  
“ganun naman talaga yun eh.. pero don’t worry, pag nakuha mo na kiliti nun, ayos na.” ano daw?   
  
“I’m just saying, he’s so mysterious.. I wonder why he’s like that…” I opened the sliding door and went inside.. I was gonna go get a drink in the kitchen. On my way there, nakita ko siya ulit, still sleeping, his face didn’t even change a bit. “I wish I knew what’s bothering him. :-\” I said softly, baka magising eh!   
  
“hala! Concerned siya!”   
  
“shut up! What’s wrong with being concerned.. eh nakakaapekto yun sa performance nya sa work noh, pag lagi na lang siyang ganyan.. ::) :-\” that’s what I said. When I finally filled my glass with water, I walked again to the terrace. And since I passed by him on my way to the kitchen, I passed by him again on my way to the terrace.   
  
Habang naglalakad ako, I heard something.. “sssmmfmfmfm” hindi naman galing kay Ella, or sa background nya. More like.. like someone’s talking? Wait? Who’s talking? Well, I checked him one more time, only to find out that he was the one I’m hearing.   
  
He’s sleep-talking!! :o ???   
  
Eh kaso hindi ko naman marinig yung sinasabi nya, so I moved closer to him. yung phone ko nasa may ear ko pa rin, si Ella kase, may kinukwento. When I was close enough that I could hear what he’s saying..   
  
  
“sorry..” he moved his head, but his eyes remained closed. He must be dreaming? “sorry..” who’s he saying sorry to!? And why is he saying sorry!? ??? “sorry I didn’t mean to….   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
---Sorry.. Tricia….” :o :o :o And I suddenly lost grip to the phone. :-[ :-[   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
---Sorry.. Tricia….” :o :o :o And I suddenly lost grip to the phone. :-[ :-[   
  
Tinamaan ako, ewan ko kung bakit. :-\ :-\ even if I have no idea of what he’s talking about, or even talking to, I felt a rather heavy feeling deep inside. Bakit kaya siya nagsosorry? May ginawa ba siyang masama? If he did, was it that bad, na bakat sa face nya yung repentance? ??? ???   
  
The real question is.. sino si Tricia? Sino siya, at bakit ganun na lang kung magsorry si Jeremy sa kanya? could she be the girl I saw in his planner? Who is she to Jeremy? Where is she now? ??? :-\   
  
Jeremy, why do you have to be so mysterious? Bakit kase kailangan ka maging quiet na lang palagi eh.. can you for once at least tell me a little why you’re always like this? Ayan tuloy…   
  
It makes me…   
  
It makes me want to know you even more…. :-[ :-\   
  
I didn’t realize I had dropped my phone until after I heard Ella screaming on the top of her lungs. “hhhhhhhheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelllllllllllloooooooooooooooooooo!?!?!?”   
  
I picked it up from the carpet right away and stood up, “sorry.. I dropped the phone. :-\”   
  
“okay ka lang? ano bang nangyari sayo?” she asked me. “bakit parang natulala ka ata?”   
  
“huh? Oh.. no..nothing.” I told her.   
  
“hay couz, akala ko naman kung ano ng nangyare dyan eh.”   
  
Even though I was standing up already and quite in a distance from him, kahit na nakikipagusap ako kay Ella, I couldn’t help but stare at him.. at his overly bothered face. Alam nyo, kahit na sobrang I get high blood pressure because of this guy, I feel his pain, although I have no idea what it is.. nasasaktan ako, because I’m seeing him like this. To tell you guys honestly, I’ve never felt anyone’s pain like how I’m feeling his right about this moment. And there is no other awful and strange feeling than watching someone go through suffering.   
  
“huy!!” ano bayan, every time na lang she speaks, nagugulat ako. “ano? Inaantok ka na ata eh.”   
  
Eh kesa naman sa divided yung attention ko, sinabi ko na lang na.. “yeah, I’m kinda sleepy, :-\” I faked a yawn, “sorry couz, I’ll just talk to you later okay?”   
  
“oh sya sige! Akala ko naman kase eh naglalaway ka na dyan sa nakikita mo…” huh!? ??? ???   
  
“what?” hindi ko yata naintindihan yun.   
  
“ang sabi ko, baka kase may pinapanood ka dyan kaya parang wala ka sa sarili mo!”   
  
“what? ???” I had the same reaction. Ano ba kasi yung sinasabi nya? Anong pinapanood? Eh patay naman yung tv ah? “how can I watch Ella, the tv is off.. ::)”   
  
“sus! Ang slow mo talaga!” can somebody please tell me what the heck she’s talking about? ??? ??? “sa bagay, tagalog yun, baka hindi mo naintindihan.”   
  
“eh ano bang sinasabi mo?” I said innocently. Gosh, I hate it when I don’t understand things! “you know, I can’t watch tv this late.. Mr. Stiffie gets all green and monstery. ::) >:(”   
  
She suddenly laughed. “eh hindi naman kaya yun yung sinasabi ko.”   
  
“okay? eh ano?”   
  
“hay nako! wala!” I know she’s being sarcastic. “Hehe! Oh sige na.. matulog ka na, baka bukas pa eh, magkagulo na naman kayo ni Jeremy kapag late ka nagising!” she blurted out a meaningful laugh. “punasan mo yung laway mo ah, tsaka magwink ka naman from time to time, he might catch you checking him out..”   
  
Anooo!? >:( So that’s what she’s been talking about!? “kaw talaga, you’re always making fun of me, hindi ko tinitignan no! ::)”   
  
“ah sus, sige, whatever you say…” aba? Mas magaling pa siya sakin? Eh wala naman siya dito? Hindi naman ako nakatingin sa kanya ahh… well, not anymore.. ;D ;D   
  
“bye na nga!” tapos yun, binaba na namin yung phone.   
  
Two hours akong nakatingin lang sa ceiling bago ako nakatulog. All the while I was just staring up there, I couldn’t help but think about what he said when he was sleep-talking.   
Bakit siya nagsosorry kase? Could he be apologizing because.. he forgot to do something for her.. like… call her? He.. forgot it’s her birthday today? It’s their anniversary? Nahh.. ang shallow naman ata nun to sleep-talk. Sino kaya si Tricia? Yung sister nya kaya? Cousin? Friend? Girl friend nya? Kung girlfriend nya, bakit never ko pa siyang nakita o kaya naririnig man lang sa mga tao? Secret lovers kaya sila? Nahh.. ang corny naman ata nun, they’re not teenagers anymore to hide their relationship, diba? o baka naman ala-Romeo and Juliet ang love story nila kaya secret lovers sila? What could be other reasons to say sorry to someone? Siguro.. he broke her heart that’s why he’s saying sorry? Or maybe it’s the other way around? iniwan siya siguro ni Tricia tapos she came back but he didn’t want her anymore?   
  
Could she be the reason why Jeremy’s so cold and bitter? ??? ???   
  
Ano bayan!? My mind is floating in the outer space! There are a lot of possibilities, but those things came up on the spot.   
  
Just the thought of these things gives me stress already.. pati.. I don’t know, it’s a strange feeling talaga. Something’s telling me there’s gotta be more to this, and I’m dying to know what’s behind that sad and lonely face of his… :-\ :-\   
  
Dahil sa wala nga akong magawa na, at gustong gusto ko ng matulog, kung ano ano na lang yung pinaglalaruan ko. yung pillow, yung comforter, my hair, even my ring.. the white gold ring that my Mom got me two years ago when she went here.. I don’t wear this often, but when I do, I always forget to take it off my finger. It’s not an extraordinary one, but out of the rings that I have, ito yung parang pinaka bagay sa lahat. The rock isn’t big, simple lang yung design. Alam nyo yun? it’s simple, I could wear this even when I’m at home.. stuff like that. Ang sabi ni Lauren, it looks like an engagement ring. Sus! Engagement ring ba to, eh ang liit ng bato!? ::) ::)   
  
I woke up in the middle of the night, and when I turned around to look at the time, it was 3:30 am. I only slept for 3 hours? Oh great, now I can’t sleep? I allowed my mind to wander for a little bit, baka sakaling sa pagwawander ko eh, bigla na lang ako makatulog ulit. Pero hindi. I’m wide awake. Arrgghh! >:(   
  
So I got up and walked to the bathroom to pee. When I got back, I thought of checking up on Stiffie, only to find out he’s not even in there. Is he up? Anong nangyare sa kanya? bakit wala siya dito? Where did he go!?   
  
Why am I panicking? :o :o   
  
I walked quietly towards the kitchen. “Jeremy? ???” the lights were on but there was silence. I stopped by the swinging door. “are you here? :-\” wala naman akong narinig. “hello?” this time, I placed my hands on the door, ready to swing it open.   
  
Which I did and found him there, with a cup of coffee, reading… a newspaper!? ??? ??? At 3:30 in the morning? Uh-uh. He must be kidding me?! :o :o “what are you doing up so early?” I sat beside him.   
  
He didn’t say anything until after a couple of minutes later. “nagbabasa, hindi ba halata?”   
  
Tignan mo to, I waited for his response only to hear sarcasm?! “I know, I can see that. ::) >:(”   
  
“yun naman pala eh.” he said, while his eyes were still glued to the newspaper. Ano bang meron sa newspaper? World-breaking news ba yan para makuha yung attention nya? “anong nakain mo at gising ka ng ganito kaaga? ???” bigla nyang tinanong.   
  
Ano nga bang nakain ko at bakit ako gising at this time? Well, I’d hate to ask myself at this time.. not when I’m going berserk! “actually, I have no idea why.” I probably wondered more than he did. I realized that he was just reading a certain part of the newspaper because the other parts were on the table, which I saw. “may I?”   
  
“oh please, like you read the newspaper. 8)” There goes the insult. AGAIN. >:( >:(   
  
I couldn’t think of any excuse to say so I just said whatever popped in my mind. “what? I sometimes like to know what’s going on. 8)” Kahit naman hindi.. well of course not unless it’s about fashion and stuff. ;D ;D   
  
He didn’t say anything; instead he reached out the remaining of the newspaper and tossed them towards me. Tignan nyo, ang sabi nya ako daw ang walang manners and breeding, tell me what he just did!? >:( “ayan, baka sakaling may malaman ka bukod sa pagsha-shopping.” Nakakainis na talaga siya ha! Ang aga aga bakit ang sungit nya!?   
  
“bakit ba ang sungit mo? >:(”   
  
“eh kase ang gulo mo. >:(”   
  
“pano ako naging magulo, eh I was just asking you? ???” he is in no position to give me an attitude noh! Pasalamat siya, pinagbibigyan ko lang siya dati   
  
“matulog ka na nga. >:(”   
  
Sira ulo ba siya? Eh kita na nga nya na nandito ako eh, malamang, hindi ako makatulog diba? “you think I’d be here if I were sleepy? ::)” I rolled my eyes on him.   
  
“pwes, wag ka dito, dahil ayoko ng istorbo.”   
  
“why are you so masungit? >:( ???” alam nyo, minsan talaga nakakaasar na siya. Wala naman akong ginagawa, susungitan nya ko? Aba.. I think that’s a little to much already. “baka naman nagsusungit ka dyan dahil sa sinabi mo kanina.. 8) :-\”   
  
humarap siya sakin. “ano bang pinagsasabi mo ha? ???”   
  
sus, kunyareng hindi alam ::).. “when you said you were jealous.” I lifted my chin up as if I were provoking him.   
  
He gave me that stern look I really hate. He sighed tapos nilayo nya yung tingin nya kagad. “sinabi ko lang yun para tumahimik ka, wag mong isipin na totoo yun, dahil hindi. >:( 8)”   
  
Sobra naman siya. How cold is that!? But honestly though, medyo nahurt ako dun. I wasn’t expecting him to say something else, like he was serious when he said that. pero kahit na. “ah. I knew that. :-\” Nilayo ko rin yung tingin ko sa kanya.   
  
“mabuti alam mo. 8)” Then he went back to reading the newspaper.   
  
Sa totoo lang, I want to slap the sh1t out of this guy >:(. Baka sakaling maisip nya na he’s talking to a girl, and girls do not get this kind of treatment, regardless of the situation. Mind you, nobody has ever spoken to me with disrespect in my whole entire life. Even when David and I were together, I didn’t let him treat me like this. Palaban ako, and he’s lucky dahil naaawa ako kanya kaya I’m letting him treat me like this. Bakit nga ba ako naaawa? So I popped this question. “why do you have to be so mean all the time? It’s not a crime to be nice, you know?”   
  
He didn’t respond, instead, he took his cup of coffee and drank from it. “wala kang pakialam kung ganito ako. Kaya pwede ba.. leave me alone? >:(” he was annoyed already. “wala ako sa mood ngayon para makipagtalo sayo okay?”   
  
“who said I’m trying to argue with you!? >:(” I couldn’t hold it anymore, everyone has a boiling point, and boy, he so reached mine already! Tinaasan ko nga sya ng kilay. “and if I don’t leave, what are you gonna do about it, huh? You’re gonna drag me out of here like what you did to me by the beach?! >:(” akala nya hindi ko pa yun nakakalimutan ah! Masakit yun! My arm was red by the time we got here and to think that I hurt my ankle that time ha! Pasalamat siya, I didn’t tell on him. I could’ve called lola or his Dad, and he would have gotten in trouble right on that spot! >:( >:(   
  
he took a deep breath tapos tumayo siya bigla. “kung ayaw mong umalis, ako ang aalis! >:(” pagkasabi nya yun, he started walking out. Okay? ??? What’s up with him? He didn’t even wait for my response. ??? ???   
  
Siempre naman, magpapatalo ba ko lalo na ngayong inis na inis na siya?! Pero sige, fine. Pagbigyan ulit. “okay fine, I’ll leave. :-\” I stood up then I walked to where he was, which was right in front of the swinging door. “sige na, bumalik ka na don. Sorry. :(” He just stared at me as if he was hearing something so unusual from me. ??? ::)   
  
After saying that, I headed out already at bumalik na sa bed. Nakakainis talaga sya. Buti nga ngayon pinapabayaan ko pa siyang ganun-ganunin ako eh. Ewan ko ba why I let him just push me around when I’m not usually like this. If I weren’t so curious about him, I’ve burst already. Di bale, I’d still try my best to find out what really happened in the past. 8) 8) Sabi ni Ella, mabait naman daw si Jeremy eh, I mean before he became a Stiffie, that is. While I was lying down, I thought perhaps his words and actions are related to what I heard a while ago when he was sleeping. And now it makes me wonder even more on who that Tricia is.. or was? ??? ??? In a few minutes time, I feel asleep.   
  
  
Next day.   
  
I woke up the next day at 10 o’clock. Paglingon ko sa couch, nakita ko siya dun nakahiga. He must’ve fallen asleep, too after I fell asleep. I rolled to my side and just stared at him. He had the same expression as last night, wrinkled yung forehead nya, at seryoso yung face nya. “alam mo, nakakainis ka.” I whispered to myself. “but don’t worry, I’ll earn your trust in time. Magiging softie ka rin, watch.” Yup, that’s probably the best way to think about his whole situation thing right now. A little morale booster is not bad. ;D   
  
I stood up, got my towel and clothes from the closet and took a shower. Thank God the seminar’s over and I don’t have to worry about getting there in time every morning. Now I can actually stay in the bathroom for as long as I like. Haayyy.. so what I did was I filled the tub with warm water, put bubbles and lit up the candles. I’m going to have a bubble bath. Wow, I haven’t done this since I got here! :P >:(   
  
But not for long, though, because I heard a pounding knock on the door. “Iris matagal ka pa ba dyan? I need to use the bathroom!” errrr!!!! I just dipped in! >:( >:(   
  
I yelled back at him from the bathroom. “can’t you see I’m using it?! Maghintay ka no!”   
  
“ano bang ginagawa mo dyan kase!? >:(”   
  
“I’m in the tub!!! >:(” nakakainis to! >:(   
  
“well, get out, I need to use the bathroom!! I can’t hold it in any longer!” he sounded so desperate. Nakonsensya naman ako, kase pano kung magkasakit siya? Eh di fault ko pa yun! “IRIS!! >:(”   
  
“alright! >:( Shut your mouth already!” I got on my feet, grabbed the towel and wrapped it around me. Inis na inis ako sa kanya non kaya I planned to yell at his face when I open the door.   
  
And I was about to! Bumubwelo na nga ako eh! I took a deep breath and unlocked the door and it swung a little bit open, siempre I know na nandon siya nakatayo with this flaming look on his face, nakita ko dun sa reflection ng mirror. Trust me, I could feel the tension!! Okay, so is it that terrible for guys to hold their pee? ??? I mean, I know it’s a bad thing to do that, but based on his face right now? Pshh. He looks like he wants to murder me! hindi pa fully open yung door, naririnig ko na siya na kung ano ano yung sinasabi. “ano pang hinihintay mo?! Lumabas ka na dyan! >:(”   
  
“lalabas na nga eh! >:(” I would, but I have to find my robe first! san na ba yun? eh this towel is too tiny to cover me up no! ang thin nga nga, white pa! and you girls know the number one problem with wearing white right!?! ??? Headlights are flashing! ;D If you know what I mean! ;) ;)   
  
So I was holding the towel with both my hands when he swung the door, wide open!!! :o “ano bang gina :o---ga-wa-mo? :-\ :-[..” Nagulat ako noh! Muntik ko na ngang mabitawan yung pagkakahawak ko sa towel!! When I got the grip back to my hands, I noticed he was… he was staring.   
  
The kind of stare that guys do that makes us girls… ANGRY! >:( >:( He’s not staring at me; he was staring at somewhere else!!!   
  
So I covered them as quickly as I could. “ARE YOU STARING AT MY CHEST!?!?!?”   
  
And he stood there, dumbfounded.. he looked like he was trying to gather the words to make up an excuse. Too bad, because no matter how hard he tries to excuse himself, I know that gape very well! And no excuse is going to make me think otherwise! >:(   
  
We stayed in the same spot for about a minute or two when he gulped decided to finally look me in the eye. “magbihis ka na. :-[” his voice was very mellow. “I’ll just use the restroom in the lobby. :-[” After saying that, he went to the closet to get something. At ako naman, I found my robe that I was looking for and put it on me.   
  
I flamed up all of a sudden so I followed him. “you think I’m gonna let you off the hook!? >:(”   
  
“ano bang sinasabi mo?! ??? :-[” nakatalikod pa rin siya sakin.   
  
“that’s not a polite thing to do, Mr. Je-re-my! >:(” I said his name slowly, and sarcastically. Aba, hindi porket nice ako sa kanya, and that I let him treat me badly at times, pwede na nya kong bastusin ng ganon noh!   
  
Nagbuntong-hininga siya tapos yung mga kamay niya nilagay nya sa head nya. “I wasn’t staring where you think I was staring. :-[”   
  
Sus! Whatever! “anong hindi!? Eh obvious naman!”   
  
He sighed again, “okay, fine. I did stare :-X.” See!?! tapos humarap siya sakin. “but just for split second. :-\”   
  
“anong split second ka dyan!?!?! >:(” ginagalit ba talaga ko nito!!?!?   
  
“I’m serious. :-\” Seryoso din yung face nya, but what the heck, he wears the same face all the time! “oo matagal akong nakatingin, but I was staring at something else. :-[”   
  
“tss! Mageexcuse ka pa, eh caught in the act ka naman. >:(” I crossed my arms. “why don’t you just admit it!?” sasakalin ko to eh!!!   
  
He closed his eyes for a bit and when he opened them, his eyes were a little.. teary?! :'( ??? Oh come on, making up an excuse is bad enough! Ano yan, iiyakan pa nya ko, just to get out of this!? Wtf? “dito ko nakatingin.. :-\” he grabbed my hand and held the ring on my finger. What’s he doing!? ??? “where did you get this?”   
  
“bigay ng Mommy ko! >:(” Kinuha ko ulit yung hand ko from him. “bakit?! ???” I said, “don’t tell me this is yours!?” ano sya bading!? ::) ???   
  
“no.” He took my hand back and held on it tightly. “It just looks very familiar… :-[” familiar ka dyan!! Kung makatingin siya sa ring ko, parang nakakita siya ng ghost. What’s up with this guy!? Ganito ba talaga ang nangyayare kapag napigil na yung pee nila? ??? ;D   
  
“okay? so what?”   
  
Yan na naman yung facial expression na nakakaawa!! :-\ Errr! >:( Huminga siya ulit ng malalim tapos sinabi nyang…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“I had the same ring in my pocket a few years back…. :-[” Okay? so what the hell is that supposed to mean? ??? ???   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Marami talagang nangyare ever since we set foot here in Davao. A lot of things that got me in a very tough ride in a roller coaster. Grabe, I thought I’d never have this ride again, yun pala, I’m bound to be in this emotional state of being for as long as my life and someone up there permits it to happen.. or maybe kismet’s not tired enough of playing with my fortune? Grabe, bakit ba ako nagkakaganito ngayon? ??? :-\   
  
Magulo ang isip ko, sobrang gulo. :-[ :-[ Ang dami ko kasing maling diskarte nitong mga nakaraang araw. To think that I’ve lived my life perfectly normal prior to this.. kahit na malungkot ako, at least I was able to get by without dwelling my mind on a certain thing all the time. Ewan ko ba kung bakit ako nagkakaganito. Minamalas nga ata talaga ako. pumayag pa kase akong pumunta dito eh, kung hindi lang sana, eh di maayos pa ang lahat. >:( :-[ Kaya ayan tuloy, a series of unfortunate events, kung maitatawag, ang nangyari at patuloy pa ring nangyayari. >:( >:(   
  
STRIKE #1: pumayag ako na magstay kame sa iisang kwarto lang. kung tutuusin, pwede naman kame magcheck in sa ibang hotel, dun sa maraming rooms.. diba? siempre sa iisang lugar lang kame natutulog, iisang place lang ang ginagalawan namin, of course hindi ko naman mapigilan na hindi siya mapansin.. :-\   
  
Which led to STRIKE #2: gumaan yung loob ko kay Iris, samantalang I convinced myself that there’s no hope she and I would get along. Yun pala, I found out we have a lot of things in common and it would be impossible for us not to harmonize. Ang nakadagdag pa dun, nagshare siya tungkol sa buhay nya… pakiramdam ko dun nagsimulang gumaan ang loob ko sa kanya. I somehow felt her distress, katulad ko. alam kong magkaiba yung source ng loneliness namin, dahil siya, she’s missing a father. Dahil dun, naintindihan ko kung bakit siya ganyan, may ugali. Hindi ko naman siya masisisi eh, because I recognize the same person, ME. :-\ :-\ ganito ako ngayon dahil sa pangungulila ko kay Tricia.   
  
Kaya ko tuloy dinala si Iris dun sa secret hiding place ko, on top of the hill kung saan makikita yung over view ng buong beach. That’s the only place I know kung gusto ko talagang mapag-isa. Dun ako nagpunta nung mawala si Tricia. Dun ko binuhos ang lahat ng sama ng loob ko sa mundo, pati na rin yung galit ko sa sarili ko. wala akong ibang dinala sa lugar na yun, si Iris lang. si Tricia nga nung nabubuhay pa siya, never kong nadala dun eh. In that case, STRIKE #3.   
  
And to make matters worse, I kissed her.   
  
STRIKE #4.   
  
And then she kissed me back.   
  
STRIKE #5.   
  
Umiwas na nga ako after nun eh, I know I owe her an apology for doing such action and a better explanation than that lame excuse I gave her, pero hindi ko nagawa. Wala naman akong masasabing ibang dahilan, kase ginusto ko rin yun and it really felt right at the moment. Ang hindi ko lang malaman, bakit nya din ako hinalikan? ??? ??? Malungkot din kaya siya katulad ko nung mga panahon na yun? Ayoko ng mag-isip.   
  
And of course, dahil sa gumaan na nga ang pakiramdam ko sa kanya, subconsciously, I started caring and looking after her. Dati kase, feeling ko I’m following orders from the boss lang kaya dapat ko siyang bantayan. But now? I think I’ve looked after her a little to much.. I started worrying about her, kailangan lagi ko siyang nakikita, hindi ako mapalagay every time lumalabas siya ng hindi ako kasama. Kapag kasama naman ako, naiinis ako sa kanya, kasi ang dami nyang arte. But whenever she’s out talaga, hindi ako mapalagay :-\ :-\. Ewan ko ba kung bakit. siguro dahil sa Randy na yun. wala talaga akong tiwala dun sa alien na yun, kahit na nung simula pa lang. Biruin nyo, nadatnan ko nung isang araw na nakahawak sa legs ni Iris? Ito namang si Iris, pinagtanggol. Minamasahe daw, anong klaseng masahe yun? >:( >:( dahil sa Randy na yun kaya pakiramdam ko, nagseselos ako. :-[ at hindi ko lang sinabi sa sarili ko, pati sa kanya mismo. Nabigla ako eh, kaya bigla na lang lumabas. STRIKE #6. I’m not supposed to act or feel like this, especially not with her. :-[ :-[   
  
Six strikes. Damn. :-\   
  
Sa totoo lang, kahit na ganun yung ugali nya, I can honestly say that I’m fond of her. Sa kakulitan nya, sa kaartehan nya, sa pagka-spoiled nya, sa pagka-maldita nya at pagka-pasaway nya. I’m surprised by the fact that even though she and Tricia are 100% different from each other, magaan pa rin ang loob ko sa kanya :). siguro dahil sa napapatawa nya ko from time to time.. something I never got to do ever since Tricia’s death. As a matter of fact, I don’t remember smiling for no reason at all in such a long time. Three years ng wala si Tricia, marami na kong nakasalubong na tao, mga nakilalang babae but none of them made me smile, or even at least tried to make me force it.   
  
Never did it occur to me that a particular personality I thought was not worth anything could turn into that one thing I really need. I hate to admit it, but Iris’ personality is slowly changing me back to who I was before these events took place…   
  
…Which got me to think about this intensively and I suddenly came into a conclusion: I’M BEING UNFAIR. Unfair kay Tricia na pinangakuan ko, kay Iris na wala namang kaalam-alam sa nangyayare pero palagi ko na lang sinusungitan each time I mess up, at higit sa lahat, sa sarili ko, for letting all of these happen when I should know better.   
  
Hindi naman siya ganun ka special kung tutuusin para magkaganito ako eh. Ayoko naman sa kanya, pero bakit parang may nagtutulak sakin para umasta ng katulad nito? Itong pagkatuwa ko kay Iris.. dapat hanggang dito na lang ito, dahil wala na tong pwedeng ibang puntahan pa.. maliban sa.. absolute friendship lang… I guess ??? :-\? Hihintayin ko pa bang mag strike 7? 8? 9? 10? Para gumawa ako ng aksyon? Ayoko namang pasukan ang isang bagay na hindi ko dapat pasukan. Si Iris yun. Hindi dapat kame maging malapit pa sa pagiging magkaibigan.   
  
Mahal ko si Tricia and I don’t want to be a person who doesn’t know how to keep his word. I should not make things worse, therefore, si Iris.. she should not be a part of any of these. Hindi ko dapat ginagawa sa kanila kaya bago man ako gumawa ng isang bagay na pagsisisihan ko lang, dapat magpigil nako. Di bale, sanay na naman ako sa ganitong kalagayan ehh.. I’ve practically been like this.. for 3 years now.   
  
Hay.. I know.. I never seem to stop torturing myself. :-\ :-\   
  
Nagising ako ng 2:45 in the morning, nagising ako sa isang panaginip.. si Tricia, nakita ko.. nasa harap ko siya at parang may sinasabi siya sakin, kaya lang hindi ko maintindihan. At ako? sa sobrang guilt na nararamdaman ko, all I ever said is that I’m sorry and I didn’t mean to do the things I just did. Kasama na dun ang pag amin ko sa kanya na hindi ko sinasadyang malapit kay Iris.. It was almost as if the whole thing was real, like she was really right in front of me.. talking to me, and I was doing the same thing :'( :'(. Ewan ko, siguro out of imagination lang yun. Lumingon ako sa kama, and I saw Iris, nakaharap siya sa side ko, sleeping. Inalis ko kagad yung tingin ko sa kanya. Ano ba naman, kakagising ko lang at kakahingi ko lang ng tawad, eto na naman ako….   
  
So I thought of getting up to drink some coffee and maybe read the newspaper in the mean time. Para madivert ko naman yung isip ko, dahil kung hindi, baka masiraan ako ng bait. Anong araw na ba ngayon? Oh great, it’s May 13 . isang buwan na lang pala, 3rd death anniversary na ni Tricia. Kaya siguro sya nagpaparamdam, para ipaalala sakin na hindi ko siya dapat makalimutan.   
  
Madalas naman akong nagigising around this time.. ganitong oras kasi namatay si Tricia eh, and since then I see to it na kung maaari sana, gising ako at this time.. para maipagdasal ko siya. Sana kung nasan man siya, masaya siya. Hay, I miss her so much. Kung hindi siguro siya namatay malamang kasal na kame ngayon, may anak na.. we could have been happy.. both of us… if she had only accepted the ring I had in my pocket that time… :-[ :-[ pakakasalan ko pa rin naman siya sa kabila ng sakit nya eh… ganon ko siya kamahal. Tatlong linggo na lang, nakalipas na naman ang isang taon na wala si Tricia. Ang sabi nila, time heals the wound.. pero bakit ganun? Habang lumilipas ang panahon, lalo akong nalulungkot? Ang sabi rin nila, don’t dwell in the past.. at kailangan ko na siyang i-let go para makapag-move on ako.. hindi ko naman magawa, I don’t want to forget about Tricia.. How can I forget someone like Tricia? ??? :-\ :-\ I tried though, but it didn’t work. Instead, it made things more complicated.. ahh! lecheng mga kasabihan yan! Hindi naman totoo!! >:( :-\ >:(   
  
I made myself a cup of coffee at naupo na sa dining table para makapagbasa na ng dyaryo. I had thirty peaceful minutes that I thought would last until sunrise. Hanggang sa…   
  
“Jeremy? ??? are you here? :-\ hello?” bakit siya gising? I didn’t respond. Kunyaring hindi ko siya naririnig. Kung pwede nga lang nga, ayoko siyang marinig eh. Mga ilang seconds pa siguro siyang nakatayo sa labas ng swinging door bago nya ito binuksan. “what are you doing up so early?” she sat beside me.   
  
“nagbabasa, hindi ba halata?” sabi ko sa kanya. I wasn’t going to respond to her at all, but I then I thought, kapag hindi, mangungulit na naman siya at lalo lang ako maiinis sa kanya.   
  
“I know, I can see that. ::) >:(”   
  
“yun naman pala eh.” nakikita naman pala nya eh, nagtatanong pa. “anong nakain mo at gising ka ng ganito kaaga? ???” my eyes remained on the article I was reading, kahit na hindi ko naman maintindihan yung binabasa ko. Tungkol sa kung ano-anong bagay lang naman. As much as possible kase, ayoko siyang tignan, kahit saglit lang. I don’t want to see those eyes, those lips, those dimples. Ahhh! Bwiset! :) >:(   
  
“actually, I have no idea why.” hindi nya alam kung bakit siya gising? Ang weirdo naman nito! “may I?” bigla nyang sinabi. Napatingin tuloy ako sa kanya. She was pointing at the newspaper I left beside me.   
  
Sus, as if naman may interest sya sa balita ng Pilipinas no? “oh please, like you read the newspaper. 8)”   
  
“what? I sometimes like to know what’s going on. 8)” whatever. If I know puro kalandian lang ang titignan mo dyan eh.   
  
Hinagis ko sa kanya yung newspaper. “ayan, baka sakaling may malaman ka bukod sa pagsha-shopping.”   
  
“bakit ba ang sungit mo? >:(”   
  
“eh kase ang gulo mo. >:(”   
  
“pano ako naging magulo, eh I was just asking you? ???” ayan na, nagsisimula ng dumakdak!!   
  
“matulog ka na nga. >:(” nananahimik yung tao eh!!   
  
She looked at me as if I said something out of concept. “you think I’d be here if I were sleepy? ::)” aba, at inirapan pa ko! oo nga naman, may punto siya. Pero kahit na!   
  
Nakakapikon na ha >:(! “pwes, wag ka dito, dahil ayoko ng istorbo.”   
  
Tinaas nya yung boses nya. “why are you so masungit? >:( ???” EH ANO BANG PAKIALAM MO KUNG MASUNGIT AKO!?!? >:( >:( Tinignan nya ulit ako, the same look she gave me when she popped that silly ‘are you jealous’ question.“baka naman nagsusungit ka dyan dahil sa sinabi mo kanina.. 8) :-\” damn it! Hindi pa ba nya yun nakakalimutan!?!?!   
  
Deadma na lang ako. Kunyaring hindi alam kung anong pinagsasabi nya. “ano bang pinagsasabi mo ha? ???”   
  
“when you said you were jealous.” ANO BA IRIS, TUMIGIL KA NA!! ANO BANG GUSTO MONG SABIHIN KO?! OO? NAGSESELOS AKO!? >:( >:(   
  
Hindi pwede :-[. “sinabi ko lang yun para tumahimik ka, wag mong isipin na totoo yun, dahil hindi. >:( 8)” ayy. Sumobra ata yung approach ko. Pagkasabi ko nun, she looked very disappointed. Ano ka ngayon ha!? 8) 8) Kagabi, ganyan din ang ginawa mo sakin. Pinagtawanan mo pa nga ako eh!! >:( >:(   
  
“ah. I knew that. :-\” nilayo nya yung tingin nya bigla. Oh ano na naman yan!?   
  
“mabuti alam mo. 8)” as much as possible, gusto ko na lang maging masungit sa kanya, baka sakaling magbago yung nararamdaman ko eh, I mean… alam nyo na, para hindi ako iniisip na…. ano nga ba!? ??? ???   
  
Matagal syang nanahimik. However, not the kind of silence I wanted to have around here. Ang gulo naman, kanina, I wanted to shut her mouth myself, ngayong tahimik na siya, hindi naman ako mapakali :-\. “why do you have to be so mean all the time? It’s not a crime to be nice, you know?” bigla nyang tinanong. Nagulat ako. Naiinis ako because her voice was filled with concern… and I do not want her to be.   
  
I couldn’t think of any response to say, so I took a sip of my coffee to allow myself to at least think about something a little bit reasonable. Eh, wala naman akong maisip, kaya ito na lang ang sinabi ko, “wala kang pakialam kung ganito ako. Kaya pwede ba.. leave me alone? >:(” I hate it when people act as if they care and actually understand me, when in reality, they really don’t. “wala ako sa mood ngayon para makipagtalo sayo okay?”   
  
“who said I’m trying to argue with you!? >:(” eto na naman tayo eh!!! Napipikon na ko ha! “and if I don’t leave, what are you gonna do about it, huh? You’re gonna drag me out of here like what you did to me by the beach?! >:(” I dragged her? ??? :-\   
  
okay, that’s it, I’ve had it! Why does she have to do this all the time? “kung ayaw mong umalis, ako ang aalis! >:(” I stood up and walked towards the swinging door.   
  
Narinig ko siyang huminga ng malalim. “okay fine, I’ll leave. :-\” so I stopped walking pero hindi ako lumingon para tignan sya. “sige na, bumalik ka na don. Sorry. :(” I looked at her. Did she just say sorry to me? ANO NA NAMANG PALABAS TO, IRIS!!?!?! >:( ??? She is so not getting me with that look! >:( :-\   
  
Hindi pa ako nakakasalita, umalis na siya. Gusto ko sana siyang sundan para tanungin kung anong pakana na naman yung ginawa nya, kaso hindi ko ginawa. Baka kung saan na naman humantong yun eh.   
  
4:00 am ng lumabas ako ng kitchen at bumalik sa bedroom. Naisip ko, maybe I was a little harsh on how I treated her a while ago. Perhaps I went a little over board with that attitude.. eh siya naman kasi eh. Ang kulit masyado. Yan tuloy, nasusungitan ko siya ng wala sa oras. Kaya naman I decided to say sorry for treating her the way I did.   
  
Which I really intend to do but she was already asleep by the time I reached the bedroom. “diba sabi ko wag kang masyadong mabait sakin? ??? >:( I hate it when you do that.. lalong gumagaan ang loob ko sayo… :-[ :-[” I spoke softly to myself. I didn’t want to wake her up just for an apology, so I sat in the couch and gazed at her until I fell asleep.   
  
Nagising ako kinabukasan ng late na. 10:30 am. Di bale na, tapos na naman ang seminar eh, baka nga bumalik na ko sa Manila ngayon. At si Iris? Kung ayaw nyang sumama sakin pauwi, pababayaan ko siya dito. Mas okay nga yun eh, at least walang madaldal sa eroplano diba? Speaking of, asan na ba yun? Wala sya sa kama eh. Tumayo ako para gumamit ng banyo. Oh great she’s inside. At may pakanta-kanta pang nalalaman! ::) ::)“Iris matagal ka pa ba dyan? I need to use the bathroom!”   
  
“can’t you see I’m using it?! Maghintay ka no!”   
  
“ano bang ginagawa mo dyan kase!? >:(”   
  
“I’m in the tub!!! >:(” nakakainis to! >:( pa-tub tub pang nalalaman!!   
  
“well, get out, I need to use the bathroom!! I can’t hold it in any longer!” okay, hindi ako nagbibiro, I really need to use it right now! “IRIS!! >:(”   
  
“alright! >:( Shut your mouth already!”   
  
She unlocked the door but did not open it. “ano pang hinihintay mo?! Lumabas ka na dyan! >:(”   
  
“lalabas na nga eh! >:(” lalabas daw, eh bakit hindi pa siya lumalabas? It seemed like she was trying to do something in there. ano bayan, ang tagal!!   
  
I couldn’t wait any longer at baka dito pa ko maihi kung hindi ako makaabot sa toilet. With no further notice, I swung the door wide open and there she was.. covered in a white towel. “ano bang gina :o---ga-wa-mo? :-\ :-[..” can’t deny it, napatingin talaga ako sa kanya at napansin nya yun. Malamang, babae siya, alam nya yung ganung tingin. But wait, what is that in her finger? Is it what I think it is? :o :o   
  
“ARE YOU STARING AT MY CHEST!?!?!?” galit na galit nyang sinabi. I was dumbfounded, I’d tell you that. :o :-X   
  
I was distracted. Not by her appearance and by the question she just asked me, which by the way eh wala pa akong maisip na maisasagot dahil totoo naman yung inaakusa nya sakin. I was distracted dahil sa suot nyang singsing… please don’t tell me it is what I think it is…kung yun nga yung iniisip ko, pano napunta sa kanya yun? Sino nagbigay sa kanya? ??? ??? :-\   
  
“magbihis ka na. :-[ I’ll just use the restroom in the lobby. :-[” umiwas ako sa kanya kagad.   
  
Like that’s going to make her shut up. Natural, hindi. Dahil sinundan nya ko, at pasugod pa siya ha. “you think I’m gonna let you off the hook!? >:(”   
  
Kunyaring deny na lang.baka sakaling makalusot. “ano bang sinasabi mo?! ??? :-[”   
  
“that’s not a polite thing to do, Mr. Je-re-my! >:(” she said with a sarcastic tone. Okay, alam kong mali ako sa pagtingin sa kanya, pero wala naman yun malisya eh, okay, maybe a little, but that’s not my main concern.   
  
“I wasn’t staring where you think I was staring. :-[” my eyes were on your ring..   
  
“anong hindi!? Eh obvious naman!”   
  
Ayaw naman nyang maniwala. Sa bagay, I don’t blame her. Nagbuntong hininga ako bago ako nagsalita. “okay, fine. I did stare :-X. but just for a split second. :-\” split second lang talaga, I swear! So she has a very nice body with all those gorgeous curves and everything… But at the time, it wasn’t my main concern.   
  
Nagsalubong ang kilay nya. BAKIT BA AYAW NYANG MANIWALA!? >:( :-\ “anong split second ka dyan!?!?! >:(”   
  
I started feeling bad, there goes the feeling again.. that painful feeling I felt 3 years ago. “I’m serious. :-\” at this point, wala na akong pakialam kung tingin nya sakin ay sinungaling. Malinis naman ang konsensya ko, wala talagang halong malisya yung tingin ko sa kanya. “oo matagal akong nakatingin, but I was staring at something else. :-[”   
  
“tss! Mageexcuse ka pa, eh caught in the act ka naman. >:(” she crossed her arms. Galit na galit siya. “why don’t you just admit it!?”   
  
I didn’t know what else to tell her para mapatunayan ko na hindi talaga ako sa dibdib nya nakatingin. I grabbed her hand and held it tightly, concentrating on the ring on her finger. I examined it carefully to make sure na akin nga ito. “dito ko nakatingin.. :-\” at dahil sa nahawakan ko na ito, sigurado na ko na ito yun. As in 100% sure na. I have a basis to that. “where did you get this?” I asked her. Please tell me, because I’m dying to know how mysteriously this ring that was once in my pocket, is now around your finger..   
  
Tinignan nya ko ng masama, yung parang nagdududa. “bigay ng Mommy ko! >:(” she took her hand back and gave me a flaming look. “bakit?! ??? don’t tell me this is yours!?” nagtataka nyang tinanong sakin. Bigay ng Mommy nya? Pano..?   
  
Gusto ko talagang sabihin sa kanya na OO THIS RING IS MINE AND IT’S INTENDED FOR SOMEONE TO WEAR, but I didn’t have the courage to do so. “no. It just looks very familiar… :-[” I wasn’t sure of what to say, because I, myself do not know what to even think right now. It was as if I saw a ghost, yun nga lang, hindi figure ng tao. Hindi ako makapaniwala sa nakikita ko ngayon. Totoo ba to?   
  
“okay? so what?”   
  
Huminga ako ng malalim. I’m very curious. Alright, this is it. I’m having second thoughts, but whatever. kaya ko to :-\ :-\. “I had the same ring in my pocket a few years back…. :-[” tinignan lang nya ko na parang hinahanap nya yung matinong sagot sa mukha ko. ayan na, nararamdaman ko na yung bigat sa dibdib ko.. Sinasabi ko na nga ba eh. :-[ :'(   
  
  
\*\* FLASHBACK – YEAR 2004 - 2005 \*\*   
  
“hun nasan na ba tayo?” nakatingin siya sa labas ng bintana and she was smiling when she asked. “kanina pa tayo nagdadrive around eh.. tsaka ang aga aga pa, tignan mo oh, wala pang araw.” I pulled up at a place and blindfolded her when we came out of the car. “ano na namang pakana ito, Mr. Jeremy Derek L. Valdez, at dinala mo pa dito sa Davao? Alam ba to ng Daddy mo ha? baka naman tumakas ka na naman..”   
  
“siempre naman alam. silang dalawa nga ni Mommy ang nagsabing dalin kita dito eh. :) basta wag mong tatanggalin yung blindfold okay? :)” I guided her through the steps.   
  
“hun naman eh! nakakainis ka, alam mo naman na I hate surprises eh..” alam kong she hates surprises, kaso sa pagkakataon na ito, hindi pwedeng hindi siya isurprise eh. “malayo pa ba tayo?”   
  
She so inquisitive, never syang titigil sa kakatanong hangga’t hindi ko sinasabi sa kanya. I love that about her. I love the fact na naiinis ako dahil sa kakatanong nya. Hay.. Patricia talaga ::).. “we’re almost there..” hawak ko parin siya, “just a few more steps.. Careful..” before I took the blindfold off, I checked my pocket one more time to make sure the box is in there.   
  
Napangiti ako.. :) :) I mean, in a few moments, Tricia will have this shocked and happy look on her face at the same time.. and she and I will be ultimately in bliss. Mararamdaman ko na rin yung feeling when somebody says, ‘yes! I’ll marry you!’ kinakabahan ako, pero ilang beses ko na itong prinactice kasama si Anthony. Mokong yun eh, kunwari siya daw si Tricia ;D. I slowly took off the blindfold from her eyes that revealed the place I took her. I took her to her favorite place, the BEACH. Sabi kasi ni Anthony, wala ng mas romantic na place than this to propose kaya ayun. Dito ko siya dinala. Mukang effective naman eh, kase tuwang tuwa siya.   
  
Tinanggal nya yung tsinelas nya at nagtatakbo kagad sa buhangin. While she’s running around, sumigaw siya. “I love you so much, Jer!! :D” napangiti ako habang pinapanood ko siya. Gosh. She never fails to make me smile all the time.   
  
After a while, sinundan ko siya kung nasan siya, she was by the shore. Nakasoak yung feet nya sa tubig habang pinaglalaruan nya yung buhangin. She had a stick on her hand and was writing something on the sand with it. It read ‘Tricia and Jeremy’ and drew a heart around it.   
  
I sat beside her and took the stick from her. This time, ako naman ang sumulat. I wrote, ‘Jeremy loves Tricia’ then I smiled at her.   
  
“no..” Kinuha nya ulit yung stick saken. ‘Tricia loves Jeremy more.’ Ang sinulat nya.   
  
“hindi..” I took the stick and wrote, ‘Jeremy loves Tricia the most’   
  
“hun!!” she looked at me. ayaw nya talagang magpatalo. “hindi.. :-[” and now she wrote, ‘Jeremy shouldn’t..’ tapos naging seryoso yung muka nya. Nakayuko siya nun so I picked her chin up.   
  
“what’s wrong? ???” umiling siya, telling me that nothing’s wrong. And we were silent, just gazing at each other’s eyes. Bakit muka siyang malungkot? May mali ba sa ginawa ko? ??? :-\   
  
After a moment of silence, she took a deep breath and smiled at me. “I love you hun.. :-[ lagi mong tatandaan yan ha. :)” tapos niyakap nya ko.   
  
Kahit na hindi ko naintindihan yung ibig nyang sabihin dun, I smiled back at her at niyakap siya ng mahigpit. We watched the sunrise together, a thing we did often times. Pagkatapos nun, kinuha ko yung box sa bulsa ko and we both stood up. but then I dropped on my knee, held her hand and opened the tiny box in front of her. She was astonished. This is it, this is the moment I have been waiting to be ready for. “Patricia Margaret Romana…” her eyes started tearing up, but from my view, it seemed like it was a different cry. Hindi ko alam, pero tinuloy ko pa rin yung pagtatanong ko. “In the future, katulad ng napagusapan natin..when everything’s been put to place…Will you be my wife? :)” she smiled at me, and her tears seemed to never stop from coming down. She was surprised as I expected. Tahimik siya, as if she was trying to find the words to tell me. Masaya siya, I could tell. But I didn’t see the perfect happiness in her eyes.   
  
I was about to put the ring on her finger when she pulled her hand from my hand. Dahil dun, I accidentally dropped the ring to the sand, before that, it hit a huge rock. Isang hindi magandang pangitain. Hindi ko alam kung bakit ginawa nya yun.. :-\ :-[   
  
“Tricia? :-\” yun na lang ang nasabi ko. parang hindi ko gusto ito ah... She was in tears. Ano bang mali sa ginawa ko? “hindi mo ba nagustohan yung ginawa ko? ???” I finally asked her. “don’t you want us to be together forever? :-\”   
  
She bowed her head down, iyak pa rin siya ng iyak. Until she lifted chin up and bravely told me, “no. :'(” she covered her face with her hands, tapos tinignan nya yung ring na nasa buhangin. “that ring’s not meant for me… you will not marry me. hindi mo ko magiging asawa.. kahit kailan. :'( :'(” I was shocked to hear that from her. It was as if she ripped my heart out and shattered it into pieces.   
  
I stood up, “Tricia bakit? ??? :'(”   
  
“hindi tayo para sa isa-t isa, Jer.. I don’t want us to be tied to each other… I don’t want you to be tied to me, because I’m not the one for you, and I will never be.. :'( :'(”   
  
“ano bang pinagsasabi mo, Tricia!? :-[ >:(” hindi ko talaga maintindihan ang sinasabi nya. “2 years, Tricia.. 2 years tayong magkasama. tapos sasabihin mo na hindi ikaw ang para sakin, when I’m kneeling down before you, asking you to be my wife? You don’t want us to be tied to each other? What the hell is that!? ??? >:(”   
  
Hinawakan nya yung kamay ko. “Jeremy please… try to understand…”   
  
“understand what, Tricia!? >:( ??? Kung ayaw mong magpakasal ngayon, hindi naman kita pinipilit eh, hindi pa rin naman ako handa. I’m proposing now, because I want you to be my wife in the future… :-\”   
  
“wala tayong future.. pero ikaw.. meron. :'(”   
  
“ano bang pinagsasabi mo? ???”   
  
“Jeremy, listen to me.. :'(” she tightened the grip to my hand. “somebody is else is meant for you.. someone who will be with you everyday of your life yung hindi ka iiwan kahit anong mangyari.. she’s someone who will support you all the way.. who will love you endlessly,. Who will be right there with you through thick and thin.. yung pagluluto ka, pagsisilbihan ka, mamahalin ka kahit inaaway mo siya.. she will love you regardless, and you will love her… pagsisigawan mo sa buong mundo na siya.. siya ang babaeng pinakamamahal mo.. :) :'( she will bear your name, she will be Mrs. Jeremy Valdez.. and she will be the mother of your kids..” she paused, tapos tumingin siya sa buhangin. “…but that person is not me :-[.. it will never be me.. :'(”   
  
“but you said you love me.. :'(”   
  
“oo.. I do love you.. I love you so much that’s why I’m doing this… :'(”   
  
Nung narinig ko yung mga sinabi nya, hindi ako makapaniwala. Naririnig ba nya yung mga sinabi nya? How can she say these? Sino siya para sabihin sakin na hindi siya ang para sakin? Bakit nya sinasabi to? At this point, talagang clueless ako sa mga nangyayari. I found myself in tears as well. Masakit yung sinabi nyang hindi siya ang para sakin. It’s painful to hear that from someone you honestly love and want to be with for the rest of your life.   
  
I could not believe this. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I’d ever be in this melting spot.. bakit nya ko pinagtutulakan sa iba… “Tricia, hindi mo alam ang mga sinasabi mo!! >:( :'(” napasigaw ako at nagulat siya. “Ikaw ang mahal ko, ikaw ang gusto kong maging asawa, ikaw ang gusto kong gumawa ng lahat ng mga sinabi mo.. I want you to be the mother of my kids.. why are you pushing me away!? ??? :-\”   
  
“Jeremy, believe me or not.. this is the proof of my love.. :'(” she had the pleading look. A look I could never bear to see.. “this is the best way I could show and make you feel how much I love you.. :'(”   
  
“what!?” ano bang pinagsasabi nya??? “Your way of showing me how much you love me is by breaking my heart? Ano ba Tricia!? >:( :-[”   
  
“Jeremy.. :'(”   
  
Tumalikod ako sa kanya. hindi ko na to kaya. oo galit ako. galit ako dahil pilit nyang sinasabi na hindi kame para sa isa’t isa. I never thought that the person you love the most can hurt you 100 times more.. and it’s painful. “sige, kung ayaw mo sakin, fine. >:(” I picked up the ring from the sand.. and I saw this scratch on it.. nagasgas siya nung tumama sa bato. This ring I’ve been eyeing for so long para lang ibigay sa kanya.. itong singsing na matagal kong iningatan para sa araw na to.. :-\ :-\ tapos, ganito lang ang mangyayari? ??? Magasgas at masisira lang. >:( I started walking away from her and I could hear her running after me, repeatedly calling my name.. hanggang sa biglang tumahimik. I wasn’t thinking of looking back at all, but then I had this feeling that something is wrong. :-\ I turned around.. and to my surprise, she was on the sand.. Unconscious. I panicked right away so I rushed her to the nearest hospital..   
  
It was 2 weeks after I found out the truth. May leukemia siya at may taning na ang buhay :-[ :-[.. kaya pala ayaw nyang magpakasal sakin.. isang bagay ni hindi ko matanggap. Yung mga huling araw nya, she had kept the ring, but never wore it.. madalas, nakatingin lang siya dito.. I had to pretend to be happy, when deep down inside, parang namamatay na rin ako paunti-unti.. kung pwede lang sana, ako na lang yung sumalo ng sakit nya.. hindi ko kayang makita siya na paunti-unting namamatay.. :-[   
  
it was on June 16, 2004 when she died.. hawak hawak nya yung kamay ko nun.. and her last words before her last breath was… “Jeremy… this belongs to her…find her… and when you do, wag na wag mo siyang pakakawalan... ” while holding the ring I wanted to give her.   
  
A year after, bumalik ako dito sa Davao.. same resort I took her to exactly a year ago.. I sat on the bench, hawak hawak ko yung singsing habang nakatingin sa sunrise.. galit pa rin ako sa buong mundo.. how could this happen to me? >:( :'(   
  
Umalis ako sa lugar na yun with the will to start anew.. mahirap, pero kakayanin ko, dahil yun ang dapat.. yun ang gusto ni Tricia.. kakayanin ko.. para kay Tricia.. I had left the box on the bench where I sat..   
  
Kung sino man ang makapulot nun, may his or her life be far less complicated than mine.. :-\   
  
\*\* END OF FLASHBACK \*\*   
  
  
“Jeremy? ???” hindi ko napansin, my mind drifted somewhere else.. “what are you talking about? ???” tinanong nya. “are you out of your mind?” oo. Wala na talaga ako sa matinong pag-iisip. Pero teka, ang gusto ko malaman, kung pano napunta sa kanya yung singsing.   
  
“Iris, please answer my question.. pano napunta sayo yung singsing? :-\”   
  
Naiinis na siya nun. oo nga pala, I asked her already. “ang kulit mo noh!? ??? Bigay nga ng Mommy ko! >:(” I could tell she’s very annoyed. “she gave this to me when she went here two years ago! Bakit ka ba tanong ng tanong?! >:(”   
  
So ibig sabihin…ang Mommy ni Iris ang nakapulot ng singsing? ??? :-[   
  
“napulot ng Mommy mo? :-\”   
  
Nag-iba bigla yung facial expression nya. “anong napulot!? ???” then she placed her hands on her waist. “anong akala mo sa Mommy ko? bum?! Yung namumulot na lang ng kung ano-ano dyan sa tabi-tabi!? ??? >:(” hindi ko naman intensyon na mang insulto eh. :-\   
  
“eh pano napunta sayo yan? :-\” I calmly asked her. Baka naman kase hindi napulot ni Tita.. err. Mommy nya.   
  
“ano ba!? >:(” she raised her voice. “have you been listening to me!? Gosh! this is the third time I’m saying this, Jeremy. >:(” She slowed down. “b-i-n-i-g-a-y n-g- M-o-m-m-y k-o. there? Get it? Oh baka naman gusto mong itranslate ko pa?! 8) >:(”   
  
“hindi.. I get it. :-\” Ang sabi ko. I get it, na binigay sa kanya ng Mommy nya. Pero… “pano napunta sa Mommy mo yan? :-\”   
  
She scratched the back of her head. Halatang inis na inis na siya. Pano, hindi naman nya naiintindihan yung pinanggagalingan ko. “I don’t know! Why don’t you ask her!?” magkasalubong na yung kilay nya. “why are you so interested about this ring?! ??? >:(”   
  
Desperado na talaga ako nun. ewan ko kung bakit, pero hindi ko makapaniwala na nasa kanya yung singsing.. o baka naman.. hindi ko lang matanggap na si Iris ang may suot non? Ewan. Ang alam ko lang ngayon, gusto kong mapunta sakin yung singsing. Kay Tricia yan, hindi naman sa kanya.   
  
“because that ring was mine.. :-\” inamin ko.   
  
“huh!? Sayo to? ??? ::)” she looked at me as if I was a fool. “pano naging sayo to, eh this is evidently a girl’s ring? ::)”   
  
Hindi ko pinansin yung tanong nya, instead.. “Iris, baka naman pwedeng akin na lang yan ulit.. importante kasi sakin yan eh.. :-[”   
  
“oh, now you’re suddenly nice to me! ??? Why? Because of this? >:(” She gave me the evil eye. “are you crazy?” she placed her hands on her back. “no way! >:( 8)”   
  
oo. crazy na kung crazy. “wala namang value sayo yan diba? :-[” please ibigay mo na yan sakin parang awa mo naaa!!! :'(   
  
“anong wala!? >:( My Mom gave this to me, and as you can see, I’m wearing it.” She flashed her left hand in front of my face, pero agad din naman nyang binalik sa likod nya. “I don’t wear things that are worth nothing to me, especially jewelries. 8)”   
  
“Iris, please.. :-[”   
  
“what is so important about this ring that you’re going loco about it, huh? ???” tinaas nya yung kilay nya. “ano? Sige tell me. 8)” then she crossed her arms.   
  
“kasi akin yan. :-[”   
  
“that’s it? ???” she had a puzzled expression on her face. “oh come on, it can’t be just that. There’s gotta be a more reasonable explanation why you’re going nuts about this ring. 8) ::)”   
  
“wala. :-\” Hindi ko masabi yung totoong dahilan. Bakit hindi ko masabi? Gusto kong sabihin, pero parang may pumipigil sakin. “kung… kung… ayaw mong ibigay, bibilin ko na lang sayo. Just name your price.. kahit magkano.. :-[ :-\” I’m desperate, I’m really, really desperate.   
  
Nainsulto ata siya. Ang sama nyang makatingin. “and what do you think of me!? mukang pera!? >:(” she looked me straight in the eye. “well, sorry ka. THIS RING BELONGS TO ME! >:( 8)”   
  
Pagkarinig ko nun, parang nagslow motion lahat ng nasa paligid ko. Sa totoo lang, I wanted to cry this very moment.. naalala ko lahat ng sinabi sakin ni Tricia.. her last words.. “Jeremy… this belongs to her…find her… and when you do, wag na wag mo siyang pakakawalan... ” pero hindi.. ayoko. :'( :-[   
  
“no.. no…” paulit kong sinabi…. “hindi ikaw... NO.” No, this can’t be happening.. not her.. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“hindi pwede… hindi dapat…. ayoko… :'( :'(”   
  
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“hindi pwede… hindi dapat…. ayoko… :'( :'(”   
  
WHAT THE HELL IS HE SAYING?! ??? ???   
  
“anong hindi pwede? Anong hindi dapat? Anong ayoko!?” He walked to the bed where and sat. Yumuko siya tapos yung hands nya nasa batok nya. “Hoy! Ano? ???” He sniffed ???. What the!? ??? “are you crying? ???” he didn’t respond. “oh come on!” I threw my hands in the air. This is so pathetic! “don’t tell me you’re crying because if you are ::)---”   
  
He suddenly cut me off saying, “hindi mo kasi alam kung gano ka-importante sakin yang singsing na yan.. :-\ :'(”   
  
“bakit? how important is this ring to you anyway?”   
  
“basta.”   
  
“anong basta ka dyan? ???”   
  
“Iris, it is important to me, that’s all I have to say, wala akong dapat i-explain.” Calm yung voice nya. It is so.. that it kinda scares me :-X, because he’s never really been calm around me. ??? :-\   
  
Lahat ng to dahil sa ring lang? Bakit ba siya nagkakaganyan over a stupid ring? ??? ??? “how do you even know it’s yours?” I continued asking him.   
  
He took my hand again at inikot nya yung ring and showed me a scratch towards the bottom. Okay? So what if there’s a scratch there? Baka nakita nya lang yan kanina tapos he’s going to claim it as a proof. “ito. Nagkascratch to because I dropped it and it hit a rock. :-[”   
  
“yun lang? ???” sus, I’ve had this ring for quite some time now and I could’ve dropped it somewhere too and scratched it. Ako pa? eh I’m clumsy pa naman ::) ;D. “How sure are you that this is the same scratch from the rock?”   
  
“wag ka ng maraming tanong! >:(” he repeatedly scratched the back of his head. “please! :-\”   
  
Aba!? ??? Ang lokong to!? “EH BAKIT HINDI AKO MAGTATANONG? You’ve been interrogating me about this stupid ring, and I can’t ask?! ??? >:(”   
  
Umiling siya, and at the same time, he took a deep breath. “You don’t understand Iris.. :-\” and then he took another one, but this time, it’s a different kind.   
  
“What don’t I understand? ???” ang kulit talaga nito. How can I understand something if he’s not telling me anything? Diba!? Common sense naman!! “Wala ka naman sinasabi sakin and you expect me to understand? ??? >:(”   
  
After I said that, tumayo siya at inayos yung damit nya. Tignan mo to? Kanina nageemote dito tapos ngayon?? “Wala ka ng dapat malaman, I’ve done enough damage. :-[” Enough damage?? ??? ??? He stood up and walked to the door. Bago sya lumabas, he turned around one more time and said, “And it’s not a stupid ring, Iris. Kung yan lang ang tingin mo dyan, mabuti pa ibalik mo na lang sakin yan.” He said it with impact. That’s it. Then he was gone, like a speeding bullet. I wasn’t even able to have the chance to stop and ask him further. Everytime he walks out on an argument, kahit ako yung nanalo, he leaves me feeling like I lost it. Ano ba to!? Bakit ako ganito? ??? ???   
  
I don’t know where he went, but 5 hours had passed after that “bloody” incident with Stiffie. Bakit bloody? Eh kasi ganun. I just didn’t give his allegedly ring back, akala mo eh nasira na buong mundo nya. Gosh, how petty is that? Akalain nyo yun, nag-iiyak dun sa corner? Oh My God :o. He’s the worst kind of a loser talaga ::). Apparently, napakaimportant ng ring na yun. feeling ko naman talaga ganun eh, kaya lang, hindi naman ako sure kung sa kanya talaga. ayoko din naman ibigay, because my Mom gave this to me. And truth be told, this is one of the few things she gave me that I really value a lot. I have no idea why. I’m even wondering what drives me to this ring in the first place.. it’s not at all that exceptional, if you look at it very closely. ??? :-X   
  
Nakakaawa yung face nya, but… too bad. IT’S MY RING, and it’s significant to me 8). okay, so it it might have been his before, but now it’s mine. Pano naman naging kanya yun? eh pang babae kaya yun. I tried to shake it off of him kaso, hindi naman nya sinabi. Sus, pahihirapan pa ko. Hirap na nga ko sa pag iinvestigate about his past and that Tricia girl he’s been calling out while he was sleeping, tapos dadagdagan pa nya!? :-\ ???   
  
Wait. Wait. Wait. WHAT!? :o ???   
  
Bakit ba ko tanong ng tanong sa sarili ko dito? Sino ka ba kase Tricia? Could it be?? No, but he would’ve… :-X :-\   
  
AHHH! ANG GULO KO!! STIFFIE NAMAN KASI EH!! HMMFFF!!! >:( >:(   
  
Naiinis ako kase no matter how hard I try, I can’t get Jeremy to trust me. I just want to know him more, so I could understand him but he wouldn’t let me. Hindi rin naman ako ganon ka patient when it comes to breaking an ice. Everytime he gives me an attitude, I seem to give him a much bigger one back. I hate it when I can’t control my temper! ::) >:( ;D   
  
Ano pa bang gagawin ko para makapenetrate ako sa wall nya? I stood by the window staring at the ring around my finger. “what are you holding?” I whispered. Alam ko there’s a big enigma or whatever they call it in this ring. “bakit ganon na lang yung reaction nya nung nakita ka nya?? ??? ??? how were you important to him? if I give you back to Jeremy, would you help me break through his ice? ??? :-\” err! I’m so pathetic! I’m talking to a stupid and absurd ring! I took it off my finger and carefully examined it. Baka naman may nakalagay na kung ano dito na magbibigay sakin ng clue and whatnot. Wala naman. it’s just a plain, ordinary ring I see around all the time, except you know, may scratch siya but what’s so special about that? ??? ???   
  
I stayed in the hotel the whole day. Goodness. Sa sobrang pagkacurious ko, I stayed here. I didn’t even eat!? What’s happening to me?! ???   
  
It was 7:30 pm when he came back from… I don’t know, from outerspace? ;D ;D I was watching TV that time and eating cheetos. And as soon as I saw him, I got on my feet and followed him to the kitchen where he went. Dala ko pa nga yung bag of cheetos ko eh! :D   
  
“where did you go? ??? >:(” I said that with an attitude. Aba, iniwan nya ko dito for the whole day noh! >:(   
  
He smiled at me. whoa. :o :o “dyan lang, sa beach :).” Tapos he started unpacking the food he bought. “kumain ka na ba?”   
  
I lifted up the bag of chips so he could see. “cheetos.”   
  
“yan lang kinain mo? ???”   
  
“well, I don’t know any place around here >:(.” why is he acting so weird? “well, I would go, but I was scared when I come back you’d be yelling your guts out again >:( :-[.”   
  
He continued doing what he was doing. After a while he said.. “sorry ah.”   
  
Ako naman eh, ayun. I stood there, completely clueless. “for what? ??? for leaving me here the whole day? >:(”   
  
“oo. And kanina. I shouldn’t have done that or reacted the way I did..” he sighed. “if it's really valuable to you, hindi ko na kukunin yung ring sayo. It’s yours.”   
  
HUH!? “but I thought it’s important to you?”   
  
“hindi. Sayo na yan, okay. Basta, ingatan mo lang ha.. :-\ :)” errrr!!! Why is he being like this!? >:( ??? :-\   
  
“but?” okay, somebody needs to tell me what in the world is up in this guy’s head right now! ??? First, he acts like he’s about to die because I won’t give him the ring, tapos ngayon, ayaw na nya? Ano ba Jeremyyyy!!! ??? >:(   
  
He must've have noticed I had this wondering expression in my face so he said, “kung pwede sana, I don’t want to talk about it. Hm?” boy, he sure can change to a demonic mood to a calm and assertive aura. How can he do that? “come on, let’s eat. :)” he pulled the chair for me so that I can sit and when I did, “it’s your favorite.” Tinanggal nya yung cover, “sinigang na pork ;D.” He mimicked my voice. Natawa naman ako, hindi kasi bagay. ::) ;D Lol. “and for dessert..” he took something from the bag and showed it, “banana split ;).” Tapos siya umupo na rin. “pero mamaya na yan pag naubos mo na yung nasa plate mo ;).” He winked at me, “hindi pwedeng ipagsabay.”   
  
BANANA SPLIT!!! :D :D Pero wait, what is he up to!? ??? Siguro bubusugin nya ko para makatulog ako, tapos kukunin nya yung ring noh!? Ah ha!! “what’s up with you!? ???”   
  
“what’s up with me?” he pointed himself.   
  
“yeah! Why are you doing this? ???”   
  
“bakit? is there something wrong with what I’m doing? ??? ::)”   
  
Nagtanong ka pa! Yes there is! you can’t just leave after giving me a freakin’ attitude and then come back totally the opposite! “wala. You’re weird ::).” I took a bite of my food. Mmmm!! Sinigang na pork!! ;D :D   
  
“I’m not weird.”   
  
“you’re not weird?” umiling siya. “then what are you doing?”   
  
Nagsmile siya ulit. Bakit ba siya smile ng smile!? ??? “nothing, I just want to feed you, that’s all. ;)”   
  
HE JUST WANNA WHAT!? :o okay, that didn't sound right?! >:( “feed me? hindi naman ako baby para i-feed mo noh! >:(”   
  
“bakit? baby lang ba ang pinapakain? ??? ;)”   
  
“hindi.. but.. :-\” tsk!! Ano ba! “oh you know what I mean! >:(” He stared at me and laughed, as if I were a source of amusement to him or something. Sira ulo to ah!? >:( “bakit ka tumatawa? ??? >:(”   
  
“nakakatawa ka kasi eh ;D ;D ..”   
  
“bakit, nagpapatawa ba ko? >:(” nakakainis to ah.   
  
“sinabi ko bang nagpapatawa ka? ??? ;D” ARGH!!! Is this his way of getting back at me!? “all I said is that you’re funny.” Tapos tinignan nya ko yung parang nakakabiro.. “diba? sa bagay, tagalog yun ::)..”   
  
“and what are you implying? That I can’t understand tagalog? >:(” I frowned at him. kulang na lang eh maglabas na ng smoke yung ears ko sa sobrang asar. I really don’t like it when people make stupid assumptions about me!!! grabe! ILANG BESES KO BA YAN UULITIN!!?!?! Nakuu!!! >:( >:(   
  
“no, I’m just saying..” he scooped some more rice and ulam tapos nilagay nya sa plate ko :o. Ano to, papatayin ata talaga ako nito eh! ang dami ko na kayang nakain!! “you need to pay attention to the words I’m using..” he stood up and got another spoon from the drawer. “o, wag mong kakalimutan may banana split ka pa ;).”   
  
Aba!! >:( Nagsigh ako ng napakalakas. “are you insulting me? >:(” tapos tumingin ako sa plate ko. “are you trying to blow me up with all of these!? ??? >:(” kahit na masarap talaga and I swear I could finish the whole thing, plus the banana split pa, kaya lang, I couldn’t help but think there’s something going on with this front.   
  
“hindi kita iniinsulto.” He kept it cool when he said that. “bakit naman kita iinsultohin?” hindi nya ko iniinsulto? Tell me, what has he been doing for the past… 4 weeks?! ??? >:(   
  
Si Stiffie ba tong tao na to? He wasn’t at all like this this morning. Ang naalala ko kase kanina he was pleading me for the ring, and prior to that, nagsusungit siya. Correct it me if I’m wrong ha, but he seems to be totally different person. Ano bang klaseng beach yung pinuntahan nya at parang ibang tao na siya when he came back here? NAIINIS AKO KASI HE’S SHOWING ME HE CARES, AND I THINK IT’S FAKE. Hindi naman kase sya talaga ganyan eh. ??? :-\   
  
“—huy! Nakikinig ka ba? ???” I felt a shake on my shoulder. “sinasabi ko na nga ba eh, nalipasan ka siguro ng gutom kaya ka natutula dyan no? ::)”   
  
“huh? ???” I spaced out to what he said, ano daw? ??? ???   
  
“hay nako, sige na. kumain ka na dyan ::).” He sat back beside me, “ubusin mo lahat ha.”   
  
Naiinis na talaga ko nun. it grosses me out to hear him say ‘sweet’ stuff. “ano bang ginagawa mo? ??? ???” tinaasan ko nga siya ng kilay.   
  
“anong ano bang ginagawa ko? ???” inulit pa yung tanong ko. hello!? I’m the one asking the question here! >:(   
  
“bakit ba sinasagot mo sa question ko ay question din?! >:( >:(”   
  
  
  
  
“uy, relax! :D” he waved his hands in front of my face, “Kaharap mo lang ako ::) ::).. I’m not across the room.”   
  
  
  
  
Tinanggal ko nga yung hands nya sa face ko. “ANO BA!? >:(”   
  
“ikaw, masyado kang high-blood ::).” Tumawa siya ng konti. “wag kang ganyan..” he touched my forehead, “tignan mo nagkakawrinkles ka na ;D ;D.” WRINKLES?! Did he say wrinkles!?!?!? “muka ka ng lola!! ;D ;D”   
  
“what are you talking about? ??? >:(” I dodged my head away. “I don’t have wrinkles!! >:( >:(” this guy’s losing it, I swear!! Ako pa? magkakawrinkles? Oh please!! Hinawakan ko nga yung forehead ko :-\ :-\.. just to make sure.. hmmff. Wala naman eh, sus, mangloloko talaga tong lalaking to! >:( >:(   
  
“how come you’re checking your forehead? ;D ;D”   
  
“bakit masama ba?! ??? >:(” for pete’s sake! Can this guy get on my nerves or what?! “you really know how to turn my switch on, huh? ??? >:(”   
  
“ano? ??? Natuturn on ka saken? ??? ;D” he placed his hand at the back of his ear.   
  
“HINDI! >:(” I slammed my hand on the table. I’m in the verge of kicking this guy’s nuts right now! I looked at him from head to toe, “eeww! you swear!!! >:(”   
  
“sus! kunyari ka pa, alam ko namang may lihim na pagnanasa ka sakin eh!!” tapos nilapit nya yung face nya sakin, “type mo ko noh?! ::) 8)”   
  
“ANO?! :o >:(” ako? may gusto sa kanya? ano sya? hilo!? “kapal ng face mo noh?! >:(”   
  
He laughed so hard that he turned red. “bakit ang defensive mo? ;D”   
  
Kung siya he turned red because of laughing, ako naman I turned red because he's getting on my nerves! >:( “EH KASE ANG FEELING MO! >:(”   
  
“Feeling ano? ??? ;D” natatawa pa rin siya, “eh totoo naman! ;D”   
  
ABA!!! >:( “anong totoo!? >:(”   
  
“na type mo ko. 8)” oh my God! ang hangin!!! “hindi mo nga masagot ng tama yung tanong ko eh!! ;D ;D”   
  
ah! yun lang ba? oh sige, let's answer his question! “well, listen carefully, okay?! >:(” nilapit ko din yung face ko sa kanya and looked him in the eye. gosh, it's awkward being this close to his face.. ::) :-\ “HINDI KITA TYPE! >:(” sinigaw ko sa kanya.   
  
“ows? ??? ::)” what the!? “eh bakit nagbablush ka?! ??? ;D”   
  
“BECAUSE YOU TICK ME OFF!!!! >:( >:( >:( >:(”   
  
“ang pikon mo noh!? :D ;D” ayy?! HINDI BA OBVIOUS!!?? >:( >:( He pointed at my lips. Ano na naman yan!? “oh? yung nguso mo humahaba, pwede ng sabitan ng hanger! ;D ::)”   
  
Kaya ayan tuloy, napahawak ako sa lips ko. humahaba? Hindi naman ah? ??? ??? “anong humahaba!? ??? >:(”   
  
He chortled when I said and did that. “ang bilis mo naman kumain ::) ;D..” he was looking at my plate, kaya pati tuloy ako napatingin. Hihi. I finished my food ;D ;D. So what? He put it there, and I was told not to waste food ::) ::)..   
  
Gosh! He’s probably thinking I’m such a baboy! “eh kase ano :-\ ::)..” ano bang magandang excuse? “eh kase ???..” oh I know! “why are you being intrusive? >:(”   
  
He raised both his hands as if he was surrendering, “okay, okay. ::)” He rose from his seat and went to the fridge. “I guess it’s time for dessert ::) ;D.” Bakit ba nya ko inaasar!?!?! ??? >:(   
  
While he was there, sumigaw ako, “no thanks! I’m not in the mood for dessert >:(!!”   
  
“sus ::).” Anong pa ‘sus’-‘sus’ pa sya dyan? ??? ???   
  
Nung nakabalik na siya from the fridge, nilagay nya sa harap ko yung banana split. BANANA SPLIT!! :D :D I’m drooling right now! Ayoko pa nga sana kainin, kasi.. you know ::). “ayoko nga diba? >:(” can’t he understand?   
  
“kunyari ka pa, you know you want it ;D.” Tapos nilapit nya lalo yung banana split sakin.   
  
Ayoko talaga!! Kahit na it’s right in front of me… ohh. But I can’t resist it, it’s my favorite. “hmmphh! >:( ::)” I pouted my lips, “sige na nga. thank you.” feeling ko masusuka ko sa sinabi ko. I’m saying thank you to this jerk?! ??? :-X   
  
“see? gusto mo naman kasi, pinipigilan mo pa sarili mo ::).” He sat back on his chair. “don’t worry, hindi ko pagkakalat na matakaw ka ;D ;D..”   
  
“anong matakaw? ??? >:(”   
  
“you eat a lot ;D.” trinanslate naman nya. >:( >:(   
  
“I don’t!”   
  
“okay nga yun sa babae eh, yung may laman. Hindi tulad ng iba na buto’t balat lang, halos wala ka ng mayakap :) :).” Ano? What is he saying? He lost me after he said babae!   
  
I just stared at him, totally confused of what he’s saying. I really have no idea what is going on around here. “ano ba yun sinasabi mo? ???”   
  
“wala! ::)” his brows met up, but his eyes were still playful, “kaw, masyado kang serious :D.” Ako!? ako pa ngayon ang serious!? Hello?! is he on crack, or something?? ???   
  
“whatever. bakit mo ba ginagawa to?” I rolled my eyes on him.   
  
“eh kasi ho, pag nangayayat ka, baka pagalitan ako ng boss! 8) ::)” inayos nya yung ibang food na nasa table. “sabihin pa nila pinapabayaan kita. Hindi kita pinapakain. Eh di lagot ako. ::)”   
  
“since when did you realize that? ??? 8)” mabuti naman at naisipan nya kong asikasuhin noh? I took the spoon on the side so I could start eating the banana split. When I was about to dig in, bigla naman nyang hinila yung tray.   
  
“eep!” ano ba??? table manners!?!!? Tapos kinuha din nya yung spoon nya sa side and said, “what do you think you’re doing? ??? >:(” bakit nya inaagaw sakin, eh akin nga to!?   
  
Look at this guy!? Ang sabi nya kain ako, tapos ngayon he’s gonna ask me what I’m doing? “what does it look like I’m doing!?” isa pa ha!!   
  
“ano ka sinuswerte? ??? ::)” nakatingin lang sya sakin. “hati tayo dito no! :D” then he dug in and took a huge one in his spoon. what!? did he just say?? ??? :o   
  
OKAY, THAT’S IT! THAT IS IT! I’VE HAD IT WITH THIS SUDDEN CHANGE OF ATTITUDE!! I got up on my feet and took the napkin that was on my lap to the table. “okay, you need to tell me what’s going on, RIGHT NOW! >:( >:( >:(”   
  
He was astounded by my reaction. Ba? Dapat lang noh! “Iris? Okay ka lang? ???” tinignan nya ko na parang he’s weirded out by me. Excuse me? Sino saming dalawa ang weird ngayon, aber!? >:( >:( He slided back the tray of banana split towards me and said, “oh.. eto. Sayo na lang, hindi na ko makikipagshare. ??? :-\”   
  
When he did that, I snapped out even more. Does he even get what I’m saying? Or he just wants to play mind games with me? ??? >:( “I’M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE STUPID ICE CREAM FOR PETE’S SAKE!!” sa sobrang inis ko, I stomped my feet. Grabe, I’m worse that a kid who’s throwing tantrums right now. Eh kasi naman noh! >:(   
  
“oohhkay.. ??? :-\” nakatingin lang siya sakin, watching every ballistic act I’m doing. Kunyaring wala siyang idea eh alam ko naman na meron! >:(   
  
When I finally calmed myself down, umupo na ko. Nagseryoso na ko nun. “seriously, Jeremy..” I looked at everything that’s on the table, “ano to? ???” tinignan ko siya, “para san yan, ha? ??? >:(”   
  
“wala.”   
  
“anong wala? ??? It can’t be just wala lang Jeremy! >:(” I didn’t realize I was screaming again. eh bakit ba, nakakainis na kase eh, tortured na nga ako, tinotorture pa ko lalo!! ARRGGHH!! “you can’t just gang up on me like you always do, act like I’m a big burden to you, walk out on me, and then come back a totally different person! >:( :-\” he stood there with a puzzled look. “oh come on, don’t give me that look!” I threw my hands in the air. “something is going on here!” I started walking around the room. After a few rounds, I came back where he was sitting. “ano yan ha?! ??? >:(” I stopped by the dining table again. “may pa-banana split ka pang nalalaman tapos sinigang! >:( >:(” I didn’t park myself that long in front of him. I walked back and forth again, but this time, around the dining table lang.   
  
“Iris.. kase--” He was about to say something in defense to what I’m saying, but I didn’t let him. Instead, I kept on going with my babbling.   
  
“ano ka ba Jeremy!? ??? ??? Hindi kita maintindihan. For the past week we’ve been together in this place, lagi mo na lang ako sinusungitan, lagi mo ako inaaway, lagi mo ko pinapagalitan. I mean, not once did you stop what you’re doing and ask me if I’m okay.. this and that.. tapos ngayon bigla kang ganyan? Ano yan? In 5 hours time bigla ka na lang nagchange? ??? :-\” tuloy-tuloy parin ako sa paglalakad ko, but this time, I was going faster and faster na feeling ko pag hindi ko napigilan yung sarili ko, baka ma-slam na lang ako kung saan saan. “diba wala ka namang pakialam sakin? Bakit mo ba to ginagawa, ha!?” I paused for a quick second. “tell me the truth nga, why are you being like this? Diba sabi mo sakin, pabigat ako sayo? That I messed everything up? You even said you broke a promise because of me? ano ba? I don’t understand you! What’s your motive? What are you trying to put up here, huh!? Why are you suddenly doing these weird things to me like bringing me food and treating all nice and stuff :o---” I kept on going with this for.. I don’t know, forever!? But he finally stopped me by holding onto both my shoulders.   
  
“IRIS! STOP!” then he faced me towards him. siempre ako, nagulat. I had no idea he was behind me all along. “you really want to know why!? ???” OO!! HINDI BA OBVIOUS!? Would I ask questions I don’t want answers to!? duh!? Common sense!?!?? >:( >:( >:( “ginagawa ko to.. lahat ito…” he looked around.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“dahil gusto ko :) :-\.” HUH!? ??? ??? And I stood there looking like this =====|> :o :o ??? ???   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“dahil gusto ko :) :-\.” hindi ko alam kung bakit, pero yun na lang ang lumabas sa bibig ko.   
  
  
\*\* FLASHBACK – 5 HOURS AGO. \*\*   
  
Hindi ko kinaya ang mga pangyayari. It was like a journey to a painful past that I had to go back and feel one more time. Hindi ako makapaniwala.. it must be a coincidence na napunta sa kanya yung singsing na dapat para kay Tricia. At kahit gano ko pa i-convince yung sarili ko na malabong pareho nga yung singsing, I still wasn’t able to. Yun yun, alam ko. Alam na alam ko. Ewan ko kung anong pumasok sa isip ko at umarte ako ng katulad ng ginawa ko, sa harap pa nya. Kaya nga nung hindi ko na napigilan ang sarili ko, minabuti ko ng umalis na lang. para makaiwas. For the longest time that I’ve been hiding behind my walls, eto na naman ako, umiiwas. :-[   
  
Nagpunta ako sa beach para maglakad, para magmuni-muni. Naisip ko, it’s been a long time since I came back here, actually walking here, all by myself. Yung huling nagpunta kase ako dito ng mag-isa, yun yung araw na iniwan ko yung singsing dito. I stood by the view and just looked at the horizon. Tricia, if you’re watching me right now, please… help me. dahil kindi ko to kayang mag-isa. Hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko.. lalo na ngayon.   
  
It wasn’t for long that I felt my eyes swell up with tears. Ayoko na ng ganito.. ayoko ng umiyak. 3 years ka ng wala, Tricia, pero bakit sa tuwing naalala kita, parang kahapon ka lang nawala? Ganon ka sakit, ganon din ka fresh yung wound. Okay na ko eh… akala ko okay na ko. :'( :'(   
  
I sighed. Wala ng ibang nasa utak ko ngayon kundi yung ring.. that ring that opened up something that should no longer be. Now, I feel I’m back to square one. God knows how I want to be okay, how I want to wake up each day with a smile on my face.. hindi naman sa gusto kong kalimutan na si Tricia.. it’s more of a.. peace of mind that I long for.. I would never ever forget Tricia.. and our happy memories.. but it’s my nightmares of her being gone that’s killing me. :-[ :'(   
  
Kinuha ko yung phone ko and decided to call Anthony. At times like this, alam kong siya lang ang mapagsasabihan ko. hindi ko naman matawagan yung kapatid ko, dahil malamang, maiinis na naman sakin yun at pinapahirapan ko lang daw ang sarili ko.   
  
He picked it up right away. “uy!! Bro! long time no talk ha!? ano ng latest!?” medyo nag-aalangan pa ko nun. Pano, hindi ko naman alam kung saan ako magsisimula. “huy!!”   
  
Finally, I was able to think of something to say. “bro, kamusta na? :-\” I know… it’s lame.   
  
“eto, okay naman! the usual, ‘tol!” full spirit pa sya nun. siguro, nasa galaan na naman to. ang aga eh. “pare, I met someone last night. okay siya ‘tol!” ito lang ang ayaw ko kay Anthony, mahilig sa babae. Di bale sana kung sineseryoso nya eh, kaso, hindi ::) :-\. Ever since niloko siya nung first girlfriend nya, ganyan na yan. “ikaw? Kamusta ka na? ano? Enjoying Davao ba?”   
  
“ayos lang ako.”   
  
“sure ka?” tinanong nya. “eh bakit parang pang biyernes santo yang boses mo? Davao yan dude, masaya dyan, maraming girls!”   
  
“hindi naman yun ang pinunta ko dito.. :-\”   
  
“sus! Wala namang masama kung maglibot libot ka dyan.. malay mo, makita mo na siya, diba?” nakita ko na ata eh ::) :-\.. “teka, pare, si Amgirl, kamusta na?”   
  
Amgirl? ??? ??? Sino yun? “sinong Amgirl?”   
  
“si Amgirl! Yung business partner mo!” ah. si Iris ::). “nakita ko yung picture nya dude. Ang ganda! Balita ko, nasa isang room lang kayo ha!! ano? May nangyare na ba?”   
  
“ulol! Hindi kame magkatabi no! >:(” sira ulo talaga to.   
  
“ang hina mo naman Jeremy!”   
  
“hindi naman ako katulad mo no! >:( ::)” Hindi ako mahina. Ayoko lang talaga. Sandali, eh pano naman nyang nalaman na maganda si Iris? ??? Maganda si Iris? ??? :) “teka? san mo nakita yung picture nya?”   
  
“may billboard kaya kayo dito! Swerte mo, ‘tol!” billboard??? Bakit kame may billboard? ??? “tinayo kahapon, ang laki nga eh. tapos yung opisina nyo, lapit na matapos. Ang ganda. High-rise!” one week pa lang kaming nawawala, ang dami na kagad ang nangyare? May pa-billboard billboard pang nalalaman, samantalang ang instructions, as much as possible, low cost ang business na to. “..tapos nakausap ko Dad mo, tuwang tuwa nga eh. Grabe, Jer. Hindi ko alam ganyan pala kaganda yan. Pakilala mo sakin pagbalik nyo ha!”   
  
Medyo nairita ako dun sa sinabi nya, ewan ko kung bakit >:( :-\. siguro dahil matagal ko ng kilala itong si Anthony and often times, I know what’s going to happen. Hay. “sige, bro pakilala ko sayo.” Kahit na parang ayaw ko.   
  
“ayos!” napasigaw pa siya. “so bakit ka nga napatawag?”   
  
“ah yun… :-\” naghesitate pa ko ulit. Sasabihin ko kaya sa kanya? huminga ako ng malalim. “naalala mo yung ring na laging kong dala noon?”   
  
“yung para kay Tricia?” medyo naging interesado naman siya pagkabanggit ko nun. “yung lagi mong hawak at ayaw ipahawak sa iba?” oo, yun nga yun.   
  
“oo, bro.”   
  
“eh diba tinapon mo na yun?”   
  
“iniwan ko sa isang bench.”   
  
“oh okay?” nagulohan pa ata siya dun. Ang akala nya kasi, hinagis ko sa dagat. “so what about it?”   
  
“nakita ko na… suot nya. :-\ :'(”   
  
“ha? sinong nya?”   
  
Yan na naman, bumigat na naman ang pakiramdam ko. ano ba. “na kay Iris, bro. :-[”   
  
“what? seryoso ka?”   
  
“oo. Hindi nga rin ako makapaniwala eh. :-[”   
  
“baka naman pareho lang? Impossible naman ata yun na mapunta sa kanya..?”   
  
“hindi, bro, I looked at it closely, 100% sure ako na yun talaga yun. nahawakan ko eh, and I felt the same feeling.. :-[ :-[” oo, ganon ka bigat. Mas higit pa nga ata eh. :'( :'(   
  
“so pano nga napunta sa kanya yun? tinanong mo ba?”   
  
“oo, sabi nya galing daw sa Mom nya.” Napaisip ako, siguro nung mga panahong nakaupo ako sa bench kung saan iniwan ko yun, yung Mommy nya yung sunod na umupo dun… “yung Mommy nya yung nakapulot, pare. :-[ :-[”   
  
Nagulat siya pagkarinig nya nun. Lumabas pa nga siya kung san man siya eh. Maingay kasi. “so ano ng nangyari?”   
  
“I tried to take it from her, pero ayaw nyang ibigay, galing daw sa Mommy nya at kanya daw yun. :-\ :-\”   
  
“totoo naman pare eh. You left it in purpose and her Mom happened to see it tapos binigay sa kanya.. so..” tumigil siya sandali, “it’s technically hers now, not yours.”   
  
Oo nga naman. Pero kahit na. hindi naman nya alam kung anong klaseng sentimental value meron yung singsing na yun eh, I mean, to her it’s just a plain, ordinary ring she sees around everyday. As a matter of fact, it must just be one of her many collection of jewelries. Hindi importante sa kanya yun. She even called it stupid. >:( :-[ :-\   
  
“I know..but— :-X”   
  
I was going to say more, kaso, he cut me off saying, “hindi kaya destiny yun?”   
  
“destiny? ??? ???” It was a question that froze me up. I don’t know but somehow, in some unexplainable way, iba yung naramdaman ko. Nagtataka na hindi, negative na positive. Hay. Ewan. :-\ :-\   
  
“oo. Try mo lang, bro, baka sakaling ito na yung matagal mo ng hinihintay...” hinihintay? ??? Wala naman akong hinihintay. He continued talking and I remained silent, listening to every word he’s saying. “—wala namang masama dun diba?”   
  
It was for a couple of moments when I realized what situation he’s trying to put me into. Is he trying to get me with Iris? ??? ??? Si Iris na sinabi ko sa sarili ko na never kong magugustohan? Alam kong marami na kong nagawang mali ever since nagpunta kame dito, she having my ring doesn’t mean she’s the one meant for me. si Tricia lang yun, wala ng iba. :-[ :-\   
  
“pare, that’s ridiculous.” Yun na lang ang sinabi ko. “nasisiraan ka na ba ng bait? We’re talking about Iris here, the same girl I told you I would never go for. :-\”   
  
“bakit naman?”   
  
“eh kasi hindi ko siya gusto, yung ugali nya… basta lahat. >:( :-\” I could’ve sworn it felt weird when I said that. :-\   
  
Nag-sigh lang sya. Oo, ganito talaga yan kapag hindi ko sumasang-ayon sa sinasabi nya. “pero aminin mo, iba ang naramdaman mo nung nakita mo yung singsing na suot nya..” he said teasingly.   
  
True, nakaramdam ako ng magaan na feeling. Sa totoo lang, I never pictured anyone wearing it, pero nung nakita ko sa kanya, I have to admit, bagay sa kamay nya. And truth be told, wala na kong gustong iba pang magsuot non kundi si Tricia, o siya.   
  
“oo, pero hindi naman ibig sabihin nun may nararamdaman na ko para sa kanya.”   
  
“but you’re attracted to her.”   
  
“hindi.”   
  
“okay..” he paused. Alam ko kung anong ginagawa nitong si Anthony, he’s trying to squeeze the truth out of me. the truth that I still can not accept. “but you saw her in a different light.. diba? aminin mo na kase…”   
  
“oo, pero we both know that’s not enough, pare. :-\ :-\” Hindi ko inentertain yung concept nya, masyado ng magulo ang isip ko, tambak-tambak na ang mga kasalanan ko. “pare, alam mo kung gano ko kamahal si Tricia. You were there during the times na hirap na hirap ako.. I promised her forever, bro.. :-\ :'( and now dahil lang sa isang bagay mawawala yun? hindi ko magagawa sa kanya to. hindi pwede, hindi ako ganong klaseng tao. And before I saw that ring around her finger, I had a dream of Tricia, she was telling me something, pero hindi ko alam kung ano.. :'( :'(”   
  
“for pete’s sake, Jeremy! It’s been 3 years. For all we know, this is what Tricia wants for you. malamang yun ang sinasabi nya. tignan mo nga ang sarili mo, baka nakakalimutan mo, ‘tol. you’re alive. Hindi ka patay. Pero yang ginagawa mo? You’re good as dead, bro.”   
  
Ilang beses ko na tong naririnig kay Anthony, but I never seem to take it in. Kapag pumpalya ko, yan ang lagi nyang sinasabi. Ano bang magagawa ko? hindi ko talaga kayang kalimutan si Tricia. “Ton, hindi naman tama yung ginagawa ko eh. at hindi rin tama yung gusto mong gawin ko. Because that’s unfair. :-\ :-\”   
  
“anong hindi tama don? You’re not tied, and you have the right to do what you want.” Halata ko na naiirita na siya, “and it’s not unfair, pare. You’re just allowing yourself to live again.”   
  
“but I don’t want to.. :'( :'(” I know, every single time I say this, I seem to have this huge bulk of pain in my chest. “kaya kong tuparin yung promise ko kay Tricia. :-\”   
  
“bakit, yan lang ba ang pumipigil sayo? Yung promise mo?” he paused, “sinasabi mo lang ba yan dahil yun ang sinabi mo, o yun talaga ang gusto mo?” I was quiet. Hindi ko alam kung anong isasagot ko sa tanong nya. Ito ba talaga ang gusto ko? ??? kung ito nga yun, bakit hindi ako matahimik, lalo na ngayon, ngayon na nandito si Iris. :-\ :-\ “bro, hindi ko naman sinasabi na baliwalain yung pinagsamahan nyo ni Tricia eh, dahil alam kong hindi mo naman magagawa yun. Ang sinasabi ko lang, let go. Kalimutan mo na si Tricia.. You should move on. There’s the sign.. malay mo, si Amgirl ang makatulong sayo.. Just give it a shot, try acting normal, the real you. Yung Jeremy na extrovert at hindi yung tahimik. Subok lang, bro. you have nothing to lose. If it doesn’t work out for the best, then drop it.”   
  
“ayoko, Anthony. I can’t do this.. :-\ :-\” kahit sa tingin ko naman may point sya, pakiramdam ko may pumipigil sakin. Mahina na lang talaga siguro ang loob ko. “kung hahanap lang ako ng panakip-butas, wag si Iris… :-\ :-[”   
  
“bakit hindi, diba sabi mo naman, hinding hindi mo siya magugustohan? ‘tol Are you scared you might fall for her in the process?”   
  
Napalunok ako ng wala sa oras nun. takot nga ba ako? hindi, I just don’t want to take the risk. Takot din naman ako sa karma. “basta. Tingin ko lang hindi tama. :-\” Pero parang gusto ko yatang subukan. Hindi naman siguro mali ang sumubok diba? :-\ :-\ I’m going to act normal around her, I’ll try to bring back the old Jeremy, baka sakaling mabawasan ang sakit na nararamdaman ko. Pero dapat hanggang dun lang yun, dahil walang kahit na sino ang pwedeng pumalit kay Tricia. “tsaka, ayoko kay Iris, kung may papalit man kay Tricia, sigurado akong hindi siya yun. :-[ :-[”   
  
“bakit ba kase? Ano bang mali sa kanya, eh the way I see it, kahit na sa picture ko lang siya nakita, tingin ko okay na okay siya.”   
  
“sinabi ko naman sayo diba, hindi siya yung tipo kong babae. yung ugali nya dude. I can’t stand it. >:( >:( Nakakahiya siyang kasama, kung pano siya manamit, the way she acts.. para talagang hindi matinong babae. >:( :-\”   
  
“then change her.” Huh? ??? ??? Change. Yeah, that’s an easy word for him to say, marami na siyang nabagong babae para lang pumasa sa standards nya. Napakunot bigla yung noo ko non. Change her? I can’t do that, si Iris pa? ??? ??? “bahala ka, pare. It’s your call. Ang akin lang, nandyan na nga ang grasya, ayaw mo pang tanggapin.” He paused. “wag mong kakalimutan, you two are in one team. Kapag hindi kayo magkasundo, hindi maganda ang effect nyan sa trabaho. Chance mo na to para mapatunayan sa Dad mo na kaya mong magpatakbo ng isang department without him always overseeing things for you.” huminga sya ng malalim tapos nagsalita siya ulit, yung boses nya, seryoso na. “change her, and you’ll change as well.”   
  
Nagulohan ako sa sinabi nya. Ako? I need a change? ??? ??? Hindi ata. “hindi ko kailangang magbago, pare.”   
  
“sure you do. Ganon lang naman yan eh, you’re going to make her adapt to your standards, and she’ll make you adapt to hers at the same time. Working process yan.” Mas lalo yata akong nagulohan. “trust me, pare. She’ll take you out from your shell.”   
  
Ako naman eh, talagang clueless dun sa sinasabi nya. “what are you talking about? ??? :-\”   
  
“positive and negative analogy, ‘tol.” Hindi ako nagcomment. “yin and yang?” lasing ata to eh? napansin nya ata na hindi ako makasunod sa sinasabi nya, pano, hindi ko nga maintindihan. “what I’m trying to say is, si Iris, may quality siya na makakabenefit sayo. She’s an extrovert person, with right handling, magagawa mo yun beneficial. At ikaw naman, ang advantage nya sayo eh introvert ka. With right handling din, mase-straighten out mo rin ang ugali nya kapag napenetrate na sakanya yung pagiging tahimik din.” Halata mong hirap na hirap na siyang mag-explain. Ako naman, medyo naiintindihan ko na yung point nya. “hindi ba yan ang gusto mo? To have total control over her? Ang ma-tame ang ugali nya?” tama. “at tsaka Jeremy, bro. sya ang makakatulong sayo para makapag-move on.” Sumimangot naman ako bigla dun sa huli nyang sinabi. Hindi ko pa ata kayang magmove on. “isipin mo na lang, bro, ito yung sinasabi ni Tricia sayo sa panaginip mo.”   
  
Actually, it makes sense. Baka ito nga yung sinasabi sakin ni Tricia.. Trish kung ito yung sinasabi mo, then okay, I’ll do it. :-\ :-\ :'(   
  
Okay, crystal clear. Alam ko na kung ano yung sinasabi nya. Nung binanggit nya yung tungkol sa business, sa Dad ko, at sa whole change thing na sinasabi nya, napaisip na talaga ako ng malalim.. On a second thought, I changed my mind. Maybe this change thing will work out for the best. Kapag napabago ko si Iris, malaking asset yun sa business.. at kapag nangyari yun, my Dad will be so proud of me. baka sakaling payagan na nya kong magstart ng sarili kong business ng hindi siya kasama. “--oh sige. Pag-iisipan ko. :-\ :-\”   
  
“sus, business lang pala ang makakapagpabago ng isip mo eh.” Sumigla naman bigla yung boses nya. “alright dude! Oh ano? Okay ka na?”   
  
“I guess. :-\”   
  
“Sige balitaan mo na lang ako.”   
  
Binaba na namin yung phone. Tama nga ba itong gagawin ko? wala namang sigurong mawawala kung susubukan ko diba? tsaka, I’m just going to loosen up with her, hindi naman ako maiinlove sa kanya.   
  
And I’ll start this by offering peace with her. Tama. Bibilan ko siya ng pagkain. 8) ;D   
  
\*\* END OF FLASHBACK \*\*   
  
continuation. ;)   
  
  
“dahil gusto mo? ??? ???” tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. Okay, I know this isn’t the answer she’s looking for. “what kind of a lame excuse is that?! >:( ::) ???”   
  
She looked at both her shoulders, I realized I was still gripping onto them. kaya ako naman, tinanggal ko yung kamay ko sa balikat nya. “oo, dahil yun ang gusto ko. masama bang bilan ka ng pagkain? :-X ??? :-\”   
  
“hindi! >:( >:(” itong si Iris, lagi na lang pasigaw kung sumagot. Parang akala mo eh bingi yung kausap nya ::) ::). “but these..” inextend nya yung arms nya. “lahat yan, mali! >:( >:(” panong naging mali, eh inubos naman nya lahat ::) ::).. “ano yan? Bribe? >:( ??? >:(”   
  
“no Iris. ::) :-\” Tinignan ko siya ng diretso. “they’re peace offering. :)” kaya tanggapin mo na!! ;D ;D   
  
Tinignan nya ko na parang sinasabi nyang, ‘huh?’ sabagay, expected ko na rin naman yung ganong klaseng reaction from her. Natawa siya ng konti sabay sabi ng.. “ARE YOU SHITTIN’ ME? >:( ??? >:(” bigla nyang sinabi. Ano daw? ??? ???   
  
Hindi ko naintindihan yun. ngayon ko lang yun narinig ah ??? ???.. “ano?”   
  
She looked so annoyed and irritated kaya ayun, pumamewang siya. “it means are you messing around with me? >:( ???” ah yun pala yun.. ::) :D   
  
“ah.. hindi. I’m not messing around with you. :D” ang hirap namang magexplain dito! “diba sabi mo.. lagi na lang tayo nag-aaway over petty things.. tapos, sabi mo lagi kitang sinusungitan, ikaw naman kasi, ang kulit mo. Pero it’s not entirely your fault. mahina kasi tolerance ko sa kakulitan :-\ :D.” Nakatingin lang siya sakin and surprisingly, she was listening attentively. Mukang interesado siya sa sinasabi ko ha. “and I thought things through.. and I realized.. we need each other. After all, diba business partners tayo.. Kaya dapat magkasundo tayo. :) :)”   
  
Tinanggal nya yung mga kamay nya sa bewang nya, but this time, she crossed her arms naman. “so you’re doing all of these, for business purposes only? ??? ???” hindi. Wala lang akong maisip na ibang dahilan. ::) ::)   
  
“kung yun ang tingin mo, then yes.” Nagbago bigla yung facial expression nya. Mukang hindi nya ata nagustohan ang sinabi ko. please naman, Iris. Wag mo na kong pahirapan! >:( :-\ ::) “I mean, it’s a big part.. you know. Para narin to sa parents natin. Kapag kasi magkasundo tayo, mas magiging maayos ang trabaho. At kapag maayos ang trabaho, matutuwa sila. Diba? ??? :)” sakyan mo na yung excuse ko!   
  
There was sudden light in her face. Oo, alam ko. she told me, she wants to make her Mom proud for once. Kaya nga yun ang naisip kong gawin na dahilan eh. Ayan. Mukang aagree na siya. Hay salamat ::) :). “talaga? ??? 8)” she walked towards me. “eh pano kung ayoko? ??? >:( Pano kung sabihin ko sayo na I don’t give a damn if my Mom thinks I’m a failure? >:( >:( Maganda nga yun eh, para pabalikin na niya ko sa LA, then I won’t have to deal with all of these business crap. >:( >:( >:( ” Babalik siya sa LA? Oo nga pala. :-\   
  
Ang hirap nyang i-convince ah. :-\ >:(   
  
“ayaw mo bang maging successful ang business partnership natin? ??? ???” sana tumalab yung reverse psychology ko.. :P :P   
  
She straightened out her face. Hmm. ano kayang ibig sabihin nun? pero teka, sandali.. bakit biglang kumunot na naman yung noo nya?? “wag mo nga kong i-reverse psychology! >:( >:(” tsk!!! >:( Bakit alam nya yun!? >:( :-X “gosh! How I hate that! >:( >:(” tapos umupo siya dun sa kama. “alam mo, if your acting and doing bizarre stuff strictly for business only, then it’s not necessary. If you plan to achieve success, then use your brain! >:( 8)” tinuro nya ko. “pa peace-offering ka pang nalalalman dyan :-\ >:(. Ang panget ng strategy mo! >:( >:( 8) Di bale sana kung sincere eh. yun pala, there’s a dark reason behind it.” She pouted her lips. Wala lang, napansin ko lang ;D. “siguro tinawagan ka ng Daddy mo noh!? ??? 8)” naman, kaduktong na ba ng pangalan ko ang ‘daddy’ ? lagi na lang ako naa-associate dun eh :-\ :-\. she raised her eyebrow, “tapos sinabi nya na you have to be nice to me para mag-cooperate ako.. ano? Tama no? ??? 8)”   
  
Well, I guess I’m stuck in the corner already. Hindi naman si Daddy ang tumawag sakin eh. pero sige na. “okay, fine. So it’s for business. but still I want to start off clean. Sincere naman ako nung sinabi kong peace-offering yung food eh. :) :)” mukang hindi parin siya naniniwala. “Babalik na tayo sa Manila.. everything is settled there. Kung pwede lang sana, maging okay na tayo, magkasundo na. we’re going live on the first of the month. Yun ang official opening ng MV Telecoms.” Naalala ko, malapit na pala yun. malapit na rin ang death anniversary ni Tricia. :-[ :-[   
  
“So? ??? Ano naman ngayon? ??? ???”   
  
Ano naman ngayon? ??? HAHARAP LANG NAMAN TAYO SA MARAMING TAO SA OPENING! >:( :-\ Just thinking about it makes me nervous already, lalo na’t kasama ko pa to :-\. “haharap tayo sa maraming tao, at hindi magandang impression ang hindi magkasundo. Gusto mo bang mapahiya tayo? :-\ ???”   
  
“like I care!? ??? >:( 8)”   
  
“well, ayokong mapahiya… :-[”   
  
“then don’t embarrass yourself, duh? ??? ::)”   
  
Hindi siya talaga papatalo noh? ??? >:( “Iris naman, sige na..”   
  
“hmf! >:(” She crossed her arms again, ano ba, Iris.. wag mo na kong pahirapan PLEASE!!! :-\ :-X :-\   
  
I assumed that she’s agreeing with what I’m saying.. yung ‘hmf!’ palang nya eh, mukang maganda ang ibig sabihin nun. “so let’s have a good start… and it’ll start kung tanggapin mo na yung peace-offering ko.. sige na. :) :)” nagpaawa naman ako ng muka. Tapos lumapit ako sa kanya.   
  
“peace-offering? ??? Ha! 8) >:(” she laughed sarcastically. Reyna talaga ng sarcasm itong babaeng to. “hindi ko tatanggapin yun unless otherwise I think it’s with sincerity. 8) 8)”   
  
“ano bang gusto mong gawin ko? dalan kita lagi ng pagkain? ng banana split? ice cream?” yun ba gusto nya? “sige just name it! 8)” yakang-yaka yan! 8) 8)   
  
“whatever it takes! 8)” she said arrogantly.   
  
Ah ganon ha! sincerity ba kamo!? Sige. I’ll give it to you 8) 8).   
  
“okay.. then I guess..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Expect to gain at least ten pounds.” Ha! maarte ka pa ha, sige! patatabain kita! 8) 8)   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“okay.. then I guess. expect to gain at least ten pounds.” WHAT THE?!?! :o >:( :o   
  
“TEN POUNDS?! >:(” this guy’s shittin’ me, isnt he!? “ten freakin’ pounds?” I asked again. his face was almost dead serious, but what the heck, his face looks like that even if there’s no reason to be serious at all! ;D Ha, I’m not falling for this one. “You’re insane, you know that? ??? >:(”   
  
He stared at me as if I were saying something so ridiculous. “oh? di ba sabi mo whatever it takes? ??? 8)” okay? I meant that in a different angle okay!? 10 pounds? Ano yun pakakainin nya ko until I blow up and end up not fitting in my clothes? Ano sya sira? ayoko nga tumaba! i do not work out and practice strict diet as much as I can para lang maachieve ko yung body ko ngayon, tapos ganyan ganyan lang? ba!? >:( >:(   
  
“you’re such a smart ass, alam mo yun? >:(” and I thought I was one, naku! Mas grabe pa to! >:( >:(   
  
“what? ::)” ah sus, kunyaring clueless pa eh! “eh yun naman talaga yung sinabi mo, diba? 8) ::)” tapos inulit nya sinabi ko, exactly the way I said it. Aba? Ang lokong to!? >:( :o   
  
“oo nga! Pero.. >:(:-\” yun nga ang sinabi ko, but this is not exactly how I pictured it. Ahh! Nakakainis sya ha! >:( >:( “I don’t want to gain weight noh!”   
  
Natawa siya dun sa sinabi ko. okay? ??? >:( what’s so funny with what I said? Eh totoo naman, ayoko naman talaga tumaba. “sus, mas maganda nga yung may laman diba? ??? ::)..” he looked at me from head to toe, “yan ba ang sexy? Eh ang payat mo eh, tignan mo oh, kitang kita yung collar bone mo.” So? His is showing too, what’s he talking about? teka nga, matignan nga. Nagpunta ako sa harap ng dresser to look at myself. Ang ganda ko talaga!! 8) ::) hihihi. “bakit tinitignan mo kung halata ang collar bone mo? ::) 8)” ay, obvious ako masyado? ::) :-[   
  
Kaya tumalikod naman ako kagad. “ano ka? Hindi no!”   
  
“sus, nagdeny pa, obvious naman. ::) 8)”   
  
“ano bang problema mo? >:(” ewan ko ba, pero may feeling ako he’s up to something.   
  
“wala.. 8)” actually, the more intently I look at him, the more he’s convincing me na hindi talaga siya sincere. “ang sinasabi ko lang, I think it’s a good idea that you gain a little weight, kahit hindi ten pounds.”   
  
“ang gulo mo noh!?! >:( ???” SERIOUSLY, BAKIT BA SIYA GANYAN?!? >:( :-\   
  
“anong magulo? Pano ako naging magulo?”   
  
“ah ewan ko sayo! >:(” naku!! Magkakagray hair ako dito ng wala sa oras eh! >:( >:(   
  
“okay! basta ha, hangga’t sa hindi ka pumapayag na maging okay na tayo, pakakainin kita ng pakakainin! 8) ;D” tapos umupo siya sa couch at nagdekwatro pa ha! “maganda yun, malusog. ;) :D”   
  
What the heck!? Eh teka? Bakit ba ko nagpapakastress dito, eh pwede ko naman hindi kainin yung papakainin nya sakin, diba? ??? 8) kahit na sinigang na pork pa yan tapos banana split na maraming toppings.. oh kaya naman pasta.. fettucine! Or baked salmon! Hay! Enough with the food thoughts na nga!! ::) ::)   
  
Nakaupo lang siya dun sa couch, tapos ako nandun sa harap ng dresser, brushing my hair. While doing that, napatingin ako ulit sa collar bone ko, hindi naman sya masyadong showing ha? hindi naman ako ganon kapayat-anorexic style eh.. ::) ::)   
  
Tapos bigla naman siya nagsalita ulit.. “hmm.. ano kayang masarap na food para tomorrow morning?” nakatingin pala sya sa menu para sa room service. sus! Feeling naman nya maapektohan ako! hmf! >:( >:( “french toast? Pancakes?..” he continued reading off of the menu. Ako naman, I couldn’t help but imagine how yummy those can be, especially kung maple syrup yung nasa pancakes, tapos may whipped cream and strawberries.. ::) :D err!! Ano ba!? “eggs benedict kaya? Oh kaya itong batter-fried apple rings?” tapos tumingin siya sakin through the mirror. Oh great, he caught me looking!! :-\ :o Nagsmile lang siya, a very sheepish smile. “ano sa tingin mo? Masarap kaya yun? :P ::)”   
  
Nilayo ko naman kagad yung tingin ko. “bakit ako tinatanong mo!? >:(”   
  
“bakit masama ba? ???”   
  
“wag mo nga ko tanungin! >:(” bwiset!!! Doesn’t he have anything better to do than tick me off here? ??? >:(   
  
“eh sinong gusto mong tanungin ko? ???” he looked around and finally landed on the wall, “yung pader? ;D”   
  
Then wall it is! “oo!!”   
  
He rolled his eyes on me. aba, at may pa-roll-roll na siya ng eyes ngayon ha!! >:( ::) Parang hindi naman nya nagets yung sinabi ko. “so, ano? Alin dun ang gusto mo for breakfast? ??? ::)” nakakaintindi ba to? ??? >:(   
  
“ewan ko sayo!! >:(” feeling ko talaga magkakawrinkles na ko eh! why am I in this mess!? Whyyyy!!?? ??? :'( ::)   
  
“ahhh alam ko na.. 8)” he shifted his position, kanina kase his left leg was over his right leg, ngayon naman, it’s the other way around. “baka gusto mo lahat orderin ko? pwede rin.. 8)” errr!! Iniinis nya talaga ako noh? Pero, oo. Gusto ko yun lahat!!! Huhuh!!   
  
So I stood up, went to my closet, and grabbed some of clothes, including this gorgeous black racer back versace dress my Mom almost had a heart attack when she saw how much money I took from her bank to spend on such a simple dress. Actually, I brought this here because I thought that perhaps the investors will come up with an idea or something about having a social gathering diba? eh di center of attraction ako for sure dun!   
  
Pero teka nga, let me just get my point across this guy’s thick head for just a quick second..   
  
“nakita mo to? ??? 8)” I showed him the dress, “this dress is worth more than that stupid laptop you're always on.” Nakatingin lang siya sakin na parang hindi siya naniniwala. Hindi nya siguro alam kung anong worth nito noh? It’s versace dress I bought for $2,695, mind you. at halos umusok ang tenga ng Mommy ko nung nakita nya yung price tag. ;D ;D   
  
“sus, problema ba yun? 8)” tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. Ang yabang nya ha. “eh di bibilan kita ng bago kapag hindi na nagkasya sayo.. yun lang pala eh. 8) ::)”   
  
“baka hindi mo alam kung magkano to? ??? >:(”   
  
He stood up in front of me para hawakan yung dress na hawak ko, after that, he scratched his chin. Sige, tignan nga natin ngayon!! 8) “it’s a versace dress right?” hala? :o Pano nya nalaman?? ??? “and it costs around…” he played with his finger while making a funny face, “P100,000.. and if you bought that in the US.. it’s roughly..” this time naman, nagcompute siya sa air, “$2000. 8)” Hmm?! :o :o close! Pano nya nalaman yun? ???   
  
“what the hell?” I swear my eyes were as big as I could imagine they were when he said what he just said. At isa lang ang pumasok sa isip ko.. come on, a guy who knows about designer dresses, and how much each is worth.. tsk, sayang, gwapo pa naman siya. “ARE YOU GAY!?” ??? ::)   
  
Naglakad na siya papalayo saken, papunta sa couch ulit. Bakit hindi sya sumagot? So it’s true!?!?! ??? :o   
  
“tumahimik ka nga, yung imagination mo, napakalawak! ::)” bakit ako tatahimik, eh curious nga ako?? he gave me an odd stare. “good night, Princess.” He yawned, Tapos nagsmile siya, yung parang bading. OH MY GOD, HE IS GAY!?! :o :o   
  
Siempre naman curious na ko talaga noh, so instead of letting him sleep, umupo ako sa bed, but I was facing him. “why aren’t you talking to me?”   
  
“kita mo?” he spoke with his eyes closed, “natutulog na yung tao eh.. ::)”   
  
“I know, I can see that… 8)” pero kung tulog na siya, bakit sya nagrespond sakin, diba? “okay, if you’re sleeping like you said you were, bakit sumasagot ka pa rin? 8) ???”   
  
“eh siempre, kinakausap mo ko, natural, sasagot ako. ::) 8)” Ay? Pilosopo?? ???   
  
You wanna play smart ass ha! “eh akala ko ba tulog ka na?”   
  
“oo nga.”   
  
“eh bakit ka nga sumasagot kung tulog ka na? ???”   
  
“eh kasi tinatanong mo ko. 8)” Nakakainis naman eh! I’m supposed to win this playing smart-ass game!!!!   
  
“EH YOU’RE ASLEEP NA NGA DIBA?! >:(” teka nga? Ano bang point ko? Eh we’re just going around in circles here eh. Hindi naman sya papatalo sakin ngayon. That idiot. So instead of instigating a fight with him, I threw myself in bed, pulled up the covers and there. I would’ve covered my face with a pillow so that I could scream, kaya lang hindi ko na ginawa. humiga na na lang ako. Nakakainis!! Bakit ganun? Ang calm nya, BAKIT HINDI NYA KO PINAPATULAN LIKE BEFORE?!!?!?! ??? >:( :-\   
  
Matutulog na sana ako eh, kaya lang he suddenly threw a pillow at me. Arrgghh!! This jerk!!! I sat up instantly and threw the pillow back at him. “ANO BA!?! NAKAKAINIS KA NA HA!! >:(” napipikon na ko talaga ha!   
  
He dodged his head away, kaya hindi ko siya tinamaan. “ooppss.. gising ka pa pala. Sorry. ;D” Then he made the peace sign. What the heck is going on with this guy!?!?! ??? ??? I mean, seriously? Ano bang nangyare sa kanya and all of a sudden he’s a different person?? Did he hit his head or something?   
  
I wish I could get back at him, para even na kami. Ahhh… I know.. “IKAW, BAKLA KA TALAGA NOH!? 8) ???”   
  
It took a couple of seconds before he said something, by the way, he said, “do I look like I’m gay to you? ???” no you don’t, but you certainly act like one.   
  
“I ASKED YOU FIRST!!”   
  
He covered naman his hears right away. Okay? Anong kaartehan yan? ??? “relax, Prince, hindi naman ako 100 feet away para sumigaw ka eh. ::)” Tapos lumapit siya sakin and spoke softly, “just to remind you, andito lang ako sa harap mo, at ayaw ko pang mabingi, okay? ::) ::)” Prince? is it me, or am I just being called with more unauthorized names? feeling ko, sa konting time na magkasama kami, ang dami ko na kagad bagong names eh. Ang we-weird pa lahat.   
  
“why are you changing the subject, ha!?” sumagot ka na kasi eh!!   
  
“gusto mong malaman? 8)” ayyy hindi!! Kaya nga nagtatanong eh!! “sa itsura kong to, hindi pa ba obvious?” magtatanong ba ko kung hindi ako nagkaron ng initiative?! ??? ???   
  
“sagutin mo na lang kasi! Pinapaikot ikot mo pa ko eh! >:(” normally, I find satisfaction kapag inaasar at kinukulit ko siya, but right now, I’m not having fun at all kasi… hindi nya ko pinapatulan :-\. And instead of actually getting mad at me for doing such, ako ang inaasar naman nya. And siempre, naasar naman ako. >:( >:(   
  
“oh sige, sasagutin ko ha.” He said slowly, hello? What was that for? What am I, retarded?! Hindi ako nagsalita, I crossed my arms instead, getting ready for whatever he’s about to say.. “hindi ako bakla, okay?” hindi daw, hooo!!! ::) ::)   
  
“whatever. ::)”   
  
“whatever ka dyan. Bakit, hindi ka naniniwala? ???” oo, naniniwala. Gusto ko lang kita asarin, see how far you can stand me, eh kaso HINDI KA NAMAN NAPIPIKON!!! >:( >:(   
  
“nope. 8)” I smiled at him sheepishly. Ayan, mukang napipikon na sya, yes!!   
  
“ah ganon?”   
  
“oo.”   
  
“gusto mo patunayan ko? 8)”   
  
“oo. 8)”   
  
“sigurado ka? ??? 8)” tanong nya ulit.   
  
“oo. 8)”   
  
“talaga lang ha?” ang kulit, sabing oo eh!!   
  
“oo nga! >:(”   
  
He stood up from the couch and sat beside me in the bed. Okay…. What’s he doing? ??? ???“gusto mo talagang patunayan ko ha? 8) ???” nilapit nya yung face nya sakin.   
  
“wait.. what are you going to do? ???”   
  
“you’ll see. 8)” anong gagawin mo sakin, and why is he getting nearer and nearer ?!?! ??? :-\   
  
Nung hindi ako sumagot, lalo naman nyang nilapit yung muka nya. Half clueless as I was, I kept still parin. Parang alam ko na ata kung anong gagawin nya, ang tanong: does he have the guts to do it? ... I BET NOT. 8) 8)   
  
He kept on moving his face towards mine; and when he was almost an inch away from my face, tumigil siya. See?! CHICKEN. Maghahamon-hamon dyan, hindi naman kayang gawin. Instead of going further, he stopped at one point and he just… he just stared at me.   
  
Yung nakakailang na stare! Basta, yung parang he’s examining my entire face intently. Eh siempre, I felt awkward na, kase why is he staring at me like that? I mean, hindi lang ito yung first time he gave me this look, a couple or more times na eh. and it makes me wonder why. really hindi ko alam kung meron bang dirt sa face ko, or a pimple maybe?. wala naman akong pimple, and I definitely do not have any dirt on my face. So I decided to just play it cool na lang. “what now? 8)” I crossed my arms, “can’t do it, can you? 8)”   
  
Tahimik pa rin siya, but this time, his eyes were almost clouding up with tears. Bakit ba sya ganyan? Kanina parang ang saya naman nya, tapos in just a snap, serious ulit. Ano ba talaga? abnormal talaga siya noh!? ??? ???   
  
He suddenly came into his senses by shifting his view to somewhere else, dun sa lamp shade na nasa nightstand. “a..anong hindi kaya?!” okay, so I guess there was another snap? Hindi na siya serious eh.. “naalala ko lang kase… :-\” nakatingin pa rin siya dun sa lamp shade, grabe. Ano bang meron sa lamp shade na yun? “ano.. uhm.. :-X” why is he stuttering? “ah! eh kase ano.. naalala ko.. hindi ka pa pala nagtotoothbrush 8) ;D.” Bumalik na siya sa couch. “I don’t want to kiss someone with a bad breath 8) :D.” Kiss!? Aha! I knew it.   
  
Sinong bad breath? Me!? “hoy hindi ako bad breath noh!! >:(” ang feeling nito!   
  
He faced me while he was sitting on the couch, “so gusto mong i-kiss kita? ??? :P” me? gusto sya i-kiss? Only in his wildest dreams noh! >:(   
  
“ang kapal ng face mo noh? ??? >:(”   
  
Tinaas nya yung feet nya and then he rested his head on both his arm. Yung ganon, parang he’s relaxing. Basta, you get the picture. “sus, ayaw pa kasing aminin… ::)” he yawned, “type mo ko eh, and you want me to kiss you… 8) ::)” he sighed, “kaya mo ko inaasar na bakla.”   
  
Why is everything suddenly back firing on me?! I shouldn’t be pissed off right now, dapat siya yung umuusok yung tenga sa sobrang asar eh!!!! arrgghh!! “eeeww!! You swear!! >:(” feeling nya noh! Hindi ko siya type. YUCK.   
  
“uuyy.. si Iris.. crush ako.. ::) ::)”   
  
He’s not gonna stop, is he?! “SHUT UP!! >:(”   
  
“uuyy.. defensive!! ;D :D”   
  
Bakit ang galing nya mangasar!!?!?!? “GOSH!! WILL YOU STOP BUGGING ME!? ??? >:(”   
  
“titigil lang ako kapag umamin ka.. ;D” geeezzz. I want to strangle him right now!   
  
Humiga na ko sa bed. “WHATEVER! >:(” I turned around and pulled up the covers. “I’m gonna go to sleep, GOOD NIGHT!! >:( >:(”   
  
And as soon as I said that, there was an incredible silence in the room. Cool, I got away with it 8)… or so I thought. :-\   
  
Akala ko okay na eh, kaya lang bigla na lang siya ulit nagsalita. “hoy, Iris, magtoothbrush ka nga, kadiri ka, matutulog ka ng hindi nagtoothbrush!! ;D ;D” then he started laughing hysterically. And trust me on this one, he really did.   
  
Shoot. :-X I almost forgot. Hihihih. ;D   
  
Teka nga muna… Ano ba!? hindi nya ba talaga ako titigilan!?! So I stood up without responding to him and walked to the bathroom to brush my teeth.   
  
Anyway, after brushing my teeth, I decided to stay in there for a while muna. Ayoko pang lumabas eh, kasi I know for sure aasarin na naman ako nun. so I allowed time for him to fall asleep before ako lalabas.   
  
I ended up not doing anything inside, which I found extremely boring that I almost fell asleep in there. Actually, hinanap ko yung planner nya na lagi lang nasa may sink, pero wala na eh. baka tinago na nya. Hmmf. Sayang. I wanted to see that picture on the last page pa naman. wala lang, nacurious lang ako kung sino siya.. and okay, since we’re on it, I’ll make a little confession. Hehe. Well, I’ve been kinda snooping around that planner ever since I saw it lying down by the sink.. ewan ko, but I really like reading about his stupid plans on how to make changes in the company and all that stuff, plus yung picture pa sa last page. I don’t know who she is, but she sure is making me so interested in finding out her identity.. :-\ :-X   
  
I realized I was there for more than I thought, and decided to come out, inaantok na rin kasi ako eh… Luckily, when I peeked outside, he was already sound asleep. Sound asleep, kasi.. he was snoring. Hindi naman yung super sa lakas na hilik, it was a soft snore, not distracting.   
  
Kaya to prevent him of waking up, I tiptoed to the bed at ayun. Success naman. nakahiga rin, sa wakas!! Hay!! I stretched out and found my sweet spot. Ahhh. So much for today, huh!? Good night folks!! :D :D   
  
“mmffmdfdmm..” what is that? ??? “mfmdfmamdfm trrrii..” oh come on! I’m trying to get some sleep here!! argghh!! “Tricia..” Geezz! He’s doing it again! so I turned around to face the couch where I found him sleep talking again. “Tricia..” Tricia na naman!? ??? ??? sino ba kasi yun and why does he keep on calling out her name everytime he sleep-talks!? ??? :-\ Ayun, Tricia lang siya ng Tricia. Nakakainis. Gusto ko na kaya matulog!! >:( Sarap batuhin ng pillow!! >:( >:(   
  
And I was about to, but then.. the next thing I heard from him was something incredibly bizarre and way out of my wildest thoughts…   
  
it even made my jaw drop to the ground.. and by that I mean, it literally dropped open. :o :o   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Iris..” he.. did he..?? DID HE JUST CALL OUT MY NAME!? :o :o :o   
  
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“Iris..” he.. did he..?? DID HE JUST CALL OUT MY NAME!? :o :o :o   
  
It took me a couple of minutes before I could get back to my senses. Nakatingin lang ako sa kanya, ewan ko kung bakit. sa totoo lang, I want to shake him so badly para magising siya, but then I thought, bakit ako magpapaapekto? Eh dream lang naman yan and I’m sure it wasn’t a good dream to begin with. ::) :-\   
  
In such a short time that I’ve known Jeremy, I couldn’t help but ponder upon things that happened along this way. Sino ba siya talaga? Because he seems to be a different person now than the first time I landed my sight on him. :-\ :-\ Dati, sobrang masungit siya and all he could think of was to find a way to get rid of me, tapos ngayon, he’s treating me with royalty.. pinapakain ako, inaasar ako, as if we’re this tight. Dahil sa mga yan, hindi ko mapigil sarili ko na magisip ng sobra sobra. Gahh! I hate this, I hate the fact that he’s making think I’m special in his eyes. Pero ang totoo, gusto lang nya ko gamitin for business. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
Gasgas na kasi yang strategy na yan eh. you know why? because I recognize those same moves from David and my Mom >:( >:(. Alam nyo naman yung dalawang yun, they just couldn’t stop making my life a living hell >:( :-\. Ganyan na ganyan din kasi yung ginawa sakin ni David before eh, he would treat me out all the time, buy me food, treat me like I’m a goddess that needs vigilant handling… I really thought I was special to him. Minahal ko siya eh. even as much as I thought I could :-[ :'(.. pero anong ginawa nya? Ginawa nya kong display lang sa business ventures nya. If he had loved me solely without the business along with it, siguro masaya ako ngayon, I mean.. I’m happy that I’m with someone and perchance, I wouldn’t be this cynical with the big L word. I wouldn’t think that loving someone will make my tears fall like rain, and most importantly, hindi ko iisipin na love itself will result to tragic endings >:( :-[ :'(. He was the first man I ever trusted, you know. Pero anong nangyare? Katulad din pala siya ng ibang lalaki dyan, like my Father who never was a good husband to my Mom, ginamit lang nya ko at ang pangalan ko for his pursuit for success in the business world. >:( >:( >:(   
  
And to make matters worse, kasabwat pa nya ang Mommy ko. My Mom that controlled my life ever since I could walk and talk. >:( :-[   
  
That’s why I never felt sorry for treating them the way I do kase kasalanan naman nila lahat kung bakit ganito ako ka-cold sa kanila eh. if they had only shown me my real worth, hindi ko sila bibigyan ng sakit ng ulo. Lalo na si Mommy. If perhaps she had loved me the way a mother should be to her daughter, I would never have said I hated her in any chance I had >:( >:(.   
  
Don’t get me wrong, I do appreciate her for all the spoiling, but let’s get on the reality side here, she’s only doing that to over compensate for the loss of her motherhood to me. tapos ngayon, madagdagan pa, pati si lola feeling ko gusto din akong gamitin para sa business. I often ask myself, what do I have that they need? Kase kung pwede lang, ibibigay ko na sa kanila eh, so that I could be free for once.. in a sense that I get to do whatever I want and I get to decide for myself anytime I want.. yun naman talaga ang gusto nating lahat diba? :-\ :-\ :-\   
  
That’s why whatever Jeremy’s trying to pull off now, I sure wouldn’t buy it. I don’t want to go back to the person I was before. Yung walang say sa mga bagay, laging yes lang ng yes. And I certainly do not want to entertain the thought that maybe he sees me as someone special, dahil I know in the end, ako rin ang masasaktan. Ayoko ng magtake ng risk ulit. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
Takot na kung takot, pero none of us wants to experience the pain of loving and not getting that love in return. :-[ :'( :-[   
  
Aaminin ko, there’s something about Jeremy that draws me near to him no matter what and how he treats me, hindi siya kagaya ni David na alam kong pure kaplastican lang ang pinapakita sakin.. may pagkaplastic si Jeremy, pero I see a side of him that’s true.. but in contradiction to this feeling, there’s something about him that tells me this is all bullshit, and that he could be using me for something..   
  
Hay nako. Bahala na nga, as long as I have all my bases covered, I should be okay. there’s only one thing that I should keep in mind: NEVER FALL FOR THOSE EYES NO MATTER WHAT THEY’RE TRYING TO TELLING ME.   
  
  
NEXT DAY.   
  
Nagising na lang ako bigla when I felt a very warm and bright light on my face. :o :o ARGGHHH!!!! THE SUN!!! >:( >:( >:( I hate the early morning sun!! ang init!! I opened my eyes in that instant and saw him standing there by the window with his arms widely spread out. errr!! Anong oras na ba? oh great, it’s only 7:30 am >:( >:(! so I rolled back on tummy and pulled up the covers again thinking I could get back to sleep but I was unfortunate. BWISET TALAGA TONG LALAKING TO, NAPAKA INSENSITVE >:( >:( >:(!!! Gusto ko pa kayang matulog noh!!   
  
“Jeremy ano ba!! >:( >:( pull the curtains back, can’t you see I’m sleeping here?” hindi nya ko pinansin. Heck, he didn’t even look back. How rude is that!? Hindi ka magsasalita ha, sige!   
  
So I grabbed the nearest pillow within my reach and threw it at him, which of course hit him, right in the back of his head! Hah! Akala nya ha! ;D 8)   
  
Nagulat siya and he immediately picked the pillow up on the floor while rubbing the back of his head. “aray! Ano ka ba!? :o ???” tinignan lang nya ko ng masama. “ano bang problema mo!? ???”   
  
What’s my problem? He’s asking me what my problem is!? Isn’t it self-explanatory?! “IKAW! YOU’RE MY PROBLEM!! >:( >:( >:(” I yelled at him.   
  
“bakit? anong ginawa ko? ??? ::)” once again ladies, he gave that innocent look I really hate.   
  
“JUST LEAVE ME ALONE OKAY!? >:(” I fixed my pillows so I could get back to sleep, pero hindi pa rin ako makatulog kase naman, yung curtains kaya! “AND WHILE YOU’RE AT IT, CAN YOU PULL THOSE BACK!?” I pointed at him to pull the curtains back.   
  
“wag ka ngang sumigaw, mahiya ka nga, umagang umaga eh ::) ::)..” tapos nagpunta siya dun sa couch and fixed it. “tsaka bumangon ka na dyan, tanghali na oh!”   
  
Tanghali? Eh 7:30 pa lang kaya, tanghali na?!? ??? >:( “I DON’T CARE! Let me sleep!”   
  
“bakit ba nagsusungit ka eh ang aga aga? ???”   
  
Ano ba? hindi ba nya naiintindihan na gusto ko pang matulog? “ughhh!!!! You want me to shut up!?” he looked at me pero walang expression yung face nya. “then pull the curtains back and let me sleep, damn it! >:( >:(”   
  
“ayaw mo bang makita yung sun?” he pointed the sky, “ang ganda oh.. :) :)”   
  
Anong maganda dyan? ??? Eh ang sobrang bright at ang init pa!? “AYOKO! I WANT TO SLEEP!” I placed a pillow on my face to cover up the bright light. “and get that thing out of my face >:( >:( >:( >:( >:(!!!” tinuro ko yung window while my face was buried under the pillow.   
  
“ano ka bampira? ;D ??? Takot sa araw?” I didn’t respond. Bahala sya, he can think whatever he wants to think, I’d careless right now. In a few seconds, I felt he sat beside me. tapos tinanggal nya yung pillow sa face ko. “breakfast tayo sa baba.”   
  
“ikaw na lang, I’m not hungry.” I’m usually not hungry around this time, eh kase naman, dapat tulog pa ko eh! nakakainis! He’s acting like my Mom, only I think he’s more annoying right now! >:( >:(   
  
He took a deep breath. Oh? ano na naman yan?! ??? >:( “okay, kung ayaw mo, eh di I’ll call room service na lang.”   
  
OMG!!! :o >:( Will this guy get any more annoying than this? Doesn’t he get it? Kinamot ko yung head ko sa sobrang asar. “will you stop bugging me?! ugh!!!” then I pushed him off my bed. “if you want to eat then go! >:( >:(”   
  
He stood up quickly from the floor. Hihih! Napalakas ata yung push ko.. “kung ayaw mo eh di wag! >:(” he dusted himself right away, “ikaw na nga ang inaalala dyan, ang dami mo pang arte!”   
  
Ah!? at ako pa ang maarte ngayon? >:( ??? Eh all I want is to get back to sleep. what’s so maarte about that? I can’t believe this guy!! “what? did I ever ask you to look out for me!? >:( ???” errr!!! Wala na! he officially ruined my sleep!   
  
Hindi na siya nagsalita, instead he walked towards the door and grabbed the knob to open it. Good, he finally got my message. Just before he was able to swing it open, somebody knocked.   
  
“breakfast in bed for Ms. Iris..” when I heard my name, bigla akong tumayo.   
  
Nagpunta ako sa may door and I saw a cart full of breakfast delights, and by that I mean everything I could ask for to eat for breakfast. Pancakes with maple syrup with strawberries and whipped cream.. oh my goodness! Si Jeremy oh, nakatayo lang dun. Haha. ;D ;D ;D   
  
“who’s this from? ???” I asked.   
  
While the person was fixing the breakfast, inabot nya sakin yung card. “from Mr. Randolph Leroy, Ma’am.”   
  
“from Randy? That’s so sweet of him :) :).” I read the card. Aww, he’s so sweet talaga..   
  
“oh tapos ngayon tatayo ka, porket galing lang dyan sa Randy mo >:( ???.” Bigla naman nyang sinabi. Okayyy!?!?!? What was that for??   
  
“what do you care? Go eat your breakfast downstairs. 8) ::)” Then I sat down.   
  
Pagkasabi ko naman nun, umalis na siya. Aba, and he banged the door pa ha!? hay nako, that guy’s got some serious problems up in his head talaga.   
  
Nako!! Lalo lang nasira yung morning ko. Nevertheless, I called Randy to say thank you for this very lovely breakfast.   
  
After two rings, he picked up. “bonjour, mademoiselle.”   
  
“got the card and breakfast, bonjour monsieur. Thanks a lot, but you know, you shouldn’t have…”   
  
“oh no, it’s nothing, je suis désolé que je ne pourrais pas vous prendre dehors sur un vrai petit déjeuner.” [sorry I couldn’t take you out on a real breakfast]   
  
A real breakfast? What kind?? Like a date?! :D ??? Hmm.. “that’s alright, but do you mind if I ask why?”   
  
“well, I was thinking of taking you out for the last time since it’s my last day.” Last day nya? Bakit? “I have to go back to London to take care of some business.” I could hear him packing his stuff in the background..   
  
He’s leaving already? Oh man, what a bummer :-\… “oh I see, well maybe we could see each other for the last time so I could thank you.. you know, for the past week and stuff.” Ang sweet kaya nya, he massaged my foot when I tripped on a rock, binuhat pa nga nya ko eh.. he took care of me when I got drunk, he taught me some business techniques… he even got beat up by Jeremy because of me, and that, I truly am sorry. Eh kase naman, sira ulo itong si Stiffie masyado eh, ewan ko ba dun kung bakit nya yun ginawa! >:( >:(   
  
“j'aimerais à, mais mes feuilles d'avion dans une heure. [oh, I would love to, but my plane leaves in an hour].. woke up late so I’m really in a hurry.” Then I heard him open his door, “and you don’t have to thank me for anything Iris, in fact, I should be the one to say that to you.. you know for being nice and for keeping me company..”   
  
Aww.. he’s so nice talaga. sayang, he has to leave na. hmff. “vous êtes bienvenu..” [you’re welcome] na touch naman ako dun, pano kase, nobody has ever appreciated my company since I got here, well, in case hindi nyo alam kung sino yung pinaparinggan ko… ahh! >:( ::) Nevermind that, you all know who I’m talking about. “well.. I guess this is it, huh? Bon voyage :)..”   
  
“merci, mademoiselle, I’ll see you when I do.. I’ll be back.. don’t worry, I didn’t forget we have a business deal to close.. that’s one of the reasons why I need to fly back, to process the proposal to the board of MCI.” oh that’s right! :D Ha! so I’ll be seeing him again! ;D hihih. Pero, wait.. what proposal? ??? I thought it was a sample document? How could he process a sample proposal? Unless some jerk’s been working behind my back to get all the credit!! >:( >:( Kaya siguro nagbabait-baitan yang si Jeremy noh!?!?! ??? >:( At kaya siguro mainit ang ulo nya kapag magkasama kami ni Randy, kase he’s probably thinking I’m doing the same thing he’s doing! May paselos selos pang nalalalman! Ughh!! That schmuck!!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
“oh yeah, huh! Alright, I’ll see you when you get back. And thanks again okay, have a safe trip back.” I pretended I knew all about this, pero mamaya talaga, lagot sakin yang si Jeremy. >:( >:(   
  
“c'était mon plaisir..” [it was my pleasure] I was about to hang up the phone when he said. “I hope when I get back, we’ll be working as one united team.” United team? ??? ??? What’s he talking about? ??? ???   
  
“I beg your pardon?”   
  
“I meant you and Jeremy. I hope you guys would get along.. at least as business associates.. it would be a huge help to the company’s progress, you know?” business business business.. yeah, yeah.. whatever. >:( >:(   
  
We’re only gonna get along if he looses that big ass attitude of his! And if he stops stabbing me in the back with all of these behind my back business deals and other work crap. “we’ll try, but you know, I’m not even staying here that long. I’ll probably be going back to LA by that time.” Yup, in 2 months time, tapos na ko dito. Babalik na ko sa aking home sweet home! Hehe. Yes! :D :D   
  
At yang si Jeremy, bahala siya sa buhay nya. Bahala siyang magpatakbo ng department nya, tutal naman eh, he makes all the decisions right!? Eh ano pang worth ko dito? Pang display na naman? >:( ??? so my assumption is correct after all.. pareho pareho lang sila. Ginamit lang ako para mapapayag si Randy dyan sa stupid deal na yan. Yun lang naman ang use ko dito eh, they’re not after my skills and whatever they’re saying I possess.. they’re just after my physical appearance. Hard to accept, but it’s true. >:( :-[   
  
Sometimes, I wish I wasn’t born to this family, and that I didn’t bear my Mom’s last name, para walang credibility na nakaattach sa identity ko. dahil feeling ko naman ever since then, people only like me because of my last name, that I’m born with a silver spoon in my mouth and that I came from a prominent family in the corporate world. At balang araw, everything will be passed on to me. yun lang. other than that, nobody cares about me what I feel. :-[ >:( :-\   
  
Naku!! If it’s not a crime to kill someone, I must’ve murdered many people already. And that guy? Oh, he’d so be dead a long time ago!! He the latest addition to my hit list. >:( >:(   
  
Why must I be here? ??? :'( am I being punished for being a handful to my Mom? Kung yun yun, pwede bang ibang punishment na lang? because I can no longer live one day seeing this person! I’d probably die out of hypertension at a very young age kung pagsasamahin pa kame ni Stiffie all the time. >:( >:(   
  
After nyang sinabi yun, binaba na namin yung phone. He’s in a hurry daw. At ako naman, ayun, kinain ko na yung breakfast. Kahit na masama yung loob ko. masarap siya! Heheh. ::) ::)   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
And you, Jeremy, you’re dead meat!! >:( >:(   
  
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Breakfast in bed, hooo! Ang arte, may pabreakfast in bed pang nalalaman! I went down the lobby to grab my own breakfast. Yung mas masarap. 8) 8)   
  
Habang nasa elevator ako, hindi ko lubos maisip kung ano ng nangyayare sakin. I know I’ve been screwing up lately and that I could not explain. Nakinig pa kasi ako kay Anthony eh :-\. eh muka namang wa-epek yung pagpapaamo ko kay Iris. Lalo lang siya nagiging matigas kapag dinadaan ko sa pakiusap eh >:( >:(. mabuti pa dati nung lagi ko siyang sinusungitan, mas okay pa siya. Actually, she was more submissive to that kind of attitude.. Eh kung ganun na lang kaya ulit ang gawin ko? papayag kaya siya sa proposal ko? hmm. ??? :-\   
  
Pagbukas ko ng elevator, may biglang tumapik sa balikat ko.   
  
“hey man :)..” ahh si asungot. May dalang mga maleta, aalis na siguro ito. Kaya tinignan ko ka lang siya habang nakatayo sa harap ko. ano bang gusto nito? Bakit siya nakatayo na parang timang dyan? ??? ???   
  
“leaving?”   
  
“yes, going back to London to hand this to the board of trustees.” Tinaas nya yung isang brown envelope at pinakita nya sakin yung nasa loob nito. Yung business proposal na ginawa ko. “listen man, I really like how this proposal is, so I’m taking it to the main office to go over everything and hopefully when I get back I’ll have some good news :).”   
  
Dadalin nya yan? ??? Eh sample lang yan eh, hindi pa nga yun yung totoong proposal, dadalin na nya agad? Ano bang klaseng utak meron itong tao na to? “uhm, sir..” I cleared my throat, “that’s a sample proposal.. I believe I must do some revising to it before you could take it with you.”   
  
Agad naman nyang tinignan yung hawak nyang papel, “oh this? Oh no, this isn’t the sample document..” hindi? Eh yan yung dala ko eh.. hindi pa nga yan masyadong ayos. pinagloloko ba ko nito? “actually, your father gave me a call the other day and asked me how everything was going over here and if I’m interested in doing business with your company. I told him everything’s going smoothly and that you guys are doing a great job laying out all the information I need. On top of that, I must say, I’m impressed with your credentials Jeremy and Iris’ too. so I talked to your father and Iris’ grandmother.. they were so delighted to hear that I’m interested. they immediately had the secretary fax me the real document.” Inabot nya sakin yung papel na hawak at tinignan ko ito. “this will speed up the process, other than the fact that Iris' mom is stock holder of MCI.. I don’t have to stop by your main office to get the original and talk to your company’s board members because they all signed the paper.”   
  
Nagpirmahan na? ??? may share sila Iris sa MCI? bakit hindi ko ata alam yun? ??? :-\ Wait.. “this isn’t the one I generated..” ang laki ng pagkakaiba. Hindi ito yung pinaghirapan kong gawin ng ilang gabi dahil sa pressure na binigay nya sakin. Wala pa nun dito si Iris, pero ilang buwan ko na itong ginagawa dahil nga dito sa convention. Kesyo kailangan perfect kahit na sample lang ang ipapakita ko sa mga investors na pupunta sa seminar dito. Hindi rin ito yung proposal na binasa ni Daddy bago ako umalis at sinabi nyang ayos na ang lahat at pwede ko na itong dalhin para ipakita sa mga investors. Kung tama yung sinabi nya, bakit binago nya yung ginawa ko? ??? >:( :-\ “the sample proposal I gave you during the convention, that’s the one I did, not this.”   
  
“yeah, I noticed that too..” he scanned through the entire document. “the wordings and the organization are a little different but hey, it’s the same concept. well.. he said it’s a revised and a much better version..”   
  
Much better version? ??? :-[ I could not believe what I just heard. Okay, so once again, my Dad meddled with my plans. Akala ko ba eh gusto nilang kami ni Iris ang aayos nito? Tapos ganyan lang ang gagawin nila? eh di ibig sabihin nun walang kwenta itong seminar na to, na pinapunta lang nya kame dito hindi para matuto si Iris tungkol sa mga pasikot sikot sa business kuno na hindi naman importante at para magkaron siya ng interaction sa mga potential investors, kundi para maconvince lang si Randy na umoo sa deal-deal na to na wala naman kaming kaalam alam. I see it, this trip was all about that Leroy account after all. I knew it >:( >:(. kahit kailan talaga walang tiwala sakin si Dad at kailangan pa nya akong paikutin, kesyo mas makakabuti daw ang magbakasyon, para lang makuha nya yung gusto nya. Lalo lang nyang pinamumuka sakin na wala akong kwenta eh. bwiset >:( :-\. Ginamit na naman akong pambargain. At ang masama pa dito, pati si Iris ngayon, ginagamit na nila. grabe, hanggang saan ba sila aabot para sa pera?! >:( >:(   
  
hindi ba nila alam kung gano kahirap yung pinagpapasa pasahan ka, pati yung may lugar ka nga, hindi mo naman talaga magalawan ng malaya, dahil laging may nagbabantay at nagdedesisyon para sayo? May pusisyon ka nga, hindi mo naman magampanan at magamit ang diskarte mo. Para sana pa’t nag-aral ako ng kung ano anong related sa lintek na business na to kung hindi ko rin naman pala magagamit yung natutunan ko? nag-aksaya lang sila ng pera sa pagpapa-aral sakin sa mga mamahaling eskwelahan at sa pagpapadala sakin sa iba’t ibang lugar. >:( :-[ :-\   
  
Umalis na si Randy. At ako naman, instead na kumain ako, hindi ko na tinuloy. Nawalan ako ng gana. Sino ba naman ang hindi diba? Kailangan kong makausap si Daddy, because he just can’t stop reordering things all the time. Bigay ng bigay ng assignment sakin, hindi naman nya ginagalang yung diskarte ko. I’ve had it, di bale sana kung unang beses pa lang ito eh, at di bale rin sana kung puro palpak ang ginagawa ko. kaso, hindi. sa lahat ng binibigay nyang assignments sakin, sineseryoso ko lahat yun at sinisiguro kong tama. at alam naman nyang tama, kaso gusto lang nyang ibahin. Lagi na lang nya ginagawa to. binabago nya lahat ng plinano ko >:( :-\. all my life, I’ve done nothing but to impress him, pero kahit kailan, hindi ko yun nagawa. Dahil para sa kanya, I’m just never enough to live up to his expectations. >:( :-\ >:(   
  
kung ganyan lang din sya, mabuti pa i-resume na lang nya yung position ko. sige, magpaka chairman sya pati general manager. Or better yet, kunin na lang nya kaya lahat ng pusisyon sa kumpanya para matapos na to at wala ng magulohan sa mga papalit-palit nyang desisyon!? >:( ??? :-\ Binigyan pa nya ko ng mataas na pusisyon eh siya rin naman pala gagawa ng trabaho ko. tapos sasabihin nya sakin na hindi siya impressed sakin. Pambihira. >:( :-[   
  
Nakatanggap ako ng tawag galing kay Daddy nung pabalik nako sa room namin.   
  
“hijo. Nakausap mo na ba si Mr. Leroy?”   
  
Hindi ko pinaligoy ligoy ang usapan. Gusto kong sabihin na OO NAKAUSAP KO AND HOW DARE YOU DO WHAT YOU JUST DID >:(, kaso pinigilan ko ang sarili ko :-\. “bakit iba yung hawak nyang proposal pati bakit nyo siya kinausap, eh akala ko ba Ms. Martin and I are going to work on this? ??? :-\”   
  
“masyadong mabagal ang progress nyo. Nakatanggap kame ng tip na may ibang kumpanyang gusto tayong unahan sa kanila, kaya minadali ko na ang proseso. Tinawagan ko siya at pinadalhan ng kopya ng proposal ng madala nya sa corporate building nila para ma-process kagad ang account nila.”   
  
Mabagal ang progress namin? Eh as far as I know, we’re only here for the seminar, at hindi para itrabaho ang Leroy account. Kung alam ko lang na ganun pala, eh di sana unang araw pa lang namin dito nakipag arrange na ko ng meeting sa kanya. “kopya ng proposal? Eh bakit ibang iba yung dala nya? Is there something wrong with my version?” yan ang gusto kong malaman. BAKIT NYA BINAGO YUNG PINAGHIRAPAN KO NG GANUN GANUN LANG?! >:( :-[ >:(   
  
“son, that’s the original company’s copy. Uniform ang investment proposals natin.” WHAT!? so anong ibig sabihin nun? walang silbi yung ginawa ko, ganun!? ??? >:(   
  
“so bakit mo pa ko pinagawa ng proposal kung meron na naman pala kayong hawak na original at uniform na document?”   
  
Natawa siya ng konti. Bakit? ??? may nakakatawa ba sa tinanong ko? “oh, son. Your version is just meant to brag.. that’s it. Or if you’re not so happy about that, it could also be a form of training..”   
  
“it was for training so it meant nothing to you? ??? >:(”   
  
“like I said, son, it was for training. Hindi naman talaga yun ang ipapakita ko sa mga investors. I just wanted to see if you’re eligible enough to be one of our board members.” Oh ngayon gusto naman nya kong gawing member ng board. Hanep. Ano ba talaga? ??? >:(   
  
“so ano? ???”   
  
“well, you need a lot of training before you become a part of the board. Hindi masyado credible yung ginawa mo.”   
  
I knew it. Wala namang pumasa sa kanya na ginawa ko eh. “akala ko ba okay na yun?”   
  
“oo, for bragging.” Hindi nya sinabi sakin yang pa-brag brag na yan. >:(   
  
“but Dad, hindi ko naman gustong maging member ehh.. :-\”   
  
“it doesn’t matter if you do or you don’t. you have to be one. Lahat ng Valdez ay naging member ng board.” Eto na naman tayo eh. sinali na naman ako sa mga ‘Valdez’ eh ano ngayon kung lahat sila naging board member? Kawalan ko ba yun kung sakaling hindi ko ako maging isa? ??? :-\ Oo, apelyido ko nga yun, pero hindi ibig sabihin nun, lahat ng dinaanan at naging tagumpay nila ay dapat maging kapareho nung akin. >:(   
  
See? pati sarili kong desisyon sya ang gumagawa para sakin. “pero— :-\”   
  
He immediately cut me off saying, “no buts. Pagbutihin mo ang trabaho mo Jeremy. Pati si Iris, ingatan mo dahil malaking asset siya at ang pamilya nya satin. At ganun din sila. Both of you have to keep this business relationship closely in tact.”   
  
Wala na kong ibang nasabi kung hindi ‘okay’.. at least ngayon hindi ‘yes dad’ o kaya, ‘yes sir’ ang sinabi ko. masama ang loob ko, because once again, umoo na naman ako sa isang bagay na hindi ko naman gusto. :-\ :-\   
  
  
  
  
Uuwi na kame sa Manila ngayon. Uuwi kaming dalawa. Walang aangal. >:( :-\   
  
  
Pagdating ko sa room namin, dumeretso na ko agad sa closet para kunin yung maleta. Si Iris? Ayan, pasugod na namang lumalapit sakin.   
  
“hoy! >:( >:( You backstabbing piece of…” hindi ko sya pinatuloy sa kung ano man ang sasabihin nya. Humarap ako sa kanya kagad.   
  
“mag impake ka na, babalik na tayo sa Manila.”   
  
“what? ???”   
  
Inatake na naman ng pagkaslow itong babaeng ito. Kaya kinuha ko na yung maleta nya at nilapag ito sa kama. “I said pack your things!” sinigawan ko siya. Okay lang yan, bumabawi lang ako sa ilang beses nyang pagsigaw sigaw dyan. 8) >:(   
  
Tinignan lang nya yung maleta nya tapos umupo siya sa kama. “I’m not going anywhere.” Ang kulit naman eh! >:(   
  
“ano ka ba Iris, hindi kita pwedeng iwanan dito okay! >:(” tuloy tuloy parin ako sa pagiimpake. Ang dami ka kasing satsat, hindi na lang gawin yung sinasabi sa kanya.   
  
“hoy, just to let you know, I’m still on vacation here. kaya kung ikaw, gusto mo ng bumalik sa Manila, well go ahead! I’m not stopping you! 8) >:(”   
  
“makinig ka nga sakin.” I grabbed her by the arm. Hindi naman mahigpit yung pagkakawak ko. “alam mo bang dadalin ni Randy yung proposal sa board ng MCI? ??? >:(”   
  
Tinanggal nya yung kamay ko sa braso nya. “get off me you jerk! >:(” then she took two steps back. “oo I know he’s bringing the proposal back to their main office to discuss that stupid investment.” Nagclap siya, pero may halong sarcasm. Ano na naman to? “good job, Jeremy. You got the account, and you definitely got all the credit for it you idiot >:(. How dare you work behind my back on this?” ano bang pinagsasabi nya? “so that’s why you want us to get along.. para ikaw ang lumabas na good guy dito! >:( >:(”   
  
Hindi ko maintindihan yung mga sinasabi nya. Ano bang epekto ng nakain nito at bakit ganyan sya kung magsalita? ??? Akala mo eh sobrang laki ng atraso ko sa kanya kung makaasta siya sakin. Ako pa ngayon ang masama, eh samantalang inaalala ko lang din naman siya dito eh. pareho lang kaming dehado dito, bakit ang lumalabas eh siya yung parang naapi? Pasalamat nga siya at hindi siya ang nagmukang tanga sa paggawa ng proposal na yan eh. wala rin palang silbi yung mga ilang gabi kong overtime dahil dyan sa lintek na yan. >:( :-\   
  
“ano bang pinagsasabi mo? I got the credit? For what? for looking like a complete idiot here? ??? >:( alam mo ba na yung dala ni Randy eh yung faxed copy ng original and standard investment proposal? hindi nila ginamit yung ginawa ko Iris :-\. At hindi ako ang nabigyan credit dito, in fact, neither one of us did, dahil silang dalawa ng lola mo ang gumawa ng lahat ng to.”   
  
“whatever, you’re just saying that.” Bakit ba ayaw nyang maniwala? Hindi ba kapanipaniwala yung mga sinasabi ko?   
  
“you think I’d be rushing to fly back to Manila and talk to my Dad kung nagsisinungaling ako? mag-isip ka nga.. >:( :-\”   
  
“ewan ko sayo! >:( Basta I’m not leaving here until my two weeks are over. Or better yet, I think I’m staying here until I go back to LA. 8)”   
  
“well, wala kang choice. 8)” I grabbed all her clothes from the closet at nilagay ang mga ito sa maleta nya. Wala akong pakialam kung mamahalin ang mga yan. >:(   
  
Nung nakita nya yung ginagawa kong paghahagis ng damit nya sa maleta nya, tumayo siya ora mismo sa kinauupuan nya. “what are you doing!? :o ??? >:(”   
  
“hindi ba obvious?” tanong pa ng tanong eh kita naman ng dalawa nyang mata yung ginagawa ko. “kung ayaw mong magimpake, pwes ako ang magiimpake ng gamit mo. At kung ayaw mong magbihis, sige yan ang suotin mo pabalik ng Manila. At kung ayaw mong tumayo dyan, wala akong choice kung hindi ang kaladkarin ka palabas dito. 8)”   
  
“what? ???” tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. “what do you think of me? sasakay ng eroplano ng nakapajama? >:( ???” actually, pwede rin. Wala namang paki yung mga tao dun eh. pumasok siya kagad ng banyo para magbihis. Ayun. Yun lang pala ang katapat nito eh. 8) ::)   
  
After one hour, nakapack na lahat ng gamit namin. Nagcheck out na rin kami ng hotel, nandito kame ngayon sa airport, naghihintay ng plane namin. Two hours pa kasi yung scheduled flight namin. We had to wait for available slots, kasi hindi naman ito yung araw na dapat umalis kami dito.   
  
“so what are you going to do? Gang up on your dad when you get there? ???” bigla niyang tinanong. “yeah right, as if you can do that, papa’s boy ;D 8).”   
  
Yan na naman siya, nagsisimula na naman sa pa-papa’s boy nyang nalalaman dyan. Naku Iris, pasalamat ka at wala ako sa mood ngayon. Dahil kung maayos ang timpla ko, ikaw ang sasakit ang ulo sa pang-aasar ko. “hindi. Kakausapin ko siya..” Sinabi ko ng mahinahon. The least I expect is an argument in a public place like this.   
  
“so why’d he do that? ???”   
  
“mabagal daw tayo masyado. :-\”   
  
“mabagal? ??? Why are they thinking that?”   
  
“ewan ko.”   
  
Our conversation ended after I said that. Pareho na kaming tumahimik. Binuksan ko yung laptop ko para i-email si Alicia, letting her know we’re coming since my phone died already. Nakalimutan kong i-charge kagabi. At siya naman, kinuha nya yung telepono nya at may kinausap sa phone. Kanina pa kasi ring ng ring. Himala at sinagot nya. Lola nya or Mommy nya siguro. Lumayo pa nga sya sakin eh.   
  
Pagkababa nya ng telepono, bumalik siya at naupo sa tabi ko. binalik nya yung phone nya sa bag nya at sinabing, “God how I feel so useless >:( :-[.” Sabay cover ng muka nya. Ano kayang pinagusapan nila?   
  
“anong nangyare sayo? ???”   
  
Tinuro nya ko. “this is all your fault! >:(” bigla nyang sinabi. Ako? pano ko naging kasalanan ang lahat ng to? “I shouldn’t have come here in the first place. As a matter of fact, I should’ve just run away when my Mom ordered me to come to this filthy country! >:( >:(”   
  
“it’s my fault? Hoy, baka nakakalimutan mo, sabit lang ako dito. Hindi naman ako dapat umaattend ng kung ano anong seminar eh, dahil lang sayo kaya napunta ako sa alanganin. Maayos naman lahat bago ka sumulpot eh.” bakit ba, eh sa totoo naman eh. “at tsaka, mahiya ka nga, pasalamat ka walang nakarinig ng sinabi mo tungkol sa Pilipinas. Hoy, Pilipino ka, baka nakakalimutan mo.” akala mo naman kung sino.   
  
“so should I deserve a hand then? ??? >:( Because of you, my life is bound to be miserable for as long as I live! I hate you! >:(” ano na naman bang pinagasasabi nya? Off-topic naman yun eh. ng dahil sakin buong buhay nya masisira? Ang OA naman nya. ::) ::)   
  
“oh? eh paki ko ba kung maging miserable ang buhay mo? Pati bakit ako ang pinagbibintangan mo ha? kasalanan ko ba ha? for your information ha, PRINCESS. Hindi lang ikaw ang miserable ang buhay, okay!? >:( ???” loko to, kung makapagsalita akala mo ako ang nagdala sa kanya dyan sa kung ano mang kalagayan nya. Pakialam ko ba sa kanya. hindi nga talaga kami magkakasundo ng babaeng ito. Walang ka amor amor, ni katiting wala. Malas siya sakin? Ba, mas malas ako sa kanya! >:(   
  
“that was my Mom on the other end a while ago.. and I’m in trouble. sumbongero ka kasi!! >:(”   
  
“anong sumbongero? ???”   
  
“sige, go ahead, play dumb! >:( Nagsumbong ka sa lola ko na I’m misbehaving and that I give you all sorts of problems kaya pinagalitan ako ng Mommy ko! >:(” wala naman akong sinabing ganon ah!? ??? ano na naman ba to? geez. Ang dami kong hindi alam. ??? :-\   
  
Tumayo ako, napansin ko yung mga taong dumadaan eh naririnig na yung pagtatalo namin dito. “alam mo Iris, kung may problema sa ugali mo, hindi na yun kataka taka, dahil alam na yun ng lahat okay? hindi ko na kailangan sabihin pa sa lola mo dahil alam na nya yun 8) >:(.” tinignan lang nya ko ng masama. Bahala siya dyan, akala naman nya matutunaw ako sa tingin nya. “tsaka pwede ba? wag mo nga kong sisihin dahil pinagalitan ka. Ayusin mo kasi ang sarili mo kung ayaw mong napapahamak! >:(”   
  
“ewan ko sayo! I hate you, I hate you, I HATE YOU! >:( >:(” biglang tumahimik yung paligid, paglingon naming dalawa, yung mga tao, lahat nakatigil, pinapanood kami at mukang nageenjoy pa sila sa nakikita nila.   
  
Kaya hinila ko siya sa tabi. Nakakahiya. “wag ka ngang mag eskandalo dito! >:( :-\”   
  
“I don’t give a single damn about it okay! eh ano ngayon kung nageeskandalo ako dito? If I’m the b1tch that everyone else, including you see me as, then let it be! Wala akong pakialam. I’d careless of what you shallow people think! >:( >:(” shallow? Sino samin ang mababaw dito!?! ??? >:( Sige, sabihin nyo nga! >:( >:(   
  
“wala akong pakialam sayo tandaan mo yan. Ang concern ko lang eh yung trabaho. Wag mong sirain, dahil pati ako damay pag nagkataon! >:(”   
  
“selfish bastard >:( >:(.” Sinabi nya habang nakatitig siya sa mga mata ko. kaya nakipagsabayan din akong ng titigan sa kanya.   
  
Saktong sakto, tinawag na yung flight number namin. Hindi ko pa sya nakita ng galit talaga. ibang klase yung expression ng muka nya. Halos patayin na nya ko sa pagkalisik ng mga mata nya eh. so what kung galit siya? I don’t care. As long as it doesn’t hit our work at ang performance nya, wala kaming pakialamanan dapat.   
  
  
She’s just in the same mess I’m in kaya wag na wag siyang makakaangal dyan sa mga nangyayare. >:( >:( >:(   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
We arrived at the airport at 11:30 am. Yung flight namin mamaya pang 1:30. so what the heck are we going to do here for two hours? ??? ??? Stare at each other!? >:( Geez. Wala namang masyadong magandang stores dito sa airport para makapagshopping man lang ako while we’re waiting. I don’t know what went up on this guy’s coconut shell na naman at bigla nyang gustong bumalik ng Manila. Hello? we have 4 more days to stay here before we go back to that hell hole noh. >:( >:(   
  
Hell hole = Manila.   
Boiling point = MV Telecoms’ Main Office.   
  
Eh ano naman ngayon kung naprocess yung investment proposal nila Randy? ??? ??? He should be thankful that it was done for him. kung ako siya, magpaparty pa ko, dahil less work yun sakin. Kaya naman yan ganyan kase hindi yung version nya yung ginamit eh.. so what!? GET OVER IT!!! ::) ::) Mga lalaki talaga, so egomaniacs! >:( I mean, what is the big deal? IT’S JUST A PROPOSAL after all. Parang yun lang, akala mo naman, it caused his entire career noh? Please!? ::)   
  
Then he comes barging in out of nowhere telling me we’re leaving today. And he even threw my stuff around. I mean, literally. Kawawa naman yung mga clothes ko :'( :'(.. he just shoved them all in my luggage! Aba!? Eh kung tutuusin, my things are more expensive than his clothes, laptop and his car. Everything combined. Isama mo pa yung face nyang lagi na lang serious! >:( Kaya nga no choice na ko but to come with eh kase kesa naman masira yung mga gamit ko no. because evidently, this guy has no mercy for my stuff. Errr!! huhuhu!! sorry Salvatore, sorry Donatella, sorry Louis, sorry Cristóbal Balenciaga! Wag kayong magalala, igaganti ko kayo! >:( :'( >:(   
  
So babalik kame sa Manila ngayon ha. with that attitude he’s showing right now? Sus, I bet you pag pasok pa lang namin sa office ng Daddy nya, let’s see if he can actually say whatever he wants to say in his Dad’s face. I mean, come on, we all know how much of a chicken he is pagdating sa Daddy nya. eh hindi nga maka no yan noh! Always na lang yes ng yes, parang robot. Gosh. Kalalaking tao, sunud-sunuran lang? tsk tsk. ::) 8) ::)   
  
Gusto ko siyang asarin, gusto ko syang mapikon. So that I could get back at him for all the those times he was getting on my nerves. Kaya lang, ayun. Hindi naman siya napipikon. Even the papa’s boy line did not seem to work this time >:( >:(. Instead, binuksan na naman nya yung laptop nya. that stupid laptop. Naku! If I ever get my hands on that, I’ll really smash that thing >:( >:(. So yun. We were just sitting and quietly waiting when I felt a vibration inside my purse. Oh great. It’s my Mom. ??? :-[   
  
I stood up and walked towards the ladies room para makalayo ako sa kanya. “hello Mom? ???”   
  
“Madeleine!” uh-oh. that doesn’t so good to me. what did I do now? ??? ??? “don’t hang up, we need to talk!”   
  
“I said hello, Mom. ::)” I repeated what I just said. Ano ba? konting courtesy naman noh?! Gosh. She teaches me to be modest and here she is, sounding so barbaric.   
  
“ikaw babae ka, ano tong naririnig ko galing sa lola mo ha?”   
  
“ugh! What is it now, Mom!? >:( ???” one thing about me when it comes to my Mom: no matter what I do, I just seem to have a short temper with her. Hindi ko alam kung bakit, but everytime she approaches me like this, I just burst. “ano? Ano na naman? >:(”   
  
“ang sabi sakin ng lola mo, hindi mo raw sinasagot ang mga tawag nya. kaya pati si Jeremy nabubulabog. Ilang beses siyang tumatawag kay Jeremy para kamustahin ka, pano lagi kang wala. At hindi mo pa sinasagot ang telepono mo. ikaw, kababae mong tao, ginagabi ka sa labas. Pinapasakit mo ulo ng mga tao dyan, and on top of that, you’re behavior is just despicable!”   
  
Okay? we’ve been living together for almost 21 years and she doesn’t realize I started going out and coming home late most of the time since what? 17? >:( ??? ::) “what’s so bad about that? It’s not like it’s the first time I went out ::) >:(..”   
  
“—and how come you’re not picking up calls? Ni yung mga text ko nga hindi mo nirereplayan. Pinagaalala mo kaming lahat. Si David, tumawag daw sayo, bakit mo siya binabaan ng telepono? Kailan ka pa naging bastos ha?” uhh?? Since the day I found out about your evil plans?? ??? >:( ???   
  
“ayoko siya kausap eh! For crying out loud Mother, I’m not a kid anymore, I don’t need to be checked up on all the time okay?” that David’s such a kiss up to my Mom ever since talaga. And ito naman si Mommy, uto-uto! God!!! >:( >:( >:(   
  
“---Pati si Jeremy dinadamay mo dyan sa kalokohan mo, mahiya ka nga! Pasalamat ka at napakabait nung batang yun at hindi ka pinababayaan!” ohh!! and Stiffie’s the other culprit >:(. He so told on me. that !@#$. “ilang beses ko ba dapat sabihin sayo sa hindi kita pinadala dyan para magparty—party lang ha?”   
  
“I need to have fun, Mom. >:(” Hello? I never went out to party? ??? ??? Ito ba yung form ng party nila dito? Yung lalabas lang to get a couple of drinks?? Geez!! Ugh!! She’s so getting on my nerves already >:( >:(. At si lola?! What happened to the sweet and loving lola before? All of a sudden she turned into a monster grandma. Ngayon, dalawa na ang monsters sa family ko. my monster Mom and my monster grandma. Gosh!! “and I don’t pick up calls because I simply don’t want to okay? ayokong madisturb.”   
  
“I need to have fun.. magtigil ka nga! Kailan mo ba marerealize na ang buhay ay hindi puro fun-fun lang ha?”   
  
“I was out with Randy, Mom!? Diba you said to get together with the investors? And I thought you were proud of me for getting that deal? ???” I received a text message from her one time telling me how proud she was. Bullcrap. >:(   
  
“so I was told. Tell me nga, may business bang pinaguusapan ng madaling araw? Ha Madeleine!? let me get this straight Princess. Your relationship with Mr. Leroy is not going any further than pure business, and business only. Do you understand?!” what the heck is she talking about? Randy and I aren’t together? And talking about business-to-business relationship. She doesn’t want Randy and I to be together? Dahil sa business? eh samantalang si David, he’s a businessman too, at kulang na lang, i-shove sakin yung tao na yun eh! ang sabihin nyo, gusto nya si David for me kase ‘amiga’ nya yung Mom nun and that they technically live and will be able to live in luxury for life. >:( >:(   
  
“why are you making a big deal out of this? It was just one night that I came back late. And yes, if you’re so desperate to hear it from me. oo. I drank alcohol and oh! some dude tried to hit on me on my first night here. you know why? because I was wearing a very revealing swim wear!!! >:( 8) >:(” gusto nya marinig ha? sige. Let’s spill it out! all at once! 8) 8) “and you know what? Randy gave me a massage. Yes. Mom a massage! He massaged my legs---” I was going to keep on ratting everything out even that kissing scene with Jeremy, but she cut me off after saying legs.   
  
“—ANO!?!?!” hahahah. I so love hearing that shocked tone of hers. “ikaw babae ka, anong pinaggagawa mo dyan ha!?”   
  
“having fun, Mom. Having fun 8).”   
  
“naku!! Aatakahin ako sa puso sayong bata ka!!”   
  
Hay, her we go again with that atake sa puso thing. Come on. I’m not a child anymore. I’ve mastered all her lines already 8) ::). “Mom! How’s that possible? You don’t even have any heart complications, okay!? >:( ???”   
  
Huminga sya ng malalim. “okay.. Madeleine, stop it, that’s it.” Ooookkkaayy. What is that now? “if this is how you want to play this game, then fine.” She said those words with very serious and stern voice, okay, so she generated new lines, big deal. “sige, kung ganyan ang gusto mo, then I’ll play with you in this little game of yours.” Serious talaga yung voice nya. “nagwawala ka na naman ha, palibhasa walang nakatutok sayo .”   
  
Okay, now I’m worried :-\. “what do you have in mind, Mom?”   
  
“well, evidently you’re not doing your part on the other end of the bargain, Madeleine. Baka nakakalimutan mo, may agreement tayo.”   
  
Oh darn. I forgot. :-X :-X   
  
“oh come on, what’s the worst thing that you can do to me? Cancel my credit cards? Oh wait, I don’t have any now, do i!?!!? >:( >:(” she cancelled all of them before I went here to make sure I’m really going on that plane. “We’re talking about thousands of miles here Mom.” Hello? If she wants to strangle me, well, too bad, hindi nya yun magagawa. Mwahahah 8) ;D. “ano? Anong gagawin mo? Ikukulong mo ko? What?! Tell me, because I’m just dying to know! >:(”   
  
“stop acting like a child and throwing tantrums on me, Iris! You’re not 3 years old anymore, but you certainly act like one!!”   
  
“oh? So now you want me to stop? Maybe you need to stop treating me like a three-year old, how about that!? >:( >:(” great. Now she turned on my switch for real.   
  
“goodness gracious Madeleine! Alam mo, kung wala lang talaga akong pasensya sayo, I would’ve put you up for adoption a long time ago!” harsh. But hey! Who cares!?! She’s always like that, so what’s new? ??? >:( :-\   
  
“oh good! Then maybe I’ll end up with a better mother! >:( >:(”   
  
“STOP. Stop it Princess. Now whether you like it or not, magtitino ka.” She took a deep, rather very disappointed breath. So she’s really mad huh? “David’s plane left here yesterday afternoon.” WHAT!!?!?!? :o :o   
  
“YOU SENT HIM HERE!?!?! >:( >:(” sa sobrang inis ko, I didn’t realize I was so pissed that I kept on stomping my feet, like a child, who’s throwing tanrums.. oh shut up, I so don’t act like a child. Ugh!!!!   
  
“oh bakit? May angal ka? Hindi ka tumupad sa usapan kaya yan ang consequence mo. Pagbalik mo galing Davao, expect David to pick you up in the airport.” She really knows how to upset me big time. Kung gusto nya ko maging matino, bakit hindi kaya siya ang pumunta dito noh!? as if David can do something!!   
  
“BUT MOM!?!”   
  
“no buts. You’re lucky David’s always available for you at tinutulungan nya ko sa pagpapatino sayo. So if I were you, I better start shaping up. Magpapakabait ako, lalo na kay Jeremy. Dahil sa kanya ako magtatanong lagi.”   
  
She’s pure evil. Worse that Cruella Da Vil and other kontrabidas we all know! bakit ganon? The reason why I agreed to come here is for me to finally be distant to David, for once for pete’s sake! I’m so tired of his face! tapos ngayon, malalapit na naman ako sa kanya? if she is so fond of David, bakit hindi na lang kaya sila ang magsama noh? Wait a second. David? as my step dad? EEWWWW. That’s gross!!!   
  
“you just can’t stop making my life miserable, can you!? I hate----”   
  
“ano? Sige ituloy mo pa yan, at makikita mo.”   
  
“ugh!!!! >:( :'(” bakit nya ginagawa sakin to!? Oh that Jeremy’s so gonna get it! Napaka sumbongero!! Because of him kaya ako tinotorture ng Mommy ko ngayon! Hmphh!! Bakit nya sinasagot yung tawag ng lola ko!?!!?!? >:( ??? why? because he wants me to get in trouble!?! Sige, tutal naman bad shot na naman ako sa Mommy ko so I don’t care anymore of anything that can happen worse than this. Lagot siya sakin! >:( >:(   
  
I looked towards his direction and there he was, on that damn laptop. I really don’t have enough words to describe how furious I am at this point. And to think that when I get off the plane in a couple of hours, I’ll be laying my eyes on the king of jerks. Damn that David. >:(   
  
After hanging up, bumalik na ko sa bench where Stiffie’s sitting on. Hindi nya ko pinansin, I guess he’s got problems to deal with as well, pero kahit na. my problem is much bigger, I have to think of something to get rid of David :-\. Only I have to find a way to make him stop running after me. Yung titigilan na nya ko talaga.   
  
“God how I feel so useless >:( :-[.” I cupped my face with my hands. Hindi ko na alam kung anong gagawin ko. I’m flaming with anger and at the same time, I’m drowning with frustration..   
  
He closed his laptop and placed it aside. “anong nangyare sayo? ???” he asked.   
  
And with a snap, the anger I’m feeling inside overpowered my frustration as I pointed my index finger at him saying, “this is all your fault! >:(” at times like this, I don’t care who to blame anymore, as long as I can condemn someone else for my misfortune. “I shouldn’t have come here in the first place. As a matter of fact, I should’ve just run away when my Mom ordered me to come to this filthy country! >:( >:(” and by that, I meant every single damn word I said. >:(   
  
“it’s my fault? Hoy, baka nakakalimutan mo, sabit lang ako dito. Hindi naman ako dapat umaattend ng kung ano anong seminar eh, dahil lang sayo kaya napunta ako sa alanganin. Maayos naman lahat bago ka sumulpot eh.” bakit ba lahat na lang ng bagay concerning this stupid business sakin bineblame ni Jeremy!?! Did I ever ask to be a part of any of these!? “at tsaka, mahiya ka nga, pasalamat ka walang nakarinig ng sinabi mo tungkol sa Pilipinas. Hoy, Pilipino ka, baka nakakalimutan mo.” so I’ve been told. pero wala akong pakialam if someone heard me when I said that. So what if they all gang up on me because of that nasty comment? I’d careless.   
  
“so should I deserve a hand then? ??? >:( Because of you, my life is bound to be miserable for as long as I live! I hate you! >:(” trust me, I REALLY hate him. and hate? It is such an unremarkable word for me. I hate everyone.   
  
“oh? eh paki ko ba kung maging miserable ang buhay mo? Pati bakit ako ang pinagbibintangan mo ha? kasalanan ko ba ha? for your information ha, PRINCESS. Hindi lang ikaw ang miserable ang buhay, okay!? >:( ???” at this point, I could feel his tension already. I don’t care of what he feels. I am upset.   
  
I mellowed down a bit dahil pakiramdam ko talaga I’m about to literally burst. “that was my Mom on the other end a while ago.. and I’m in trouble. sumbongero ka kasi!! >:(” honestly, gusto ko ng umiyak, but I’m fighting my tears.   
  
“anong sumbongero? ???” he asked with curiosity.   
  
And the most thing I really despise is when people act like they do not know what I’m talking about. “sige, go ahead, play dumb! >:( Nagsumbong ka sa lola ko na I’m misbehaving and that I give you all sorts of problems kaya pinagalitan ako ng Mommy ko! >:(” oh ano?!   
  
Tumayo sya tapos he looked down on me. “alam mo Iris, kung may problema sa ugali mo, hindi na yun kataka taka, dahil alam na yun ng lahat okay? hindi ko na kailangan sabihin pa sa lola mo dahil alam na nya yun 8) >:(.” ok so here we go again with this Iris-having-some-attitude-problem of his. I do not have any attitude problems!!! Silang lahat ang problema ko, hindi ako! “tsaka pwede ba? wag mo nga kong sisihin dahil pinagalitan ka. Ayusin mo kasi ang sarili mo kung ayaw mong napapahamak! >:(” ha!? at ako pa ang may kasalanan kung bakit ganito yung situation ko? have I ever asked to be in this place? NO! and mind you, IKAW ANG SINISISI KO DAHIL GUSTO KO. >:( >:(   
  
I stood up as well. The moment’s heated up as I noticed people grouping around us. “ewan ko sayo! I hate you, I hate you, I HATE YOU! >:( >:(” I kept on poking his chest.   
  
I must’ve hurt him badly as he grabbed my hand with a strong grip and walked me to the corner. “wag ka ngang mag eskandalo dito! >:( :-\” I AM NOT MAKING A SCENE!! I’m mad. I’m angry, I’m enraged.   
  
“I don’t give a single damn about it okay! eh ano ngayon kung nageeskandalo ako dito? If I’m the b1tch that everyone else, including you see me as, then let it be! Wala akong pakialam. I’d careless of what you shallow people think! >:( >:(”   
  
He looked at me as he was receiving an insult. That’s right. “wala akong pakialam sayo tandaan mo yan. Ang concern ko lang eh yung trabaho. Wag mong sirain, dahil pati ako damay pag nagkataon! >:(” everything always concerns that hell business! susunugin ko talaga yung building na yan para lahat tumahimik na!!!   
  
I sighed deeply as I felt my eyes starting to swell up with tears. Hindi ako iiyak. I looked at him straight in the eye. at this point, isa lang talaga ang gusto kong sabihin sa kanya. “selfish bastard >:( >:(.”   
  
And right on cue, our flight number was called. He turned around and started walking. Halfway distant to me, he said, “ayusin mo na sarili mo, aalis na tayo.” Without even looking back. He picked up his laptop and I was left there, nakatayo. Staring at my ring. Minsan iniisip ko, sana ako na lang yung ring, emotionless and lifeless.. :-[ :-[ Nobody understands me.. :-[ :-\   
  
Nasa plane na kame nun pero hindi kame naguusap. I’m still very bothered by the fact that when this plane lands, makikita ko si David :-\. I need to find a way to get rid of him permanently, but how? ??? :-\ Tumingin ako kay Jeremy, he was sleeping. My anger subsided when I saw how sad and serious he looked like while sleeping. And then I realized, we’re just in the same mess after all. If I’m having a difficult time, he’s having twice more than that. Because he has his own problems, plus me. Kahit na ganyan siya, never kong na-feel na worthless ako sa kanya :) :). kahit yun yung sinasabi nya, I don’t believe him kase hindi ko nakikita. I know I say things a lot, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that I mean them. Oo, siguro I mean those at that moment, pero hindi yung permanent. I don’t hate him. I’m just frustrated dahil mag-isa ako. Moreover, I’m checkmated by my Mother and David. >:( :-[   
  
Nakatingin lang ako sa window nun when felt a tap on my arm. “kumain ka na.” si Jeremy.   
  
“no, thanks, I’m not hungry :-\.”   
  
“wag ka ng maarte okay? ??? hindi ka pa naglulunch 8) >:(.” Tumingin ako sa kanya. bakit ba nya ko pinipilit, eh hindi nga ako gutom? “oh? ano pang hinihintay mo? Sige na.” nilagay nya yung food sa harap ko. I didn’t speak, I just took the fork and began eating. “alam mo Iris, hindi ko alam kung anong problema mo, pero hindi tama yung bigla bigla ka na lang magwawala kung saan-saan. Hindi yun maganda tignan, lalo na’t babae ka.”   
  
“you don’t know half the reason why I’m like this :-\.” I said.   
  
“and I shouldn’t.” did he just say that? ??? ??? “ayokong makialam sa personal mong buhay. It doesn’t mean na masama akong tao, dahil ganun. Ayoko rin kasi na pinapakialaman ako eh :-\ :-\.” he continued talking, but he was facing forward. “I know how it feels to have everyone interfering with your life. yung hindi ka makagalaw ng maayos dahil bawat hakbang mo, may nanunuod sayo :-\ :-[.” Hindi ko masyadong naintindihan yun, pero I know it’s good. “your Mom and my Dad.. pareho lang sila, diba? ??? :-\”   
  
“oo.” But atleast yung Daddy nya hindi siya pinagtutulakan sa isang tao… “trust me, my Mom is worse. :-\ >:(”   
  
“bakit hindi mo na lang tanggapin yun, katulad ko..sumunod ka na lang, wag ka ng kumontra.”   
  
“and what? ??? be a pushover? ??? No way >:( 8).”   
  
“hindi.” Tumingin siya sakin, “para hindi ka napapahamak :) :-\.” I don’t know what got into me with what he said, but he made me smile :). A simple, yet very concerned thing to say. Ngayon ko lang naramdaman to. :-[ :)   
  
He smiled back at me. tapos ginulo nya yung buhok ko. “para kang baby, ang hirap alagaan at disiplinahin! ;D ;D”   
  
I stopped him from doing that, tapos pinalo ko siya sa shoulder nya. “ano ka! Hindi noh! ::) ::)”   
  
“aray naman! ikaw kababae mong tao, kung mamalo ka, parang lalake! :D” he rubbed his shoulder. “but seriously speaking Iris, just do what you’re told para hindi ka mahirapan. Don’t worry, tutulungan naman kita eh. magtutulungan tayo, okay? ??? :) ;)”   
  
We’re gonna help each other? That sounds good. He just gave me an idea.. actually, it’s a brilliant beyond brilliant idea :D :)… “promise? ??? ::)”   
  
“peksman ;).”   
  
Peksman? ??? Ano yun? “peks.. what? ??? ???”   
  
Tumawa lang siya. “wala! ::)”   
  
Our plane touched the ground in few minutes. This is it. Pagkababa na pagkababa pa lang namin sa plane, hiniram na nya kagad yung phone ko. he’s gonna call Alicia daw.   
  
“dito tayo.” Tinuro nya yung gate. “the driver should be here any minute.”   
  
Sumunod lang ako sa kanya dala dala yung hand carry ko. he was right, in a minute a van pulled over and the driver stepped out to put our things inside. “welcome back po Sir, Ma’am.” He smiled at us. “pinapadiretso ho kayo ng lola nyo sa opisina, Ms. Iris. May naghihintay daw po sa inyo.” Tumingin lang si Jeremy sakin, trying to get an idea of what the driver was talking about. I just shrugged pero alam na kung sino yun. Si David yun, no doubt. >:( >:(   
  
After 45 minutes, dumating na kame sa main office ng MV Telecoms. It’s so big it seems like there’s a whole city inside. So ito pala yung nirenovate while we were gone.. sa labas meron banner, tapos nakalagay dun kung kelan ang official day the business is going live. May picture pa nga namin ni Jeremy dun eh. okay? is that necessary? ??? ??? I don’t think so.   
  
Everyone greeted us inside, as if we were royalty. Sus, whatever. we kept on walking until we reached the elevator. Nung nasa elevator kame, pakiramdam ko sobrang sikip, eh big naman yung elevator. I know, I’m claustrophobic, pero okay naman ako sa elevator eh :-\ :-\.. as long as it’s spacious like this one. “oh? bakit pinapawisan ka dyan? ???” he suddenly asked.   
  
Nagulat ako, siempre my mind was somewhere else eh.. “huh? :o ???” I realized I was sweating in nervousness. Eeww. “oh, mainit.” so I fanned myself. “uhm.. Jeremy? ??? :-\”   
  
“O? ???”   
  
“you said we're gonna help each other right? ??? :-\” he nodded. “okay :).” good.   
  
A second after, bumukas na yung door. Okay, this is it. Naglakad na kame papunta sa office ni lola. “welcome back po, Sir Jeremy, Miss Iris :)..” sabi ni Alicia. “sandali lang po, sasabihin ko lang na nandito na kayo.” She stood up and led us to my lola’s office. It was just a few steps away from her desk. she opened the door, “they’re here.”   
  
As soon as I stepped inside, I felt like I was going to pass out. kinakabahan ako. nandun yung Daddy ni Jeremy, si lola, and standing next to her, is David.   
  
She stood up and walked towards me. “Princess! :D” then she hugged and kissed me. “I missed you!!” yeah, whatever.   
  
“how’s the trip son?” tinanong ni Mr. Valdez.   
  
“okay lang po.” Sabi ni Jeremy.   
  
“it was fine, sir.”   
  
“tito Ramon, hija. Please call me tito Ramon :).” Nag smile lang ako sa kanya. tito Ramon ha. okay. ::)   
  
“how are you Iris? :)” ugh!   
  
“I’m fine.” I said, without any expression. Sa totoo lang, hindi ko alam kung bakit sobrang heavy ng feeling ko sa kanya, beside what he did to me and the many years he’s been trying to make up for it, hindi ko talaga siya maforgive. >:( >:(   
  
“I flew in the minute Tita Josephine asked me to..”   
  
“I bet you did ::) >:(.” I rolled my eyes on him. sus, pwede ba!?   
  
My lola cleared her throat. “ahem. Princess, aren’t you going to introduce Jeremy to David?”   
  
I took a deep breath and hooked my arm to his arm. Nagulat siya kase ginawa ko yun ;D. alright. This is it. God speed, Iris. Kaya ko to. this is the only way I could think of to solve my problem with David. 8) 8)   
  
I took another deep breath and slowly said…   
  
“David.. meet Jeremy my business partner and…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
MY BOYFRIEND :) 8)…”   
  
  
  
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Nakatulog na ko pagkasakay pa lang namin sa eroplano. Siempre, nakipagtalo muna siya sakin sa kung sino ang uupo malapit sa bintana. Ayaw daw nya kase yung nakaupo sa gitna, kesyo hindi daw siya makahinga. At never daw siyang umuupo sa gitna. Dahil hindi siya makahinga? Ano kaya yun? ang arte talaga ::) >:(. at kung ano ano pang dahilan ang ginawa nya. pwede naman siyang makiusap ng maayos, pagbibigyan ko naman eh. kaso, talagang palaban sya lagi kung makipag usap sakin. Ewan ko ba kung bakit ang sungit sungit na nya, samantalang noon, ako ang hindi pumapansin sa kanya ??? ???. eh kesa naman sa gumawa na naman siya ng eksena sa eroplano, pinagbigyan ko na. tutal wala naman akong pakialam kung saan ako umupo eh, as long as makauwi kame sa Manila kagad.   
  
Masarap ang tulog ko, nagising lang ako ng tanungin ako ng flight attendant kung anong klaseng pagkain ang gusto ko. Kahit na wala naman akong gana na kumain, kinuha ko pa rin yung nasa cart. Hindi pa kase ako kumakain mula kaninang umaga.   
  
“Sir, for the miss?” tanong nung attendant. “kanina ko pa ho siya tinatanong, hindi naman ho sumasagot.” Tumingin ako kay Iris nun, she was looking outside the window, nakasalumbaba pa nga sya eh. mukang nasa outer space na naman ang isip nito.   
  
“same as mine..” ang sabi ko na lang. binigay niya sakin yung tray kaya pinatong ko ito sa dun sa tray table sa harapan nya. and she didn’t notice what I just did, siguro talagang sobrang lalim ang iniisip nya ngayon. At kung ano man yun, wala na ko dun. “that would be all, thank you.” nagpasalamat naman ko dun sa stewardess. I waited for a couple of minutes for her to notice the food in front of her, pero hindi nya talaga napansin. Kaya kinalabit ko na lang siya sa may braso nya, “kumain ka na.”   
  
“no, thanks, I’m not hungry :-\.” sagot naman nya.   
  
Nainis naman ako ng konti, pano hindi naman pwedeng hindi siya kumain at anong oras na. “wag ka ng maarte okay? ??? hindi ka pa naglulunch 8) >:(.” tumingin lang siya sakin pagkasabi ko nun. kaya naman nilapit ko sa kanya yung pagkain nya. “oh? ano pang hinihintay mo? Sige na.” she picked up the fork and started to eat. bakit hindi siya nagsasalita? As in not a single word. Ang weird naman nya. kumain na rin ako nun, pero hindi talaga ako mapalagay. Kumakain nga sya, pero it’s so unusual for her to be quiet that I began to be bothered by it. So I decided to start a conversation, maybe she’ll open up to me or something. Hindi naman ako nageexpect at hindi ko rin naman gustong malaman ang dahilan kung bakit siya tahimik.. I just want her to… speak. :-\ :-\   
  
Ano bang sasabihin ko? eh hindi rin naman ako sanay na magopen ng topic. Gusto ko sana siyang pagsabihin tungkol dun sa nangyare kanina, but I’m not so sure of how to put my words together :-\ ???. Words that will not aggravate her more, dahil alam kong iritado na siya. Ayoko ng madagdagan pa yun kasi baka magwala na naman yan dito >:( ::). “alam mo Iris, hindi ko alam kung anong problema mo, pero hindi tama yung bigla bigla ka na lang magwawala kung saan-saan. Hindi yun maganda tignan, lalo na’t babae ka.”   
  
She continued eating her food, actually hindi ko na ineexpect magsasalita siya, but she did. “you don’t know half the reason why I’m like this :-\.” nakatingin lang siya sa fork na hawak nya habang pinaglalaruan nya yung pagkain nya.   
  
“and I shouldn’t.” she suddenly looked up as if she heard something for the first time. Sa reaction nyang yun, pakiramdam ko na naiintindihan ko na kung anong nararamdaman nya. parang ako pala siya. Only it was more difficult for me to see what I’m feeling through someone else. iba rin pala ang pakiramdam kapag nakikita mo sa iba yung nararamdaman mo :-\. “ayokong makialam sa personal mong buhay. It doesn’t mean na masama akong tao, dahil ganun. Ayoko rin kasi na pinapakialaman ako eh :-\ :-\.” I faced forward. Alam kong nakikinig siya sakin. “I know how it feels to have everyone interfering with your life. yung hindi ka makagalaw ng maayos dahil bawat hakbang mo, may nanunuod sayo :-\ :-[.” I started remembering things that made me feel bad again. “your Mom and my Dad.. pareho lang sila, diba? ??? :-\”   
  
“oo.” agad naman nyang sinabi. Halata mong interesado siya sa sinasabi ko. hindi nya siguro inaakalang pareho kame ng kalagayan. Sa bagay, ako rin, hindi ko inakala na sya rin pala kahit na spoiled eh nakakaramdam ng tulad ng akin. “trust me, my Mom is worse. :-\ >:(” worse? Hindi naman siguro. I mean, what's the worst thing that her mom can do to her diba? eh spoiled nga siya. ??? ::)   
  
I don’t know what else to say, kaya ito na lang ang sinabi ko.. “bakit hindi mo na lang tanggapin yun, katulad ko..sumunod ka na lang, wag ka ng kumontra.” tama naman, or at least that’s what I learned to do. Kung hindi ko kayang tumayo sa sarili kong mga paa, susunod na lang ako sa sinasabi ni Daddy, dahil alam ko naman para sa ikabubuti ko yun, kahit na hindi ako sang-ayon.   
  
“and what? ??? be a pushover? ??? No way >:( 8).” hindi ko naman sinabi yun eh.   
  
“hindi. para hindi ka napapahamak :) :-\.” hindi ko alam kung bakit yun ang sinabi ko, pero seryoso ako. she smiled at me, for the first time, ngayon ko lang siya nakitang ngumiti ng ganyan. Kaya pati ako napangiti na rin. Ang gulo namin no? away-bati. Parang mga bata. “para kang baby, ang hirap alagaan at disiplinahin! ;D ;D” Ginulo ko nga yung buhok nya eh. buti hindi nagalit. ;D ;D   
  
“ano ka! Hindi noh! ::) ::)” tapos pinalo nya ko. aray. Ang lakas pa lang mamalo nito?! ??? ::)   
  
“aray naman! ikaw kababae mong tao, kung mamalo ka, parang lalake! :D” tumawa lang siya. At ako naman, hinihimas-himas ko yung braso ko, it’s gonna leave a mark, watch. “but seriously speaking Iris, just do what you’re told para hindi ka mahirapan. Don’t worry, tutulungan naman kita eh. magtutulungan tayo, okay? ??? :) ;)” sinabi ko yun sa kanya para hindi na siya malungkot. Tutulungan ko naman siya eh, sana ako rin matulungan nya. :-\ :)   
  
There was a sudden light in her face. “promise? ??? ::)”   
  
“peksman ;).”   
  
“peks.. what? ??? ???” natawa ako sa expression ng muka nya. nakalimutan ko, sablay pala ang tagalong nitong babaeng to.   
  
“wala! ::)”   
  
Ilang minuto pa nung nagland yung plane namin. Pagkababa namin, hiniram ko na kagad yung phone nya para matawagan si Alicia kung nakuha ba nya yung e-mail ko bago kami sumakay ng eroplano kanina. Nung tinawagan ko naman siya, ang sabi nya na paparating na daw yung driver at maghintay lang kami ng konti, dahil medyo traffic daw ng ganitong oras.   
  
“dito tayo.” tinuro ko yung gate. “the driver should be here any minute.” tinulungan ko syang buhatin yung mga handcarry nya, jusko. Ano bang dala nito at bakit ganito kabibigat?!   
  
At pagkasabi ko naman nun, dumating na nga yung driver. “welcome back po Sir, Ma’am. pinapadiretso ho kayo ng lola nyo sa opisina, Ms. Iris. May naghihintay daw po sa inyo.” naghihintay? Sinong naghihintay? Tinignan ko si Iris nun, but she shrugged her shoulders. Hindi nya siguro alam yun.   
  
Medyo traffic nga, kaya natagalan kame bago nakarating sa office. When we pulled over by the front, napansin ko ka kagad yung mga binago nila. nagexpand sila, they did a paint job, at kung ano ano pa. actually, on the way namin dito, tinignan ko kung totoo ba yung sinabi ni Anthony na may billboard, eh wala naman, banner lang yan eh. Yun talaga, kung magkwento laging exaggerated. ::)   
  
Sumakay na kami ng elevator nun, kaming dalawa lang. nasa 25th floor kasi yung office ng lola ni Iris so medyo matagal ng konti bago kami makakarating dun. Nung lumingon ako sa kanya, napansin ko na pinagpapawisan siya. Iba yung expression ng face nya, yung parang kinakabahan na ewan. Anong nangyayare sa kanya? ??? “oh? bakit pinapawisan ka dyan? ???”   
  
Halata mong wala naman siya sa isip nya. napatalon siya konti, about half an inch nung tinananong ko yun. “huh? :o ??? oh, mainit.” tapos pinaypayan nya yung sarili nya. mainit? Hindi naman kaya. Ang weirdo naman nito. “uhm.. Jeremy? ??? :-\”   
  
“O? ???”   
  
“you said we're gonna help each other right? ??? :-\” tumungo naman ako. “okay :).”   
  
Saktong pagkasabi nya nun, bumukas na yung pinto. “welcome back po, Sir Jeremy, Miss Iris :)..” bati naman ni Alicia. “sandali lang po, sasabihin ko lang na nandito na kayo.” tumayo siya at naglakad na. kaya sinundan namin siya. “they’re here.”   
  
Pagpasok pa lang namin sa loob, napansin ko na kagad na parang may kakaiba. May lalaking nakatayo dun, next to her lola. Sino kaya yun, at bakit ngayon ko lang ata siya nakita?   
  
“Princess! :D I missed you!!”   
  
“how’s the trip son?” tanong ni Dad.   
  
“okay lang po.” Sabi ni Jeremy.   
  
“it was fine, sir.”   
  
“tito Ramon, hija. Please call me tito Ramon :).” Tito Ramon? That’s weird. Bakit siya nagpapatawag nun?   
  
Bigla naman nagsalita yung lalaki sa tabi ng lola nya, “how are you Iris? :)” Iris? Kilala nya si Iris?   
  
“I’m fine.”   
  
“I flew in the minute Tita Josephine asked me to..” kilala nya si Tita Josephine…errr. Mommy ni Iris?? Magkamag-anak kaya sila?   
  
“I bet you did ::) >:(.” bakit ganyan yung muka ni Iris?   
  
“ahem. Princess, aren’t you going to introduce Jeremy to David?” David? parang narinig ko na yung pangalan na yun ah…   
  
Tumingin sakin si Iris, lumapit siya tapos bigla na lang nya hinook yung kamay nya sa braso ko. yung parang pang escort!? Basta ganun. Teka sandali? Anong ginagawa nya?!?! bakit ganyan??   
  
“David.. meet Jeremy my business partner and…MY BOYFRIEND :) 8)…”   
  
ANOOOOO!?!!!?!?!?!?!??! :o :o Naintindihan ko yung business partner part, pero yung susunod dun!? BOYFRIEND? Ako? What the?! ??? :o   
  
At tsaka bakit ganun na lang yung reaction nilang lahat? Si Daddy pati yung lola nya, parang natuwa pa ata? At yung David naman… ah! ewan!   
  
What the hell is going on!?!?! “Iris—” hinila ko yung kamay ko, pero hinila nya ulit pabalik. ???   
  
“babe, later ::) 8).” Bigla nyang sinabi. BABE!?! Kailan pa nag-iba ang pangalan ko? ??? :o   
  
“tek—”   
  
Hinila nya ulit yung kamay ko sabay tingin sakin na parang may gusto nyang manahimik ako. okay, fine. Hindi ako magrereact ngayon, pero mamaya humanda ka sakin!!! >:( >:(   
  
Ang tagal siguro naming 5 na tahimik dun. Nabreak lang yung silence ng tanungin siya ng lola nya. “totoo?! Princess? Jeremy? Since when? ??? :D” medyo gulat pa sya nun.   
  
“uhmm.” Nagpause siya. “3 days ago, lola 8).”   
  
“talaga?”   
  
Lumapit naman si Daddy samin, “you look good together :).” Tapos ngumiti siya. Sa totoo lang, ngayon ko lang nakitang ngumiti si Daddy. Ni minsan hindi yan ngumiti sakin eh, lagi na lang seryoso. Kiniss nya sa cheek si Iris. “I’m sure my son will take good care of you :).” he tapped my shoulder, “right son?”   
  
Hinila ulit ni Iris yung kamay ko. “uhh.. yes ??? :-\.” Grabe ano ba to?   
  
“so David 8)..” biglang hirit naman nitong si Iris. “how long are you here for?”   
  
“I’m not sure yet :-\..” tumingin siya sakin ng masama. Sino ba tong David na to kase at bakit ganyan na lang kung makareact siya? Parang hindi makapaniwala na ewan. “I’m sorry Iris, your Mom didn’t mention that you.. that he’s..-- :-[ >:(”   
  
“—MY BOYFRIEND? ??? 8)” talagang nakaemphasize pa yung boyfiend ha. ano bang meron?? “that’s because I haven’t told her yet, it’s a surprise.” Then she smiled. “actually, it’s a surprise for everyone 8) 8).”   
  
“it’s a good surprise.” Sabi ng lola nya. “right kumpare?”   
  
“oo. It’s unexpected, but I’m happy.. really happy.” Hindi talaga maalis yung ngiti ni Daddy. Parang hindi ata maganda ang pakiramdam ko dito. Parang may mali. Well duh. Mali nga ito, kung ano mang ginagawa nitong si Iris >:(. “so this means, we’re on our way to a successful and solid partnership :).” Sabi na eh.   
  
“well, in that case, I think this calls for a celebration! :D” masiglang sinabi ng lola ni Iris. Celebration!? Bakit may celebration!?!!? ???   
  
“what for? ???” ang sabi ko.   
  
“hijo.. for good luck :)” kinindatan pa nya ko. good luck? Baka BAD LUCK. >:(   
  
“you’re invited, David 8).” sabi bigla ni Iris. Seriously, gusto kong malaman kung anong nangyayare talaga!! ??? >:(   
  
Hindi ko nakayanan, ano ba to. biglaan to. pakiramdam ko sasabog na ko. “uhm.. excuse us.” Hinila ko si Iris sa palabas ng office. Nung nakalabas na kami dun, binitawan ko kagad yung kamay nya. “what are you doing? Bakit mo sinabi na boyfriend mo ko? ??? >:(” halos masuka suka na ko habang sinasabi ko yun.   
  
“Jeremy.. eh kase.. :-[” she started panicking.   
  
“dahil ano? ??? Dun sa David na yun?” tinuro ko yung pintuan. “sino ba yun? boyfriend mo? ??? >:(”   
  
“hindi.”   
  
“eh yun naman pala eh! anong klaseng palabas ba to? ??? >:(” hindi siya nagsalita. “hindi ka magsasalita? Oh sige, papasok tayo ulit sa loob at sasabihin mo sa kanilang lahat ng walang katotoohan ang lahat ng sinabi mo >:(.” Hiniwakan ko yung braso nya sabay lakad.   
  
Pero huminto siya. “wag! Jeremy please :-\ :-[..makiride on ka na lang.”   
  
“makiride on? Ano ako, hilo!? ??? AYOKO NGA! >:(” ano siya, sinuswerte? “anong kalokohan ba to ha?”   
  
“I need you to pretend that you're my boyfriend :-\... just for a while lang. Sige na :-[ 8)..” magpapanggap kame? ??? HINDI PWEDE, AYOKO!. >:(   
  
“Iris, ano ba! ??? wag mo nga kong idamay sa kalokohan mo! >:(”   
  
“I’ll do anything! :-\ Kahit ano. Pumayag ka lang. PLEASEEEE!? ??? :-\” she gave me a desperate look. Bakit ba? “I’ll be good now, promise. lahat ng sasabihin mo susundin ko talaga, hindi ako magrereklamo. I’ll do a good job, I guarantee you. :-\”   
  
“Ayoko nga sinabi! >:(” isa na lang, makakatikim na to sakin!   
  
“diba you said we’re gonna help each other? ??? :-[” lintek na yan. Oo sinabi ko nga yun, pero hindi sa ganitong paraan noh! I’m not about to pretend to be someone that I’m not. “diba? well.. I happened to need your help right now.. so please.. wala na kong ibang malalapitan eh. ikaw lang :-\.” nakita ko sa muka nya na parang ipit na ipit siya. Gusto ko siyang tulungan, pero ayokong magpanggap kame >:(. Pwede naman sa ibang bagay diba? ???   
  
“ano ba kasing problema mo?”   
  
“si David :-\.”   
  
“what about him? ???”   
  
“basta :-\.”   
  
Bakit ayaw nyang sabihin? Naiinis na ko ha. “bahala ka, hindi ako papayag unless alam ko kung anong dahilan 8).”   
  
Huminga sya ng pagkalalim-lalim. “okay. si David… my Mom likes him for me >:( :-\.” yun lang ang sinabi nya.   
  
“oh? eh anong problema mo dun? Ayaw mo sakanya? ??? ::)” she nodded. “bakit hindi mo sabihin? ??? Akala ko ba matapang ka? ???” hindi ko maintindihan to, parang amazona sa katapangan tapos simpleng bagay lang, naduwag sya?   
  
“it’s not as easy as you think, Jeremy :-\ >:(.” Seryoso yung muka nya. wag ka ngang ganyan, baka lumambot ang puso ko at mapapayag mo pa ko eh!! >:( “it’s complicated.”   
  
“complicated? Pano naging complicated yun, eh sasabihin mo lang naman na ayaw mo sakanya?” hindi ba’t madali naman yun? lalo na sa mga babae?   
  
“oh darn. God knows how many times I’ve said that to him and to my Mom. Pero pilit pa rin sila ng pilit! >:( :-\I don’t know what to do anymore... this is the only way I could think of to solve this.. kaya please, I beg you. pumayag ka na :-\ :-\..” naiinis ako kasi nakikiusap siya. Ayoko siyang makiusap, hindi ko matiis. Arrgghh!! >:( :-\ “we just have to pretend lang naman when people are around eh.. especially David hanggang sa umalis lang siya… para tigilan na nya ko.. dahil may boyfriend na ko 8) :-\.”   
  
Ano ba namang klaseng strategy to!? pati ako nadadamay eh! “alam mo kung mahal ka non, hindi yun titigil no >:(.”   
  
“well, he should!! Dahil kung hindi, maloloka na talaga ko! :-[ >:(” bakas sa muka nya yung pag-aalala. Ayaw nya talaga dun sa David na yun. ang hindi ko lang maintindihan eh kung bakit kailangan pa nyang gumawa ng kung ano anong dahilan para lang tigilan siya. Grabe namang pagmamahal yan! “kaya pretty please, Jeremy?? Pumayag ka naa… If you help me, I’ll remember this for the rest of my life and when it’s your turn to need my help, kahit ano pa yan, papayag ako!” tapos tinaas nya yung right hand nya. “PEKSMAN! :)”   
  
Natawa talaga ako nung sinabi nya yun ;D. pano, hindi naman ata appropriate yung word nay un. Parang hindi siya connected. hindi ko ineexpect kasi na sasabihin nya yun, at kuhang kuha pa nya kung panong sabihin ha ::). grabe ibang klase talaga tong babaeng to! ayan na, napapayag na nya ko. “tsk! Oo na sige na!! >:( ::) basta ipangako mo na magiging matino ka at gagawin mo ang trabaho mo ng walang angal, okay! Naku!!! You owe me big time!”   
  
Pagkasabi ko pa lang nun, tumalon siya at niyakap ako ng pagkahigpit-higpit na halos hindi na ko makahinga. “thank you thank you thank you thank you!!! you’re the best!! :D :D” abot hanggang tenga pa yung ngiti nya. yung para bang bata na pinagbigyan na kumain ng ice cream kahit na hindi siya pwede.. parang siyang nanalo ng isang milyon sa tuwa. ::)   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“I promise I’ll be the best girlfriend you could ever have!! :D :D” bigla akong bumitaw sa pagkakayakap nya, at bigla akong napaisip.. best girlfriend :o :-[… Diyos ko :-\ :-\.. ano ba tong pinasok ko!? ??? :-\ :-[   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“I promise I’ll be the best girlfriend you could ever have!! :D :D”   
  
  
Don’t ask why I said that, because even I am surprised. I guess it just slipped out of my mouth? ??? :P Basta. What’s important right now is that he said okay already. So.. bye bye David na!! yes!! :D 8)   
  
When the two of us came back inside, we heard them, well.. basically lola and tito Ramon discussing the ‘celebration’ daw. Bakit ba kasi may celebration pa eh? para san pa yun? ganito ba talaga dito sa Philippines, when there’s a new couple, there’s always a big celebration? ??? ???   
  
Si David naman, ayun.. nakaupo lang siya dun. Looking at me as if I did a terrible thing. Muka syang tanga. Heheh! 8) >:(   
  
“so hija, when do you want the celebration?” tanong ni lola. “san mo gusto? Sa hotel? Sa private place.. sa bahay na lang kaya? ::)”   
  
“siguro sa opening na lang, how’s that sound?” that’s tito Ramon. Oh good, I’m so getting used to this ‘tito Ramon’ thing ::) ;D. “and we’ll do the celebration at our place.”   
  
“good idea. imbitahin mo na rin ang lahat para maintroduce narin ng maayos itong apo ko.” she placed her hand around my waist. tsk!   
  
Wala naman kaming ginawa ni Jeremy kung hindi ang mag nod na lang. I can see he’s not so fond of this. Naiinis na nga siya, kanina pa siya pull ng pull ng hand ko.   
  
“umalis na tayo dito! >:(” he whispered. “aalis nako! >:(”   
  
“sandali lang! >:(” I whispered back, only mine was a little louder.   
  
“ohh look at these two, they’re having petty fights already! :)” she put her hands together causing a soft clap. “aren’t they a character?” tumingin siya kay David. character? ???   
  
“uhmm.. yes. Yes.. She is a character. :)” He was looking at me.   
  
“oh you mean Jeremy and I? 8)” nakakainis na ha.   
  
“no Princess, I meant you 8).” I gave him a flaming look, while he was smiling at me. Bwiset ka! >:(   
  
Good thing tito Ramon broke the moment saying, “oh, Jeremy. Siya nga pala. Bukas ko na kayo itu-tour sa department nyo okay?”   
  
“sure.”   
  
“oohhkay! Well, I’m tired.” I stopped, kasi naman hinila na naman ako ni Jeremy ::). “we’re tired. So we’re gonna take off.”   
  
“oh sige, we’ll wait for you in the car okay?” we? She took her stuff from her desk which she handed to David. “let’s go David.”   
  
“okay, low-la.” LOLA? Why is he calling her lola!? ??? >:(   
  
“uhm excuse me? why are you calling her lola? ???”   
  
“what’s wrong with that? ???” anong what’s wrong with that!? Ang kapal ng face mo!! may sarili kang lola noh! >:(   
  
I was starting to heat up when my lola tapped my shoulder and said, “Princess, I told him to call me that, now calm down.”   
  
So instead of saying anything further, tinignan ko na lang siya ng sobrang sama. He really knows how to tick me off, and he never fails to always get on my nerves! >:( Ewan ko ba, siguro talagang I shut him out of my life completely to the point where I resist everything about him. I absolutely hate him. well, it’s his fault anyway.   
  
Calm down, Iris. Just calm down. I took a deep breath and tightened my grip on Jeremy’s hand. Nakatingin ako kay David when I said, “let’s go BABE 8).” Now let’s see who gets the last laugh.   
  
Nauna kami ni Jeremy. Actually, we all left the room at the same time. We only took different directions. Siempre, since pretending to be a couple nga kame, hindi lang dapat sa harap ni David at nila lola kame ganun, sa lahat din dapat. And by that I mean lahat ng tao sa building and possibly everyone in the business world. Actually, I kinda like this whole ‘pretend’ thing, hindi kasi ako inaaway ni Stiffie. Hehe. Ang nakakainis lang kase, yung hand nya sobrang pinagpapawisan!! Gross!!! ??? >:(   
  
Nung nasa elevator na kame, binitawan ko kagad yung hand nya. “Jeremy ano ba yan ???..” and wiped it on my jeans, “yung hand mo kaya, basa.”   
  
“pasmado eh.” he said that as if it was a normal thing to have sweaty palms. “eh ikaw kase, ang arte mo may pa hawak-hawak ka pa ng kamay dyan. Hindi naman kailangan. Oh tapos ngayon magrereklamo ka dyan? ??? >:(” he did the same thing I was doing. he took out a hankerchief from his pocket and started wiping his sweaty palms. ::)   
  
“I’m just saying :-\..” I continued to wipe my hand until it was dry enough. “you should go to a hand spa to get those treated 8).” Tinuro ko yung mga kamay nya. “kadiri naman kasi kapag sweaty palms ka.”   
  
“eh di wag mong hawakan! >:(” oohhkay? bakit defensive siya masyado? ???   
  
“ang sungit mo! >:(”   
  
“oh bakit? ???” he looked at me. “may angal ka? ??? >:(”   
  
“wala.. I’m just stating my opinion :-X..”   
  
“wala naman pala eh 8).” he said softly, but it wasn’t really a whisper, kase narinig ko pa rin. Bakit ganyan? Nagsusungit na naman siya.. eh I’m just stating an opinion lang naman. ano bang masama don? Eh totoo namang nakakadiri yung sweaty palms noh! ::) I would’ve said more, tutal, wala namang tao eh. but when I was about to open my mouth to say something, saktong-sakto bumukas yung door. We were at the lobby already, so I held it back instead. “oh bukas agahan mo okay. ayoko ng late.” He walked ahead of me.   
  
“tomorrow? ??? Don’t I at least get a day off? ???” ang sama naman, kakadating lang namin galing Davao, work na kagad? eh next week pa kaya yung opening?!   
  
He looked back at me, tapos magkasalubong na naman yung eyebrows nya. “Iris! >:(”   
  
“oo na! >:(” hmf!! “joke lang! >:(”   
  
“aalis na ko okay.”   
  
“aren’t you even gonna wait for me to get home? ???”   
  
He just stared at me as if he could not believe what he’s hearing. “bakit pa? ??? >:(”   
  
“anong bakit pa? diba yun naman yung ginagawa ng mga couples? The boyfriend takes his girlfriend home, or if he can’t at least he’d walk her to her car ::)..” ano ba namang klaseng bf toh, walang kwenta! >:(   
  
“eh ayun na sila oh, hinihintay ka ata.” He pointed at the door. Nakatayo na pala dun si lola and David. bakit kasama yan? “sige na, hinihintay ka na ng prince charming mo eh! ;D 8)” he gave me a little push in my lower back sabay tawa.   
  
Of course, kahit konting push lang yun, medyo malakas pa rin. “oww!! >:(” I rubbed my lower back. “samahan mo kaya ako dun noh?”   
  
“bakit? eh wala namang mangyayari sayo, konting steps lang yan eh.”   
  
“hello? aren’t you going to take me there at least? ??? anong klaseng boyfriend ka? napaka ungentle man ::)..”   
  
“who cares? hindi mo naman talaga ako boyfriend no.”   
  
“hindi nga, pero pumayag ka sa usapan natin.. 8)” gawin mo na kasi, para wala ng gulo noh! baka hindi pa sila maniwala eh! “you could've said no, but you chose to say yes. 8)” cornered!!! 8) ;D   
  
“tsk! sige na! ang dami mong satsat! >:(” Kinamot nya yung ulo nya. “tara na nga! >:(”   
  
At ayun, he walked me to the car where they were waiting for me. Nagpaalam lang siya kay lola na uuwi na siya, tapos dumating na rin yung car nya. the driver handed over his keys then he was gone.   
  
“let’s go Princess :).” Sabi ni David. hindi ko siya pinansin, instead, I took a step to get in the van.   
  
Dun sya sa front nakaupo, kame ni lola nasa likod. Nung nasa loob na kame, I leaned my head over to my lola and whispered, “lola, why is he here? ??? >:(”   
  
“Iris, he’s staying at our house for a couple of days, bilin yun ng Mommy mo.”   
  
“WHAT!? :o >:(” that came out a little loud. “why? >:(”   
  
He turned his head around, “Is there a problem? ??? :-\” tanong naman nya. okay? what an eavesdropper! >:(   
  
“actually, there is.” I faced him. “can’t you see, we’re having a private conversation here? ??? >:(”   
  
“I didn’t mean to interrupt, I just overheard you guys :-[.” Tapos tumingin siya kay lola with his apologetic face, “I’m sorry.”   
  
Nagsmile lang sa kanya si lola. Bakit ganun? When my cousins and I do things like that, nagagalit siya samin, pero kapag ibang tao, wala lang syang sinasabi? Unfair. “Princess, stop that, nakakahiya ka.” Binulong nya sakin. Nakakahiya?! Whatever! >:( ???   
  
“lola, I don’t want him at our house.” Nakakainis naman eh!!   
  
“eh di sige, bukas na bukas din sasamahan mo siyang maghanap ng place.”   
  
“bakit ako? ???”   
  
“oh? diba ayaw mo sya sa bahay? Eh di gawan mo ng paraan 8)..” hindi na ko nakipag-argue kay lola nun. a worse thing than this might happen. Err! I’m so mad at my Mom! Siya kasi! “I’m sure Jeremy won’t mind ::)..”   
  
I almost forgot about that Jeremy and I thing. “of course he would. Baka magalit yun pag meron akong kasamang iba 8).”   
  
“eh di isama mo siya :).” ANO BA!?!?!?   
  
“not gonna happen. Diba nga sabi ni tito Ramon he’s taking us a tour to our department tomorrow?”   
  
“it’s not gonna take you the whole day, Iris.”   
  
I sighed. It’s useless to argue with her because she’s just like my Mom. tumingin na lang ako sa window. So our discussion ended there, pero nagstart naman siya ng bago. She was talking nonstop on our way home eh. ang kulit nya, and she’s giving me a migraine already!   
  
“alam mo mabait yang si Jeremy, matalino, magaling, very gentleman at galing sa magandang pamilya ..good choice yan apo :).” hindi naman ako sumasagot sa mga tanong nya. “sabi ko na nga ba, magkakasundo rin kayong dalawa eh.. naku! Ibabalita ko na to sa mga amiga ko!” excited naman siyang masyado!? Kung alam lang nya, fake naman to noh! I did nothing but roll my eyes. Hindi naman nya nakikita eh, nakatingin kasi ako sa labas ng window. hehe. ;D ::)   
  
Nung dumating na kame sa bahay, umakyat na ko kagad sa room ko. I’m so tired that I don’t need to take a huge pill to sleep. Pagkapasok ko pa lang sa room. May kumatok na kagad. “couz!!!!!” si Ella pala. grabe, sobra naman to! hihih!! “namiss kita!! :D” she squeezed me so tightly, I felt like my ribs broke.   
  
“missed you too.. ahem..” I cleared my throat, pano, sobrang tight nung pagkakayakap nya sakin that I almost ran out of breath. “can’t breathe!”   
  
“sorry! ;D” she started unpacking my stuff. okay din itong pinsan ko na to eh. Since I got here sya na lagi ang nagaayos ng gamit ko. the maids do not need to fix them anymore, kasi siya na lagi yung gumagawa, pati pa nga bed ko, kapag hindi pa siya nauunahan ng maid, siya din ang nagfifix. ::)   
  
Well, for the mean time, I decided to clean up muna, wash my body, brush my teeth.. the usual night ritual. After doing all that, lumabas nako ng bathroom. “uyy ikaw ha!?!?!?” she said while still unpacking my stuff.   
  
“what? ???” hindi ko kasi naintindihan yung sinabi nya.   
  
“you didn't tell me.. Ms. Stiff ka na pala ngayon ha! :D” bigla nyang sinabi. Okay, she knows already? Omg. It’s crazy how word goes around so fast! It’s been only 2 hours since. And besides, why are they all making a big deal out of this, eh palabas lang naman yun. pero wait, Ms. Stiff? Oh hell no! ??? >:(   
  
“anong Ms. Stiff ka dyan!? ???”   
  
“oh diba ganun yun? siya si Mr. Stiff, so ikaw na ngayon si Ms. Stiff! ;D” I can see she’s really having fun at this. “oh baka naman gusto mo maging MRS. STIFF, pwede rin! ;D”   
  
Ganun ba yun? “hindi kaya…”   
  
“so, tell me?! pano nya nakuha ang iyong matamis na oo!?” ano daw? Matamis? Oo? I don’t get it? She must’ve realized I’m zoning out again with the words she’s using. “what I mean to say is.. how did you guys end up together? Ano? May nangyare ba sa Davao? Nagkiss kayo? Naghug? Oh baka naman nag boom boom kayo? Nako couz ha, akala ko ba hindi ka bibigay? :D”   
  
Wait!!! Hindi ko talaga maintindihan. Well, I understood the part where she said kiss and hug thing. Pero boom boom? Ano yun? ??? “slow down, only one at a time!” I threw my hands in the air as a sign of surrendering. “what the heck is boom boom? ???”   
  
She busted a big laugh, hawak hawak pa nga nya yung tummy nya, kase she almost ran out of breath while doing so. “hindi mo alam yung boom boom?” hello? Magtatanong ba ko kung hindi ko alam!? ::) ??? “boom boom… you know?! The 3 lettered word? ;D”   
  
“three lettered wo— :o” I stopped suddenly. 3 lettered word! Ewww!!!! I think I know what she’s trying to say. “kadiri ka! Hindi noh!!”   
  
“hahahahah!!! Look at you!” tinuro nya yung face ko, “you’re as red as ripe tomato! ;D” malamang! Nakakahiya yung tinanong mo! “ano? Magaling ba? did he give you the fireworks? ;D”   
  
FIREWORKS? ??? WHAT THE HECK!? Eww noh! He doesn’t even look like he’s capable of giving me fireworks.. if you know what I mean ::) 8).. “shut up ::)..” I fanned my face para magsubside yung blush. Nakakainis naman kase eh! bakit ang bilis ko mag-blush!?!?! Nakakahiya tuloy :-[ ::)…   
  
“oh? eh anong masama dun? Normal lang yun sa mga couples noh, diba?..”   
  
“huh? No..”   
  
“hindi ba ganun sa America? Come on, couz ::)..”   
  
“oo nga pero.. I’m not one those girls who give it up just like that.” Eww kadiri!!   
  
“sa bagay, ilang days pa lang kayo? 3?” omg? Pati yun, alam nya? grabe naman. parang may satellite dito ah?! kuhang kuha yung chismis!   
  
Pero teka, napansin ko.. “bakit ba you’re so interested in the ‘three-lettered-word’ ha? and how come you know all the details to it?” lagi na lang nya tinatanong yan eh.. siguroo… “don’t tell me you’re not ???---”   
  
Her eyes became so big, as if she was hearing something so bad. “ano ka ba! siempre virgin pa rin ako noh! Ikaw naman, as if naman may time akong gawin yun eh magkaboyfriend nga lang, mukang impusible na ::).” she sat there looking so upset. “si lola kase eh, napaka strikta! >:( May lumapit lang na lalaki sakin, nakakontra kagad. Kapag hindi investor o kaya anak ng isa sa mga amiga nya, hindi pwede. Alam mo na, ayaw daw nya kasing mapunta sa wala yung pera natin.”   
  
“that sucks.” I know how that feels.   
  
“kaya ikaw, maswerte ka, gusto ni lola si Jeremy.. kaya walang kokontra sa relationship nyo. In fact, tuwang tuwa pa yun at baka bilan ka pa ng kotse, watch.” She’s gonna buy me a car just because I’m going out with Stiffie? How lame is that? She is nothing different from my Mom. That car I have back in L.A? she got me that as a present. hindi dahil birthday ko or whatever holiday, I made her proud daw, kasi I closed a big deal with the Stewarts. Tss. Big business deal ba yung maging part kame sa business nila dahil David and I became a couple? Tumawa siya. “grabe, couz, jackpot ka! Ang bongga ng mga boylets mo! May Jeremy ka na, may David ka pa! :D”   
  
“oh come on, don’t tell me you’re falling for that sweet face of his! Eh puro bullsh1t lang yun noh! Ganyan naman yan sa simula eh para makuha nya yung trust mo >:(.”   
  
“eh muka namang okay na siya eh ::).” Iba na siya? Oh please! Hindi na magbabago yun noh! “pero wag kang mag-alala, solid Jeremy pa rin ako! sa kanya ako boto para sayo! Heheh! ;D” si Ella talaga oh.. “naku, tignan mo bukas, word of town kayo for sure!! Grabe, couple of the year!! :D” she laughed so hard even her face turned red.   
  
“we’re not even dating for real ::)..” I told her.   
  
Napatigil siya sa kakatawa. “HUH?!”   
  
Nakakatawa yung facial expression nya, eh kase naman she had high hopes, tuwang tuwa siya dahil Jeremy and I are a ‘couple’. Heheh. “yeah, sorry to disappoint you, couz. Pero fake lang lahat to 8).” I sat down beside her.   
  
“what? anong ibig mong sabihin? ???”   
  
“we’re just pretending.. to get rid of David..”   
  
“bakit?”   
  
“because I don’t want him here. Malas lang siya sakin eh.”   
  
“ganun? Hindi nga? ???”   
  
“oo nga!” Ang kulit naman eh! “and besides, I want to prove my Mom wrong about David and I.. I don’t need David to be successful you know?” muka kasing pera ang Mommy ko eh. she never asked what I wanted, it’s always what she wants. Pero this time, hindi na talaga ako papayag. We’re talking about my future here, and I certainly do not want David to be a part of it.   
  
“sa bagay :-\..” serious na yung muka nya. “ehh..buti napapayag mo si Jeremy? ???”   
  
“oo nga eh.” inayos ko yung sarili ko sa bed. “I never thought he’d give in, but he did :).” akala ko talaga hindi siya papayag, pano naman, lagi na lang akong bad shot sa kanya, lagi ko kase siyang inaaway eh. “but I promise him I’ll be good and behaved from now on. I’ll do whatever he wants para ma-pull off lang tong pretend-couple namin. Hanggang umalis lang naman si David eh, after that, wala na.” ano ba to, I can’t believe I have to go through this just to get rid of that dimwit.   
  
“ah sus! Ikaw pa, magbabago? Naku couz, good luck na lang sayo! :D” she relaxed herself in my bed. “at tsaka, sigurado ka bang hanggang pretention na lang yan ha? eh muka namang may laman yang kasunduan nyo eh… :D ::)” she turned her head to my direction and faced me..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“MRS. STIFF! ::) :D” Mrs. Stiff?! namann!? NOOOO!!!!! :'( >:( ::)   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“breakfast in bed…” what time is it? 6:30? Ugh!!! What’s this jerk doing here? >:(   
  
“what are you doing here!? >:( ???” I covered my face with a pillow.   
  
“I cooked breakfast for you and brought it here, Princess. :)” Ano siya? Maid!?   
  
“I don’t feel like eating, now go away! >:(” I shifted to my side para hindi ko siya makita. Hindi na kasi ako makahinga noh, yung pillow nasa face ko pa rin! >:( ;D   
  
“but lola said you need to eat, so you can go to work.. :-\ :-\” ang aga aga, binubwiset na ko ng taong to!?! “which I’ll be glad to take you to.. :)”   
  
I let out a loud sigh and sat up. “will you stop playing nice David? ??? and what are you doing kissing up to my lola, huh!? >:(”   
  
“what are you talking about? I’m not playing nice, Iris.. I want to do these things for you.. nobody told me to cook breakfast for you, but I did.” he paused. “and I’m not kissing up.. I just want to return her generosity of letting me stay here.”   
  
“oh!? ??? so I should I be thanking you then!? >:(” tinaasan ko nga sya ng kilay. Kahit kailan talaga, napaka plastic ng taong to! “woah. Thank you David! >:(” I sarcastically said.   
  
“Iris, you’re taking this the wrong way again :-\…”   
  
“so are you calling me stupid? ??? >:(”   
  
“I didn’t say that.. I never called you one.. :-\” ha! never called me one, yeah right!!?! >:( >:( he placed the tray on the nightstand and stood in front of me. “look, Princess.. I just want to serve you breakfast and take you to work..”   
  
Nanadya ba to? “WILL YOU STOP ACTING LIKE EVERYTHING’S COOL BETWEEN US? >:(” he did a very fantastic job kissing up to my Mom and now he’s doing it to my lola too!? What an asswipe. >:( >:(   
  
I just stared at him with my angry face. Sometimes I feel sorry for him for receiving all these kinds of attitude from me. but it was his fault, he made me treat him so badly. “I’m trying my best to patch things up between us.. so we can start over again. :-\”   
  
“that’ll never happen, David. you had your chance and you blew it.” I said calmly.   
  
“I know, and I admit my mistakes.. all I’m asking is a chance to show you that I changed already :-\.”   
  
“I don’t give second chances >:(.” Errr! Well, evidently, this guy’s understanding is way too low. Sabihin nyo nga sakin, kung kayo yung naging gf nitong lalaki na to wala naman ginawa kung hindi ang idisplay ka at i-control ka, in a sense na pati ang susuotin mo kailangan ng approval nya? are you going to forgive and give him the ‘second’ chance he’s asking for? ??? >:( ako? uh-uh. No way! I was in that hellhole for a long time, and I had a hard time getting out. what makes anyone think I want to go back there!?   
  
“if I have to show you everyday that I’ve changed, I’m willing to do it.. look.. I will even do everything you want me to do, just give me a chance.” Hindi siya talaga nakakaintindi noh? God! He just can’t stop getting on my nerves! >:( >:( Didn’t I just say I don’t give second chances? Bakit ba ang kulit nya? I’m sure pakana na naman ito ni Mommy para magkabalikan kame. Yun ang gusto nya, well, sorry! not gonna happen! “just tell me what I need to do.”   
  
He wants me to tell him what he needs to do? Parang baliktad ata ngayon ah?! dati sya yung nagsasabi sakin lahat ng dapat kong gawin, oh tapos ngayon gaganyan ganyan siya dyan. What a loser. “here’s what you need to do 8) >:(.” Tumayo ako sa bed and wore the robe that was sitting at the edge of my bed. “first, you need to take that tray then bring it downstairs. Second, tell MY lola I do not need anybody to do these things for me, because I have Jeremy to take care of me.” then I circled around him, “third, I want you to go to your room, pack your things and take the next flight out.” pagkasabi ko nun, tumingin siya sakin bigla. “and then, tell my Mom to stop dreaming there’s gonna be another chance for you and me because there wouldn’t be.” I stopped in front of him. he was speechless. What? he asked for this, didn’t he? I pointed the door. “both of you just can’t seem to stop making my life a living hell. You need to stay out of sight and my life completely. do you understand?” nakatingin lang siya sakin, “now, scram! >:( 8)”   
  
He took the tray from the nightstand and started walking to the door. When he was halfway there, he faced me. “Iris, I’m not here to make your life miserable.. I just want to be the guy you loved and cared about before :-\ :-[..”   
  
“keep dreaming, LOSER! 8)” sus, paawa effect pa. PLASTIC! “get out! >:(”   
  
He shook his head and headed towards the door. Look what he did to me!? ang aga aga, mainit na kagad ang ulo ko! >:( >:( kasi naman eh.   
  
I took a shower after that. Nung natapos naman ako, I went straight to my closet kagad to pick an outfit. First day of work ko ngayon, and I promised Jeremy I won’t give him any trouble from now on ::). Kaya kahit na it’s against my will, I’m wearing a black suit today :'(. I just wore a red blouse under the blazer. Gosh, how I feel so dull! Muka nga akong Mrs. Stiff sa suot ko! :'( :'(   
  
Kumatok naman bigla si lola. Oh great.   
  
“Princess, ano na naman ginawa mo kay David? ???” I knew it. That sumbongero! >:( “bakit mo naman ginanon yung tao? Alam mo bang maaga sya nagising para paghandaan ka lang ng breakfast tapos ni hindi ka man lang nagpasalamat? Kailan ka ba naging bastos ha? ??? >:(”   
  
She was behind me. I’m putting on make up kasi eh. “ayoko yung niluto nya eh, sunog 8) >:(.” Yun na lang ang sinabi ko, because I know either way, ako pa rin ang bad shot. Humanda talaga sakin yan si David! >:(   
  
“kahit na! matuto kang magpasalamat si binibigay sayo. Ikaw.. ikaw na nga ang pinagsisilbihan, maarte ka pa. hindi como mabait si David sayo may karapatan ka na para bastusin sya.”   
  
Oh come on! Hindi ko kaya siya binastos! “err. Lola, can we please not talk about manners and David? ???” I placed my hands over my head. “you’re giving me a migraine eh 8).”   
  
“nako, ikaw na bata ka, napakamaldita mo. Oh sya, magready ka na at baka malate ka na naman.” hindi ba obvious na nakaready na ko? “humarap ka nga, I want to see what you’re wearing.” She turned me towards her para tignan ng mabuti kung presentable ba yung suot ko. of course naman noh! Eh muka nga kong librarian na ewan eh! kung hindi lang ako nagsuot ng red na necklace at red stilettos with matching red purse, muka na talaga akong old maid. Siguro naman, hindi na magrereklamo si Stiffie sa suot ko, diba? ::) 8) “good. Pero bakit hindi ka na lang magblack shoes? Muka naman kasing pang party yang red na sapatos mo.”   
  
Are you kidding me? ??? these shoes? Uh-uh. I have another pair for parties okay! ::) ::) “lola naman, tignan mo nga,” I lifted my slacks so she can see the stiletto, “pang party ba yan? And besides, black shoes are not gonna look so nice with this outfit plus the details I’m wearing.. masyado ng maraming black, kailangan ng breaker noh ::) ::).”   
  
“ay siya sige! Mga kabataan talaga ngayon, masyadong style conscious.” She took the brush from the dresser and started brushing my hair, after nun, tumayo na siya. “oh, bilisan mo na, 7:15 na. susunduin ka ba ni Jeremy? Kung hindi ipapahatid na lang kita sa driver.. isama mo na rin si David ng malibang naman, kasi diba mamaya sasamahan nyo sya maghanap ng matitirihan?”   
  
7:15 na!? :o eh teka? Hala! “huh? Oh.. eh I forgot to mention to Stif—err. Jeremy that we’re coming with him to look for a place to stay.. we might have plans later on, so.. hindi ko sya masasamahan, ikaw na lang or si Ella..” I have to think my way out of this, kung hindi baka atakahin ako sa puso sa sobrang sama ng loob dyan sa taong yan! >:( “wait, how about Chris?” oo nga, I haven’t seen him yet? Asan ba yun? “where is he? I haven’t seen him ???.”   
  
“wala si Christopher, pinadala ko sa Singapore para dun sa bagong software na pinapatignan ko sa kanya.” oh man! “si Ella naman, fully booked yun ngayon, maaga nga umalis eh, she’s closing the deal with the Guzmans and it’s gonna take her the whole day dahil marami pang aayusin after ng closing.”   
  
I stood up and took my purse from the closet. “well, I’m fully booked too. Tito Ramon is touring us at our department, and who knows what else is there planned for us 8)..”   
  
“I’ll talk to them, one day lang naman eh.”   
  
“lola naman, siempre I want to impress them. Di ba yun naman ang sinabi mo?” bakit ang kulit kulit nya…   
  
“oh sige, kung busy ka, eh dito na lang si David magsestay.” Arghh!! >:(   
  
I can’t live with that ass hole Ayoko sa kanya dahil nabubwiset ako sa kanya. everytime I look at the face of that loser, naalala ko lahat ng ginawa nya sakin. At kung hindi ako makapagpigil one day, baka mapatay ko yan. >:( >:( “fine, I’ll talk to Jeremy.”   
  
Nagsmile siya pagkadinig nya nun. hmf. Siguro kasabwat na siya ng Mommy ko ngayon. Hindi naman ganyan si lola eh, business ang priority nya hindi yung kung ano ano.   
  
Nung umalis naman sya, kinuha ko kagad yung phone ko para tawagan si Stiffie. Magpapasundo ako sa kanya para hindi sumama si David sakin. Who knows, baka kidnappin pa ko nun at dalin sa isang secluded place. Oh no!! :o :o   
  
“hello? asan ka na?” wow, ang ganda naman ng greeting nya.   
  
“good morning, babe! ;D”   
  
“ano ka ba, wag mo nga kong tawaging babe. Nakakainis eh.”   
  
“sus, ito naman, naglalambing lang eh ::)…” hehehe!!! I like it when he gets mad. Hihihi! ;D ;D   
  
“bakit kaharap mo siguro si David noh?”   
  
“hindi noh, nasa room ako eh..”   
  
“oh? eh bakit pa-babe babe ka pa dyan?”   
  
“wala lang,, gusto ko lang ;D..”   
  
“hay nako! Iris ha, ang aga aga, wag mo nga ko binubwiset! Asan ka na ba? malapit ng mag 8!”   
  
“sa bahay nga!” hello? hindi ba nya narinig yung sinabi ko na nasa room ako? “pick me up..yeah?”   
  
“I’m at work already.”   
  
“so? Then step out and pick me up ::).” Mahirap ba yun eh my house is not that far from work naman eh. “then let’s have breakfast. Hindi pa kasi ako kumakain eh.”   
  
“hoy, sinuswerte ka ata? Bakit susunduin pa kita eh may driver ka naman? at tsaka bakit hindi ka kumain dyan? Ikaw, galit ka sa pera noh?”   
  
“yeah, about that, sabi ni lola si David maghahatid sakin, and if he takes me to work, for sure malelate ako, kasi magaaway pa kame, masisira yung mood ko, at kapag nasira yung mood ko, pati ikaw magiging ganun na rin, kasi I’ll just throw tantrums at you…so sunduin mo na lang ako, please? ??? ::)”   
  
“sus! Ang dami mo namang sinabi. Sige na, aalis na ko dito, gusto ko nakaready ka na pagdating ko at ayokong maghintay!”   
  
Yahhooo! :D :D “yes babe! I’ll be down and ready when you get here!”   
  
He hung up the phone. Ano bayan, hindi man lang nag-bye. Hmff! Pero sige, pagbibigyan ko siya.. dahil kung boyfriend ko talaga siya, he can never do that to me, dahil aawayin ko siya talaga! of course I never got to that to David, he had total control over me. that bastard. >:( :-\   
  
Habang naghihintay ako, I decided to fix my hair. i did a wavy style, since my hair is too straight. After about 25 minutes, tinawag ako nung maid. Nasa baba na daw si Stiffie. Grabe, 25 minutes na yun? well, okay. I gathered all my stuff and went down immediately.   
  
Pagbaba ko, nakita ko kagad si David, lola and Jeremy sa dining table. Jeremy was standing while lola and David were sitting down having breakfast. He was wearing a white dress shirt with a red tie. he looks.. cute. ::) ::)   
  
“oh join us for breakfast.” Sabi ni lola. “Jeremy, sit down, have a taste of David’s omelette.”   
  
Nakita ko nakasmile na naman si David, yung mayabang na smile. Basta! So I walked towards Jeremy and gave him a kiss on the cheek, nagulat nga siya eh. if he had seen it coming, I know he would’ve docked his head. Pero, too bad, mabilis ako eh! hihih ;D ::). “morning babe 8).” He was just staring at me na parang it’s a crime that I kissed his cheek. Sus, parang yun lang eh ::). “we’re gonna be late, so we’re gonna take off, we’ll probably just get breakfast on our way to work.” I linked my arm to his and gave him a little pull, giving him a sign that we need to go. “let’s go.”   
  
“we’re gonna go now, we’re running late.” Nagsmile siya kay lola at nagnod sya kay David. “Lola, mauna na po kame.”   
  
“oh sige hijo, magingat kayo ha. drive safely :).”   
  
“bye Princess 8).” Gusto ko siyang tapunan ng vase! >:(   
  
So ayun, lumabas na kami at sumakay sa car nya. “sa susunod nga, don’t kiss me >:(.” he said while he was driving. He wiped his cheek pa nga eh. aba!? Sira ulo to ha! >:(   
  
“sa cheeks lang naman eh ::).”   
  
“kahit na. pinapayagan na nga kitang tawagin ako na babe kahit na nasusuka na ko eh 8) >:(.”   
  
Ang arte nya, buti nga ang sweet ko pa sa kanya eh ::). hmf! Hirap palang maging gf ni Stiffie. Pero okay lang ::) ::)… “so how do you like my outfit?” I decided to ask him about my suit, in case he noticed.. which I think he did, dahil I don’t wear black that much. “ano? ??? ::)”   
  
He didn’t speak until we stopped at the light. “okay lang.” tapos tinignan nya ko. “too much red 8),.”   
  
“too much red? ??? Eh ang panget naman if I wear all black noh, para ako pupunta sa funeral eh ::).” nagiba bigla yung expression ng face nya when he heard that. Okay… something wrong with what I said? ??? :-\   
  
“wag mo nga sabihin yan :-\.”   
  
“bakit? eh totoo naman eh.. kaya nga red breaks the dullness eh ::).”   
  
“okay, bahala ka.”   
  
Tumahimik na siya after nun, so I took my ipod out and listened to it. Ano bang magandang song.. hmm. I kept on browsing until I reached the song ‘Nothing in this world’.. gusto ko kasi yung song na yun. Medyo traffic kasi eh, I was bored, kasi hindi naman nagsasalita si Stiffie. Sobra naman to, pag nagdadrive siya, he doesn’t talk talaga, he only talks when we are at full stop.   
  
Dumating kami sa work pass 8 na. may construction pa sa labas, I thought they were done remodeling the facility, hindi pa pala.. well, it’s pretty much just the paint job that they’re doing, so I guess safe naman pumasok sa loob. Well, duh? Of course, may mga tao na nga eh! hay, Iris, minsan slow ka din eh!! ::) ::)   
  
He parked the car in front, tapos hinagis nya yung keys nya dun sa valet and I continued listening to my ipod, while I’m walking inside. He was a few feet away from me, tignan mo to, what kind of a bf is this guy? ??? He didn’t open the door for me na nga, hindi pa siya naglakad beside me. kawawa naman ako noh? :'( :'( These people could be thinking ang sobrang sama ni Stiffie dahil ganyan sya. Nagpepretend nga lang kame, hindi pa nya ginawang realistic. Hmmf! Bahala nga sya, wala naman si David dito para magworry ako.   
  
I walked through the construction, yung front kase yung inaayos nila, maraming paint cans, at may isang maliit na walkway lang. I was walking with poise pa nga when I suddenly stopped because I couldn’t move my right foot. I looked down and saw that my heel was stuck to a small hole. Oh no!! my shoe!!! :o :o   
  
Kaya naman I held on the side bars and I shook my foot as much as I can to get the heel out of the hole but didn’t realize that while doing that, nagagalaw yung mga paint cans sa taas. Nagulat na lang ako when I looked up, yung mga cans nasa edge na maliit na plywood. :o :o   
  
OH-MY-GOD. :o   
  
THEY’RE GONNA FALL ON ME!!!!!!   
  
But I couldn’t do anything, my foot was stuck and I can’t take my shoes off.. “ahhh!!!” sumigaw na ko nun when I realized I had no way out, but a miracle to this. Yung mga tao nagtinginan na at pati sila din sumisigaw na rin.   
  
And in a split second, all the cans fell off of the plywood.   
  
At ako…..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I was on the ground…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
With Jeremy on top of me, and his hand was under my head.. :o :-[ :o   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Nauna na kong umalis sa kanya, kahit yung van nila nasa harap ng kotse ko. pagod na ko. una dahil sa biyahe namin, pangalawa, dahil dito kay Iris. Biruin nyong sabihin nyang kami na daw? ??? >:( At tinatawag pa kong BABE ha >:(. okay, sige sinabi ko nga na magtutulungan kaming dalawa, at kung tutuusin, hindi naman mahirap ang magpanggap na may relasyon kami, wala namang personalan, yun ang usapan. Ang mahirap lang dito eh yung ugali nya. I don’t know if I can stand her. Period. >:( >:(   
  
Yung bibig nun? sus. Nonstop. Daig pa ang manok na tumitilaok sa umaga kung magsalita siya. Lalo na’t pag nagsimula siyang magsalita, asahan mong tuloy-tuloy na yan. Oh, and before I forget, kapag yan, tinamaan ng lintek, hanep pa sa batang tinatantrums kung sumpungin siya ng toyo nya. Naku kulang na lang calamansi o kaya suka, pwede ng sawsawan. Para akong nagaalaga ng bata tuwing kasama ko siya eh. sumasakit ang ulo ko. although there at times na napapatawa nya ko, hindi pa rin sapat yun para mabago yung tingin ko sa kanya. IMMATURE NA, SPOILED BRAT PA. >:( >:(   
  
Dumating ako sa bahay less than an hour, nandun nga si Mommy at sinalubong nya ko.   
  
“oh hijo welcome back!! :)” niyakap nya ko sabay kiss. Minsan itong nanay ko may pagka OA eh. Ang tanda tanda ko na, hinalikan pa rin ako. Pagkatapos nyang gawin yung mga seremonyas nya na pahalik halik, she led me to the couch. “ano, kamusta ang trip? Tell me everything.”   
  
“yun, okay lang, nakakapagod.” Eto ang gusto ko sa Mommy ko eh, lagi syang may time para sakin, at lagi syang available para makinig sa mga kwento ko. Hindi tulad ng tatay ko na kulang na lang tumira sa opisina. Tumayo siya at pumunta sa kitchen saglit. Pagbalik nya, may dala na syang juice. “Ma, pwede mo naman iutos yan, bakit ikaw pa ang kumuha? ???”   
  
“aba, bakit? Eh may paa’t kamay naman ako.” Si Mommy talaga. Umupo siya sa tabi ko at minasahe ang likod ko. Ahhh. Ang sarap. “so yun lang? wala ka bang ibabalita sa Mommy na magandang balita, hm? ::) ::)” parang hindi ko ata gusto yung tono nya ah….   
  
“Ma? Tulad ng ano? ???” tumingin ako sa kanya.   
  
“kelan mo siya ipapakilala sakin? ??? ::)” ang tanong naman nya.   
  
“sino? ???”   
  
“sino pa ba?” parang nagtataka pa yung itsura nya. “si Princess.. ::)”   
  
“ah.. si Iris.” Sus! Wag mo ng kilalanin yun, madidisappoint ka lang >:( 8). “saka na Ma. Busy pa eh.” Sa totoo lang, ayoko siyang ipakilala sa Mommy ko. Disgrace lang yun, at baka sabihin pa ni Mommy eh wala akong taste.   
  
“well, to tell you honestly, hindi ko naman siya kailangan na mameet pa para masabi kong mabuti siya para sayo eh..” what’s that supposed to mean? “hindi ba’t anak siya ni Josephine? ??? :)” nag-nod naman ako. “if I left that part out, me and Josephine were good friends in high school until college, bago sya nagmigrate sa U.S.” magkakilala sila ng Mommy ni Iris? Small world? Ano bayan >:(. “magandang choice yan, hijo, hindi na ako mahihirapang mag-adjust sa kanya, and I’m sure magkakasundo kaming dalawa :).” Sus, akala mo lang yun. Muka lang angel yun sa umpisa, pero kapag nakilala na nya yun ng husto, mas daig pa kay Lucifer ang ugali nun. “mahilig ba syang magbake? Kasi si Josephine, mahilig magbake yun noon eh..” eto na naman tayo, nagsimula na namang magreminisce si Mommy. ::)   
  
“hindi, walang alam sa kusina yun 8).” talagang sisiraan ko siya kay Mommy para hindi nya magustohan at para sabihin nya sakin na humanap na lang ako ng iba.   
  
“good.” Say what?! “eh di tuturuan ko siya :).” Excited nyang sinabi. Si Iris? Sa kusina? Yeah, that’ll be the day. I’ll even pay big money to see her wearing an apron ::). “naku, I’m sure both of us will have a great time together.” Nagpalakad lakad na sya sa buong living room. “kaya hijo, wag mo ng patagalin bago mo siya ipakilala ng pormal sakin ha. Dahil kapag ako nainip, ako mismo ang pupunta sa kanya para ipakilala ang sarili ko.” she kissed me in the forehead and smiled at me. “alam mo, anak, natutuwa ako para sayo :)..”   
  
“bakit naman, Ma? ???” tinanong ko siya.   
  
“eh kasi alam kong magmamahal ka na ulit, at magiging masaya ka :)..” nung narinig ko yun, nakaramdam ako ng konting kirot sa dibdib ko. gusto kong sabihin sa kanya na hindi pa ko handang magmahal dahil wala na kong ibang mamahalin kundi si Tricia lang, pero hindi ko magawang sabihin dahil nakita ko sa muka ni Mommy na masaya siya. :-\ :-\   
  
Hay nako. Ano bang meron yang babaeng yan at bakit parang gusto na siya kagad ng pamilya ko? hindi naman ako makahinde kay Mommy, hindi dahil sa wala akong choice, ayoko lang talagang humindi sa kanya.   
  
Anyway, tinuloy namin ang kwentuhan over dinner. Kasama si Daddy, at halata mong siya rin eh tuwang tuwa. Actually, the more I see how happy my Dad is, the more I think I made a big mistake. Dahil kung nagkataon, malaking disappointment na naman to para sa kanya kapag nalaman nyang palabas lang ang lahat ng to.   
  
Jusko, kung alam lang nila, isang malaking pagkakamali ang pumayag ako sa gusto ni Iris. Pakiramdam ko eh ako ang madedehado dito sa set-up na to. hindi na nga siya ang ipit, ako naman ngayon. Grabe. Sana nga umalis na yang David na yan eh, para matahimik na ko. >:( >:(   
  
But on the other hand, gusto ko rin yung ganito, kasi at least proud sakin si Daddy. Tinuturing nya kasi na parang accomplishment ang magkaron kami ng magandang relationship sa mga Martin, dahil nga makakabuti naman talaga yun para sa business. well, that’s corporate-thinking. Reality-wise though, hindi kame swak sa ugali ni Iris. Alam nyo naman siguro yun by now no?   
  
Nung gabi na at nasa kama na ko, wala akong ibang ginawa kundi ang titigin ang picture ni Tricia sa may night stand ko. hindi ko mapigilan ang maguilty, dahil kahit na peke lang yung relasyon namin ni Iris, alam kong hindi yun tama, at sigurado akong hindi natutuwa si Tricia sa ginawa ko.   
  
“hun, pasensya ka na ha, naipit nako eh :-\..” hinimas himas ko yung frame. “hanggang sa umalis lang naman si David, tapos pangako, tapos na to :-[ :-\.” huminga ako ng malalim at pinikit ko na yung mga mata ko.   
  
  
Next day.   
  
Nagising ako ng maaga kinabukasan. Ginising kasi ako ni Daddy. “wake up, Jeremy.” Humarap ako sa kanya. “wag mong kakalimutan, ngayon ko kayo itu-tour ni Iris sa department nyo ha. kaya kung pupwede eh magreport kayong dalawa before 10. may meeting kasi ako ng 11:30 with the other clients.” nag nod lang ako. anong oras na ba? lumingon ako sa tabi para makita yung oras. 6:00.   
  
Nag-yawn ako at nagstretch. “sige, Dad. We’ll see you there at 10.” Kahit na ilang oras pa bago mag 10, dapat bumangon na ko, may naiwan pa kong paperworks na kailangang asikasuhin. Maaga naman siguro papasok yun diba? siempre may pinag-usapan kami na magtitino na siya diba? tama. 8)   
  
Ngumiti lang si Daddy sakin at tumalikod na rin siya para lumabas ng kwarto ko. nung malapit na siya sa pintuan, tumingin siya ulit sakin. “sya nga pala, anak. Sa Monday na yung ribbon cutting. At sa gabi, may party dito sa bahay.” Sa Monday? Anong araw na ba ngayon? Thursday. “ipapakilala na natin sa corporate world si Iris as the new sales and advertising manager, and as your girlfriend :).” Napalunok ako ng di-oras sa sinabi ni Dad. Oo nga pala, sa party, ipapakilala na si Iris sa maraming tao. Okay lang sana as someone from a prominent family in the corporate world eh, oh di kaya as a business partner.. pero as my girlfriend? Hindi ko yata kayang sikmurain yun. :-\ :'(   
  
Naligo na ko’t nagbihis. Hindi na ko sumabay sa parents ko na magbreakfast, eh kasi kapag nagkataon, sigurado akong pangalan lang ni Iris ang maririnig ko ng paulit ulit. Napansin nyo naman siguro kung gano sila kaexcited diba? lalo na si Mommy. ::)   
  
On the way ko sa office, naisipan kong tawagan si Anthony. Tumawag kasi siya sakin last night, eh kaso tulog na ko. mag-aaya sigurong uminom.   
  
“hello?” humikab siya.   
  
“what’s up bro?”   
  
“what’s up?” narinig kong umikot siya. “pare, do you know what time it is? it’s freakin’ 7 am! Natutulog pa yung tao oh..” si Anthony, hari ng katamaran. Biruin nyong alas-ocho ang trabaho nyan, kung bumangon eh 8:30? Katulad ko, may family corporation sila kung san sya nagtatrabaho, pareho kami ng pusisyon. General Manager. Ang pagkakaiba lang naman saming dalawa, close siya sa Daddy nya kaya hawak nya ang oras nya. at ako? himala na lang kung makita kaming magkasama ni Daddy sa labas, other than a meeting siempre.   
  
“eh tumawag ka kagabi diba? ???”   
  
“sus, bro, last night pa yun. umaga na no.” humikab siya ulit, pero this time tumayo na ata siya. Nag-iba kasi yung boses nya. “langya naman oh. nawala na tuloy yung antok ko. asan ka ba?”   
  
“papunta ng office.”   
  
“sige kape muna tayo.”   
  
So I pulled over the nearest coffee shop, the one next to our building. In a few minutes, dumating na siya, at nakapajama pa.   
  
Umupo siya sa tapat ko. “oh ano ng balita?” uminom ako ng coffee.   
  
“anong anong balita? Baka ikaw ang may balita, pare 8) ;D..” geez. Pati ba naman sa kanya, nakaabot na? “so ano? Kamusta na kayo ni amgirl?” nilabas nya yung isang pack nya na yosi at yung lighter sa bulsa nya.   
  
“disaster pare >:(.” Actually, self-explanatory naman na yun. Alam naman nating lahat na hindi kame talaga compatible ni Iris.   
  
“anong disaster? Panong naging disaster? Eh jackpot nga yun. biruin mo, ang ganda nun, artistahin 8).” Naglight siya ng isang yosi.   
  
“it’s complicated >:(.” Yun lang ang nasabi ko.   
  
“basta, pare, I can’t wait to meet her. I have to meet her para makita ko siya sa personal 8) :).” Sige, pag nakilala mo na yun, tignan lang natin kung pareho pa rin ang sasabihin mo.   
  
“sige, pakilala kita. But I’m warning you. looks can be very deceiving 8) >:(.” Proven na yun ngayon. Dati, hindi ako naniniwala sa kasabihan na yan.   
  
“oo nga, muka lang siyang suplada, pero feeling ko magkakasundo kami.” Sabay inom ng coffee. talagang excited pa siya ha. “grabe ka tol, tindi mo. Ang swerte mo dyan sa girlfriend mo, pwede ng ilaban sa kahit anong beauty contest.” Sus. Beauty contest daw. Pwede ba! “so ano? Kwento ka naman dyan. Pano mo napasagot? Eh diba ang sabi mo hindi kayo magkasundo nun? tignan mo nga naman, sabi na eh, kakainin mo rin ang sinabi mo ::) 8).”   
  
Naiinis talaga ako kapag pinupuri nila si Iris. Teka nga, eh bakit hindi ko na lang sabihin na hindi ko siya girlfriend diba? ??? ??? hindi naman ako ang humingi ng favor, siya naman. “hindi ko girlfriend yun. palabas lang ang lahat ng to >:(.”   
  
“ANO? :o ???” sorry to disappoint you 8). lol ;D. “panong nangyari yun? eh ang bali-balita mukang nagkakaigihan na kayo at pusibleng sa simbahan na ang tuloy nyan.” What the hell!? Nung una girlfriend lang, tapos ngayon tuloy sa simbahan? Ano ba! ??? >:(   
  
“eh kailangan eh. nagkaipitan na :-\.”   
  
“si erpat? ???” tanong nya.   
  
“hindi. Sa part nya. dumating kasi yung pinagkasundo sa kanya ng Mommy nya eh ayaw nya dun sa tao.” Uminom ako ulit ng coffee. At si Anthony naman, well, he was listening attentively. “at tsaka, may usapan kasi kami na magtutulungan kami. sabi ko kasi sa kanya tutulungan ko siya in exchange of her right behavior, kaya pumayag na rin ako, bawas problema din yun.”   
  
“seryoso ka? ??? ???” sus, sa pagkaba haba ng paliwanag ko, ‘seryoso ka’ lang ang isasagot nya sakin?   
  
“muka ba kong nagbibiro? ???” nakatingin lang sya sakin na para bang high ako na ewan. “hanggang sa umalis lang naman si David. pagkatapos nun, tapos na tong pagpapanggap >:(.”   
  
Sa sinabi kong yun, napatawa siya bigla. “yeah right, bro. alam mo sa mga kasong ganyan na boto ang pamilya, mahirap i-maintain yan sa pagpapanggap. At tsaka, kung sa mata ng iba kailangang ipakita nyong kayo nga, aba, eh hindi magkalayong magkalapit kayong dalawa nyan ::).” Umiling iling siya, “baka nga sa huli eh maging totohanan na yan ::) 8).”   
  
“tumahimik ka nga, sinabi ng hindi ko siya type >:(.”   
  
Tinaas nya yung mga kamay nya. “it’s okay, bro. okay lang na magdeny ka sa umpisa ;D.” Sabay tawa ng malakas.   
  
“ulol!” tumayo na ko. 7:20 na kasi. “sige na mauna na ko, malelate na ko eh.”   
  
“ano, susunduin mo na si tisay? ;D”   
  
“bakit ko susunduin eh may kotse naman yun. hindi ko na obligation kuno ang hatid sundo siya no >:( 8).” nagsimula na kong maglakad. “sya nga pala, since alam mong hindi totoo na kami nga, wag mong ipagsasabi yun kahit kanino okay.”   
  
“yes bossing! ;D” sumigaw naman siya. Sira ulo talaga tong tao na to.   
  
Sumakay na ko sa kotse ko at iniwan siya dun sa coffee shop. In five minutes,dumating na ko sa office, binati lang ako nung mga tao dun, at dumagdag pa sa asar ko eh yung kada bati nila, hinahanap si ‘Miss Iris’ nila. pwede ba!? muka ba kong tanungan? ??? >:( Naku Iris! Ano ba tong pinasok mo!? >:( >:(   
  
Saktong dumating ako sa office ko, nagring yung cellphone ko. at nung nakita ko na siya ang tumatawag, sinagot ko kagad. Pano, anong oras na at wala pa siya dito!   
“hello? asan ka na?”   
  
“good morning, babe! ;D” cheerful pa yung pagbati nya. pwede bang itigil na niya yang pagtawag sakin ng babe at lalong umiinit ang ulo ko!? muka ba kong baboy para tawaging BABE!?   
  
“ano ka ba, wag mo nga kong tawaging babe. Nakakainis eh.”   
  
Natawa siya ng konti. Okay? anong nakakatawa? “sus, ito naman, naglalambing lang eh ::)…” kung gusto mo kong lambingin, wag kang magsasalita. Period.   
  
Teka nga, siguro kaya ganyan yan kase may pinaparinggan na naman noh? “bakit kaharap mo siguro si David noh?”   
  
“hindi noh, nasa room ako eh..”   
  
“oh? eh bakit pa-babe babe ka pa dyan?”   
  
“wala lang,, gusto ko lang ;D..” gusto lang nya?   
  
“hay nako! Iris ha, ang aga aga, wag mo nga ko binubwiset! Asan ka na ba? malapit ng mag 8!” I checked the time. 7:40 na. oo alam kong 10 pa yung napagusapan namin ni Daddy, pero gusto ko na nandito na siya ng alas-ocho pa lang.   
  
“sa bahay nga! pick me up..yeah?” ano ako driver?!   
  
“I’m at work already.” there’s no way I’m stepping out of this place para lang sunduin siya no. kung gusto nyang magpasundo sana sinabi nya kagabi para nadaanan ko sya kanina bago ako nagpunta dito!   
  
“so? Then step out and pick me up ::). then let’s have breakfast. Hindi pa kasi ako kumakain eh.” eh ano naman ngayon kung hindi pa siya kumakain? Problema ko ba yun? hanep naman to. may pasundo-sundo pang nalalaman pati breakfast! Ano nya ko? alalay?   
  
Akala naman nya kung sino sya dyan kung umasta, eh kung tutuusin, ako nga dapat ang nagdedemand sa kanya at ako itong kinontrata nya dito sa sitwasyong to. “hoy, sinuswerte ka ata? Bakit susunduin pa kita eh may driver ka naman? at tsaka bakit hindi ka kumain dyan? Ikaw, galit ka sa pera noh?”   
  
“yeah, about that, sabi ni lola si David maghahatid sakin, and if he takes me to work, for sure malelate ako, kasi magaaway pa kame, masisira yung mood ko, at kapag nasira yung mood ko, pati ikaw magiging ganun na rin, kasi I’ll just throw tantrums at you…so sunduin mo na lang ako, please? ??? ::)”   
  
“sus! Ang dami mo namang sinabi. Sige na, aalis na ko dito, gusto ko nakaready ka na pagdating ko at ayokong maghintay!” wala na kong choice kung hindi ang sunduin sya, eh kesa naman sa maginarte pa yan, baka lalo lang akong maasar.   
  
“yes babe! I’ll be down and ready when you get here!” pwede bang itigil na yang babe na yan!? Eh kung siya kaya ang tawagin kong babe dyan, ano kayang mararamdaman nya? ang dating kasi sakin, parang baboy eh. eh hindi naman ako baboy!! >:( >:(   
  
Hindi na ko nag-bye sa kanya, binababa ko na kagad yung phone at tinawagan yung baba para kunin yung kotse ko.   
  
After 25 minutes, (medyo traffic na kasi) dumating na ko sa kanila. Pinagbuksan ako nung guard ng gate at pinapasok ako ng maid. Sinalubong din ako nung lola ni Iris. Pilit pa nga nyang sinasabi na lola na rin ang itawag ko sa kanya, dahil kung sino daw ang mahal ng apo nya, eh mahal na rin daw nya at part na ng pamilya nya. sus! Kung alam nyo lang, gusto ko sanang masuka dun sa harapan nya nung binanggit nya yun >:( >:(. nung narinig ko pa lang yung ‘parte ng pamilya’ part, kinilabutan na ko eh. hindi na nga lang ako nagsalita eh, at baka kung ano pa ang masabi ko. sumunod na lang ako sa kanya. lola it is. I guess wala namang masama dun.   
  
“oh apo, umupo ka muna, bababa na rin yun si Princess, pinatawag ko na.” nag-nod na lang ako at ngumiti.   
  
Maya maya naman, dumating yung David. dito pala nakatira to? “sup man? 8)” binati naman nya ko. “picking up Iris?”   
  
“yes.” Ewan ko ba, pero hindi maganda ang basa ko dito sa taong to. hindi ko alam kung nahahawa lang ako sa kaweirdohan ni Iris, o talagang may hindi ako magandang pakiramdam sa kanya.   
  
“she’ll be down in a sec. 8)” nilapag nya yung tray sa dining table. “she’s usually like that, taking all the time in world getting ready..” ano ba pinagsasabi nito? ??? Kung magsalita eh kala mo kung sino siyang malaking parte ng buhay ni Iris. “don’t worry, it’s just a matter of getting used to.. when she was my girlfriend, I had the same problem too. Man she’d take hours to find an outfit, and when she finally does, it’ll take her another hour or so deciding whether she wants to wear it or not 8) ::).” wait! Hold on a second!! she was his girlfriend and he was her boyfriend!? Bakit hindi sinabi sakin ni Iris to!? ??? >:( ang sinabi nya lang sakin, pinagkasundo sila ng Mommy nya, pero yung part na dati silang may relasyon? Teka!!!!! >:( >:(   
  
“Jeremy, dito ka.” Tinuro ni lola yung tabi nya. nakaupo na pala sila sa dining table, hindi ko man lang namalayan. “kumain ka muna bago kayo umalis.”   
  
Tumayo ako sa couch para pumunta dun. Sa totoo lang, ayaw ko naman talagang kumain, ayoko lang tanggihan yung alok ni lola sakin. Saktong sakto, bumaba si Iris. She was wearing a black suit with lots of red. Ngayon ko lang siya nakitang nakasuot ng itim. She looks very decent in that outfit at bagay na bagay sa kanya, muka siyang karesperespetong tignan :). Teka nga, bakit ko ba siya tinignan? ??? Eh ano naman ngayon kung maganda siya sa suot nya? panget naman ang ugali nya. 8) >:(   
  
“oh join us for breakfast.” Sabi ni lola sa kanya. “Jeremy, sit down, have a taste of David’s omelette.” si David ang nagluto nyan? Hindi na ko kakain.   
  
Tinignan nya ng masama si David tapos lumapit siya sakin. “morning babe 8).” she kissed my cheek. I did not see that coming kaya tinignan ko na lang sya. “we’re gonna be late, so we’re gonna take off, we’ll probably just get breakfast on our way to work.” tapos ni-link nya yung arm sa arm ko at hinila ito. “let’s go.”   
  
“we’re gonna go now, we’re running late. Lola, mauna na kami.” nag-nod lang ako kay David at ngumiti kay Lola.   
  
“oh sige hijo, magingat kayo ha. drive safely :).”   
  
“bye Princess 8).” he smiled and winked at her. alam nyo, kung hindi ko alam na peke itong relasyon namin ni Iris, iisipin kong binabastos na ko nitong lalaking ito. Kahit papano, kunyaring ‘girlfriend’ ko si Iris at hindi nya dapat yun ginagawa sa kanya, lalo na’t kaharap ako.   
  
Naiinis ako, ewan ko kung bakit. ??? >:(   
  
Nung nakasakay na kami sa kotse ko, naisipan ko siyang pagsabihan tungkol dun sa ginawa nya kanina. Ayoko ng hinahalikan ako ng basta basta, lalo na’t wala pang consent. “sa susunod nga, don’t kiss me >:(.” at kunyaring pinunasan ko yung pisngi ko, kahit naman na wala akong pinupunasan.   
  
“sa cheeks lang naman eh ::).” anong sa cheeks lang? kahit na no!   
  
“kahit na. pinapayagan na nga kitang tawagin ako na babe kahit na nasusuka na ko eh 8) >:(.” she smirked and rolled her eyes on me. tignan mo to, sya na ang ginawan ng favor dyan, siya pa ang may lakas ng loob na irapan ako!   
  
“so how do you like my outfit?” tinignan ko ng mabilis yung suot nya. oo na, she looks very pretty. At kaya pa la nyang dalhin ang business attire na outfit. “ano? ??? ::)”   
  
Nung nagred na yung stoplight, humarap ako sa kanya at sinabing, “okay lang.” ang hindi ko lang maintindihan, eh bakit ang daming red? Kailangan ba talaga yun? “too much red 8),.”   
  
“too much red? ??? Eh ang panget naman if I wear all black noh, para ako pupunta sa funeral eh ::).” tinamaan ako sa sinabi nya. funeral. She did not just say funeral.   
  
“wag mo nga sabihin yan :-\.” naalala ko si Tricia. 2 weeks na lang, 3rd death anniversary na nya…   
  
“bakit? eh totoo naman eh.. kaya nga red breaks the dullness eh ::).”   
  
“okay, bahala ka.” hindi na siya sumagot pagkatapos nun at hindi ko na rin siya kinausap. she took out her iPod and listened to it. May pakanta kanta pa ngang nalalaman eh.. hay. Pero okay lang, hindi naman boses palaka ang boses nya. pwede na rin. ;D 8)   
  
Nung dumating kame sa building, pinark ko yung kotse sa may harap at bumaba na. siya din, ganun ang ginawa, pero tuloy pa rin ang pakikinig nya sa iPod nya. nauna na ko sa kanya na dumaan dun sa walkway, since I anticipated it’ll take her time to get herself organized and ready to go. Hindi pa kasi tapos yung construction sa front, pinipunturahan pa lang. Tsaka, wala na naman sigurong mangyayare sa kanya diba.   
  
Binati ako ng mga tao sa loob, at napansin kong wala pa siya sa likod ko hanggang ngayon. Hanggang sa makarinig na lang ako ng ingay sa may harap at yung mga tao eh sumisigaw.   
  
“yung babae, babagsakan ng mga lata!”   
  
“ano bang ginagawa nya dyan? Bakit hindi pa siya umalis?”   
  
“yung sapatos nya nashoot dun sa butas!!”   
  
Kung ano ano ng sinasabi nung mga tao, pero hindi ako lumingon. Hanggang sa may narinig na lang ako na sumigaw, “ahhh!!!”   
  
“teka!! Si Miss Iris yun ah!!” sabi nung receptionist. “sir! Si Miss Iris!! Maaksidente!” nung narinig ko yun, hindi ko malaman kung anong gagawin ko. I looked back that instant and saw her, standing by the walkway while shaking her right foot. Tumingin ako sa taas at nakita na yung mga paint cans eh malapit ng malaglag.   
  
I don’t know what happened, pero tumakbo ako as fast as I could para maabutan siya bago sya mabagsakan. Ano ba kasing nangyare at napunta sya dun!? ??? :o :-\   
  
I really thought I wasn’t going to make it on time. Milagro na lang na saktong pagtalon ko, nalaglag yung mga paint cans.   
  
She was on the ground.. fortunately, I was able to jump in on time. Ligtas na sya. But she was in the state of shock. Hindi siya gumagalaw kaya lalo akong kinabahan. Natakot naman akong gumalaw at baka kung ano pa ang mangyare. After a couple of minutes of staying put, gumalaw na siya.   
  
“are you okay? ??? what exactly are you feeling right now? Iris!? :-\” I started panicking kasi hindi ko alam kung anong nararamdaman nya, baka may nabaling buto o kahit ano. :-\   
  
“you… you’re heavy :-[…” yun lang ang sinabi nya. Heavy? Yun lang? ???   
  
“alright, that’s it, I’ll take you to the doctor right now.”   
  
“I’m okay :-[.” sinabi naman nya. “tatayo na ba ko? ???”   
  
kaya yun, tumayo nako. At pagkatayo ko, inextend ko yung kamay ko para makatayo rin siya. Na off-balance pa nga sya. “woah wait a minute.” Sinabi ko habang binabalance ko siya. “Are you sure you’re okay? ??? :-\”   
  
“I’m okay.” then she started looking around. “why is everything spi-----” her knees started shaking at ayun na. she collapsed in my arms that instant.   
  
“Iris!? ??? IRIS!!! :o” humarap ako sa mga tao na nakatayo sa paligid namin, “call an ambulance RIGHT NOW!!”   
  
  
  
Hospital.   
  
Lumabas yung doctor after almost an hour. “Jeremy… I’m doctor Robles.” He shook my hand. “she’s stable now, pero binigyan namin siya ng pamapatulog para makapagpahinga siya. By the way, how’s your hand?” he asked.   
  
May galos yung kamay ko dahil sa pagbagsak naming dalawa. Hindi naman malalim ang sugat, pero malakas ang pagdugo kanina. “doc, okay na po ba talaga sya? What are the findings?” I asked. I can’t help but think there might be something wrong with the x-rays and the CT scan. :-[ :-\   
  
“we did a series of tests on her to make sure na walang nabali o nadislocate na bone sa katawan nya, but we paid special attention to her head, since yun ang pinaka vulnerable. We’ll find out the results in a little while pero I’m guessing it’s just a minor head concussion, nothing too serious.” He sat down, kaya ako rin umupo na. “she's lucky you were able to catch her and your hand was able to support her head, dahil kung hindi..” he paused, dahil kung hindi ano? ??? :-\ “she could’ve suffered a major head injury which may result to a coma or amnesia or worse case, she could’ve died of intracerebral hemorrhage dahil sa lakas ng impact.” Nakaramdam ako ng panghihina nung narinig ko yun :o. She almost died :-[ :-\.. hindi ako makapagsalita at pakiramdam ko eh may parang humihila sakin pababa. Saktong pagkasabi nya nun dumating sila Daddy at Mommy, si lola, Ella at si David. Narining nilang lahat yung sinabi ni Dr. Robles na yung ‘could’ve died’ part.   
  
“oh my God :o :-\..” parehong sinabi ni Lola at ni Mommy.   
  
“doc, ako ho ang lola ng pasyente.. kamusta na ho ang apo ko? :-[ ???”   
  
“she’s safe medyo light headed nga lang at parang nasa state of shock sya, so we need to continue running tests to make sure everything’s well and functioning properly. Pagkagising nya, she will be a little disoriented.. Although Jeremy’s hand was able to support her head, sa lakas ng pagbagsak nilang dalawa, nagkaron siya ng concussion, because of that, she might be experiencing mild amnesia, which is normal for her case. Pero wag kayong mag-alala, hindi naman permanent yun.”   
  
Nagpatuloy pa si Dr. Robles sa pag-explain sa kanilang lahat ang kalagayan ni Iris. Hinila ako kagad ni Daddy sa sulok.   
  
“anong nangyare kay Iris? Bakit mo siya pinabayaan?! >:(”   
  
“Dad, lumusot kasi yung sapatos nya dun sa butas ng dinadaanan nya :-\..” teka nga, bakit parang ako pa ata ang may kasalanan dito? Eh samantalang kung hindi naman dahil sakin, baka kung ano ng masama ang nangyare dyan sa pinakamamahal nilang si Iris. >:( >:(   
  
“hindi ba kayo sabay naglalakad?” umiling ako. “hindi mo man lang siya hinintay?” umiling ulit ako. “ganyan ba ang tamang pagtrato sa girlfriend mo ha, Jeremy?” eh hindi ko naman kasi siya girlfriend eh!!!!   
  
“pero :-\---”   
  
“wala ng pero pero, Jeremy! I am so disappointed.”   
  
Disappointed? ??? He didn’t even listen to what I have to say, disappointed kagad!? “sorry Dad, hindi na po mauulit :-\.”   
  
“dapat lang! I expect you to take care good care of her habang may sakit sya. And it is your responsibility to calm and assure her family that everything will be fine. Dahil kung hindi, sakin ka mananagot. Nagkakaintindihan ba tayo? >:( ???” tumungo lang ako dahil wala na akong masabi. Naisip ko kasi, kung sakali mang magsalita ako, tiyak kong it will only count against me. >:( :-\   
  
Great >:(. I was the one who helped and all that, and I’m being condemned because of it? Ni hindi man lang nya ko kinamusta o ano. Kung tutuusin, wala naman akong pananagutan dyan kay Iris eh. Bakit ako ang sinisisi eh siya naman ang may kasalanan dyan, pasuot suot pa kasi ng heels, napakaarte! Nakakainis. Sa susunod nga, hindi na ko makikialam at pababayaan ko na lang syang mahulog kung saan saan. >:( >:(   
  
At dahil nga sa ako ang kilala nilang boyfriend, nagpresenta na ko na ako na lang ang magbabantay dito sa kanya. yeah right. It’s amazing how I was so worried about her this morning, pero nung dumating silang lahat at ako ang sinisisi ni Daddy kaya nangyari sa kanya to, nawala bigla yung concern na yun at napalitan ng galit at inis sa kanya. >:( >:( >:(   
  
Hinihintay ko lang siya gumising ng magantihan ko siya. May mild amnesia siya diba? :o 8) Ha. Pagkakataon ko na to para makabawi sa lahat ng kasalanan nya sakin. Simula ng dumating siya dito, nagkandamalas malas na ko. At dahil din sa mga pakana nya kaya lalong humihigpit sakin si Daddy. Bwiset. >:(   
  
Sa paghihintay ko sa paggising nya, hindi ko namalayan, nakatulog na rin pala ako. Nagising na lang ako ng nakaramdam ako ng may humihimas ng ulo ko, so I lifted my head. Oh good, she’s awake.   
  
“Jeremy? ??? What happened? ??? Where am I? ??? :-[” she looked around the room. So she really lost parts of her memory, katulad ng sinabi ni Dr. Robles. hinawakan nya yung ulo nya, “ahh! I have a terrible headache :-[.”   
  
“nasa ospital ka.”   
  
“ha? bakit? :o ???”   
  
“naaksidente ka.” I responded.   
  
“huh? :o ??? how? ??? When? ???” sunod sunod nyang tinanong.   
  
“this morning. Natumba ka at tinamaan ang ulo.”   
  
“natumba ko? saan? ???” halata mong wala siyang maalala sa mga sinasabi ko. she is totally clueless. 8)   
  
Pero ako naman, tuloy tuloy pa rin ang paliwanag to make sure na hindi nya talaga natatandaan. “sa entrance, kung hindi nga ko dumating, baka mas grabe pa ang kalagayan mo ngayon 8).”   
  
Kumunot yung noo nya. “you saved me? ??? :-[” parang hindi pa siya makapaniwala.   
  
“oo. I saved you. nakita mo to? ??? 8)” pinakita ko sa kanya yung kamay ko na may benda. “nagasgas yan sa pagsalo ko dyan sa ulo mo.”   
  
“really? ???” hinawakan nya yung kamay ko. “thank you :-[.. thank you for saving my life.. kung wala ka dun baka kung ano ng nangyare sakin.. I don’t know how I could ever repay you :-[ :)..”   
  
Thank you!? tss! Humanda ka sakin ngayon! 8) 8) “anong thank you?! ???” hinila ko yung kamay ko. “magbabayad ka dahil utang mo sakin ang buhay mo 8).”   
  
“huh? ??? Bayad? ???” she gave me a puzzled look. “magkano? ???” anong magkano!? ??? >:( pinagloloko ba ko nito?   
  
Huminga ako ng malalim. Relax. “hindi magkano Iris 8). Dahil ang hinihingi kong kabayaran ay ikaw >:( 8). Habang buhay mong tatanawing utang na loob ang pagligtas ko sa buhay mo. Kaya ihanda mo na ang sarili mo...   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
dahil magsisimula yun paglabas mo sa ospital na to.8) >:(..” at ayun siya, nakahiga pa rin, at natulala sa narinig nya. 8) 8)   
  
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I woke up later that day. Actually, I don’t even know if it’s still daytime or nighttime.. wait? What day is today anyway? ??? Nasan ba ko bakit puro white lang nakikita ko? why am I wearing this ugly thing and why can’t I move? Aray. Masakit ang head ko, feels like someone landed a big blow in my head :-[ :-[. What happened? Bakit merong bandage yung head ko? Why am I in this place? This is evidently not my room, or any of the familiar rooms I’ve been in. how did I get here in the first place? I don’t remember walking in through that door and lying down on this bed at all.. As a matter of fact, the only thing I remember is …..   
  
OH MY GOD! I DON’T REMEMBER ANYTHING PRIOR TO THIS MOMENT!!!! :o :o   
  
Basta ang alam ko lang, I was walking and then that’s it. Everything went black. Hindi ko nga maalala kung saan ako naglalakad eh.. could I be dreaming? Baka naman nananaginip lang ako.. pero hindi eh, parang totoo. :-\ ???   
  
Teka? Sino ba to na nasa side ko? Si Jeremy ba to? Anong ginagawa nya dito? Tsaka bakit siya dyan natutulog? Teka, natutulog ba siya? Why are my thoughts so jumpy? ???   
  
Hinimas ko yung head nya hanggang sa magising sya, and he did naman. “Jeremy? ??? What happened? ??? Where am I? ??? :-[” how come when I’m trying to think, I get a headache? “ahh! I have a terrible headache :-[.” I squinted my eyes hoping this headache would subside, and also because I thought I saw two Jeremys at the same time.. pero hindi naman. duh. Iisa lang naman si Jeremy eh, wala naman siyang twin… lalo pa ngang sumakit eh ang ulo ko eh. Sa totoo lang, napansin ko, the more I think, the more I get confused. Bakit ba kasi ako nagiisip? Kailangan ba yun? :-\ ???   
  
It wasn’t for long that he gave me a response. “nasa ospital ka.”   
  
Hospital!? No wonder this room doesn’t look familiar to me at all! Pero bakit ako nandito? “ha? bakit? :o ???”   
  
“naaksidente ka.” I got in an accident!? What kind of an accident? Was it a major one? Is that why I feel like I’m in the lala land?   
  
“huh? :o ??? how? ??? When? ???” sunod sunod kong tinanong. Nagugulohan kasi ako. I don’t understand why I’m here at all.   
  
“sa entrance, kung hindi nga ko dumating, baka mas grabe pa ang kalagayan mo ngayon 8).” entrance? San yun? Entrance ng ano? ???   
  
I couldn’t really gather all the things he said so far in my head, but after a couple or maybe more of minutes, what he said kinda sunk in to me. “you saved me? ??? :-[” I was doubtful, but he looks serious.   
  
“oo. I saved you. nakita mo to? ??? 8)” he lifted his right hand and showed me that it’s wrapped in a bandage.. “nagasgas yan sa pagsalo ko dyan sa ulo mo.” huh? And so I touched my head. Oh, that’s probably why I have a bandage around it.. :-\   
  
“really? ???” I held his hand to get a closer look at it. When I realized he might be telling me the truth that he did save my life, I held his hand tightly. It’s out of the ordinary to save someone’s life especially that of someone you consider as an enemy… “thank you :-[.. thank you for saving my life.. kung wala ka dun baka kung ano ng nangyare sakin.. I don’t know how I could ever repay you :-[ :)..” nahihiya ako kasi I never thought he had a kind heart deep down that strong and serious face.   
  
“anong thank you?! ???” he pulled his hand back. Bakit? Too tight ba yung grip ko? “magbabayad ka dahil utang mo sakin ang buhay mo 8).” I know, didn’t I just say I don’t know how I could ever you? Eh meaning nun, I’m willing to pay! This dummy! ::) ???   
  
Pero how come something’s telling me this could mean something else? “huh? ??? Bayad? ???” Sandali, may pera ba ko dito para bayaran siya? Wala naman ata, I don’t see my purse around here. Oh my gosh!! Where is my purse?! Wait, was I carrying a purse? But instead of looking like a total weirdo here, which I already think I am because of my juggling thoughts here and there, I decided to just get on with it. Nagugulohan ako, I don’t even know what I’m thinking right now. “magkano? ???” his facial expression changed that instant when I said that. Bakit kaya? Eh willing naman ako talaga magbayad.. :-\   
  
He took a deep breath before speaking. “hindi magkano Iris 8). Dahil ang hinihingi kong kabayaran ay ikaw >:( 8). Habang buhay mong tatanawing utang na loob ang pagligtas ko sa buhay mo. Kaya ihanda mo na ang sarili mo dahil magsisimula yun paglabas mo sa ospital na to.8) >:(..” ano daw!? Muka ba kong pera para ibayad ko ang sarili ko sa kanya? oh wait, that didn’t sound so right. I was clueless like what he probably is thinking right now,. What is wrong with me? How come I feel like there’s something missing or it seems like I’m forgetting a huge chunk of something. Tsaka, bakit siya ganyan? I know I owe him my life but why does he have to put it that way? ???   
  
ang sama nya makatingin. I don’t even know why.. is he usually like this? hindi na ko nagsalita, eh kase baka magalit siya eh and I have a feeling I’m not gonna like it.   
  
After a few moments, somebody opened the door. Kaya tumayo siya to greet him. “Dr. Robles.”   
  
They shook hands. Bakit may doctor dito? Ay duh!? I’m at the hospital remember? Ano ba Iris! Nakakainis ka na ha! Para kang ulyanin! Ano nga ba yung ulyanin? ??? ???   
  
Anyway, while I was stressing of thinking what ulyanin is again, lumapit sakin si Dr… what’s his name again? “how are you feeling, Iris?” sinabi nya while scanning through this paper that he had on his hand. “any pains? Vision problems?” he asked. Then he pulled out his little flashlight and flashed it in front of my eyes.   
  
“yes, my vision is kinda blurry and I’m kinda seeing double..” I responded. “and I have a terrible headache. Para akong sinuntok. :-\” I tilted my head to the side to show him exactly where I feel the pain, “doc, may sumuntok ba sakin? ???” I heard a chuckle after I said that. Bakit tumatawa si Jeremy? Funny ba yung sinabi ko? “why are you laughing? ???”   
  
“eh kasi diba sinabi ko naman sayo na nahulog ka? Bakit hindi ka naniniwala? ???”   
  
“that’s right, Iris. Don’t you remember?”   
  
Remember what? that I fell? ??? “no.. I don’t remember falling at all..”   
  
“hm..” he took out an xray film from a brown envelope and showed it to me. “this is your CT scan.” Tapos pinoint nya yung parts. “this is your skull, and this is the part where you got hit by the fall.” He pointed the bottom part of it. “the impact caused an injury to your brain. You see this part?” tinuro nya yung part na ineexplain nya, “this is where your injury is.”   
  
“I have an injury? :o ???” parang hindi pa ko makapaniwala. Pano ko magkakaron ng injury eh hindi ko nga maalala yung mga sinasabi nila sakin na dahilan kung bakit ako nandito at may benda yung ulo ko.   
  
“a mild one. It’s called MTBI or mild traumatic brain injury.”   
  
“what? :o so what’s gonna happen to her?” Sumabat naman itong si Jeremy. Sus, playing concerned eh pag kaming dalawa lang, ang sama sama nya sakin.   
  
Umupo si Dr… hindi ko talaga maalala yung pangalan nya. ah whatever! basta he’s a doctor. “wag kang magalala, Iris. We’ll run more tests para makasigurado kami, dahil so far ito yung result ng mga naunang test namin sa ulo mo. Mild lang naman ito, caused by the intense impact sa head mo. You’re lucky we did not find a fracture in your skull. Dahil kung nagkataon, malaking problema yun..”   
  
“so she has amnesia? ???” hindi ako makapagsalita. I know what amnesia is.. :o   
  
Nagsigh yung doctor. “yes, she has amnesia. But take note, it’s only mild. meaning, her memory loss is only temporary.”   
  
“what does that mean? ???” I started panicking. “I’m not gonna be normal anymore? :'(”   
  
“like a said, Iris.. temporary lang ang lahat ng ito.. natrauma kasi yung brain mo sa lakas ng pagbagsak ninyong dalawa. And as of this moment, talagang wala kang maalala, but in due time, unti unti mo ulit yun maaalala.. hindi lang natin alam how long this is going to take.” Tumingin siya kay Jeremy, tapos sakin. “anyway, you are in good hands here. gagawin namin ang lahat para mapadali ang recovery mo.” That’s it?! ??? Some doctor is just gonna tell me I have amnesia, MTBI or whatever that is and that’s it? ??? Eh pano naman ako? ano ng mangyayare sakin? “Jeremy, she needs to be in full watch all the time, hindi siya pwedeng maiwan na nagiisa dahil hindi natin alam kung anong klaseng epekto ang maidudulot sa kanya ng injury na to. as we all know, our brain is very important and sensitive kaya hindi basta basta ang kalagayan nya.” tapos pinasok nya ulit yung x-ray sa envelope. “I have already informed your lola and everybody else about your condition, Iris. Bukas, pwede ka ng lumabas dito, at twice a week naman ang check-up mo.”   
  
Nag nod lang ako. tapos nun, lumabas na ulit yung doctor. Si Jeremy naman, he started gathering his stuff. Looks like he’s about to leave. “hey, where are you going!? ??? :-\”   
  
“ano sa tingin mo? Eh di uuwi na.” uuwi na siya? Iiwan nya ko dito? Eh pano kung may mangyare sakin? ??? :'(   
  
“iiwan mo ko? bakit? eh pano kung may mangyare sakin? ???”   
  
“anong mangyayare sayo? ???” he stood in front of me, “mahuhulog dyan sa kama? ??? >:(” tinaasan nya ko ng kilay. “hindi naman siguro ganon kasama yung tama dyan sa utak mo para makalimutan mo kung pano tumayo diba? ???”   
  
“but the doctor said I need to be in full watch :-\..”   
  
“eh di tawagan mo yung lola mo.”   
  
“I don’t know her number :-\..” ano bang number nya? “or I forgot :-\..”   
  
Nilabas nya yung cell phone nya from his pocket tapos kumuha naman siya ng pen pati paper from the side drawer. “oh, ayan. Isulat mo yung number ng lola mo dito sa papel. Tapos itabi mo sayo para hindi mo makalimutan 8).”   
  
So sinulat ko naman yung number. “san ko lalagay? ???” I asked him. “dito?” I pointed the desk beside the bed.   
  
“oo. Dyan.” Then he handed me this thing with a button in the center. Ano ba to? “tapos ito, pindutin mo if you need help. Dadating yung nurse.” Then he started walking towards the door. But when he was about to do it, may pumasok naman bigla.   
  
“Iris, apo.. kamusta ka na?” it took me a couple of seconds to realize she was my lola.   
  
Tapos may pumasok pa. “Iris.. it’s tito Ramon.. remember me? :)” tinignan ko lang siya. Hindi ko kasi maalala eh… “Daddy ni Jeremy..” daddy ni Jeremy.. oh! okay, I remember. I smiled at him, kahit medyo blurry pa rin yung memory ko sa kanya. after nun, lumabas siya, sinama nya si Jeremy na nasa door na.   
  
And on my other side, may babae naman. sino kaya to? parang ngayon ko lang siya nakita ah.. o baka nakalimutan ko lang.. “hi hija.. ako si Tita Amy :)..” she kissed my cheek, “Jeremy’s mom.” Tapos hinawakan nya head ko. “how are you feeling? I'm so glad I finally met you.”   
  
“I.. I’m okay :-\.” I forced a smile. Sa totoo lang, feeling ko maraming fireworks sa head ko. sobrang sakit eh!!! teka.. fireworks?? Where did I hear that word from again? ??? :o   
  
“tinawagan ko na ang Mommy mo at binalita ang nangyari.. uuwi daw siya dito, pero ang sabi ko wag na, tutal naman eh maayos na ang kalagayan mo..” sabi ni lola. “sabi ni Dr. Robles pwede ka ng lumabas bukas :)..”   
  
“wag kang mag-alala hija.. paglabas mo dito, aalagaan kita :).” Sabi ni Tita Amy.. I like her already :). She’s so nice.. buti pa sya gusto akong alagaan.. while my Mom wouldn’t even fly over here to take care of me. kahit naman sabihin ni lola na wag na siyang umuwi, dapat umuwi pa rin siya diba?   
  
So anyway, ayun.. they continued asking me questions kung naalala ko daw ba this or that, pero hindi eh. konti lang yung naalala ko, and most of them are from the past pa talaga.. as in yung wayyy wayyy in the past. Or that’s just what I think.. Yeah, I remember doing things, pero yung small details, hindi talaga. Hindi ko maalala kung anong ginawa ko kahapon, the day before that.. even last week.. basta ang naalala ko lang I woke up, I ate, I slept.. yun lang. yung mga general routines.   
  
We heard a knock on the door, kaya binuksan ni lola. “excuse me po, ma’am… tapos na po ang visiting hours..” it was the nurse.   
  
“nurse, pano yung apo ako? hindi ba’t kailangang may nagbabantay sa kanya dito?”   
  
“full watch naman ho kami dito.” She replied.   
  
“how about we spend the night here?” sabi ni tita Amy.   
  
“ay.. ma’am.. isa lang po ang pwede.” Sabi ng nurse.   
  
“oh sige, ako na lang ang maiiwan.”   
  
Tapos bumukas ulit yung door, ano ba? kanina pa open ng open yan ha! pumasok si tito Ramon pati si Jeremy. Akala ko ba aalis na siya? Bakit nandito sya? ??? ::) “si Jeremy na lang ang maiiwan. Kasi maliit lang yung couch, baka mahirapan ho kayo sa pagtulog.” Sabi ni tito Ramon kay lola. Sa bagay, maliit lang nga yung couch.   
  
“ay oo nga..” tinignan nya yung couch. “bawal kasi sakin ang matulog ng hindi nakadiretso, makakasama sa likod ko.” hinawakan nya yung likod nya habang sinasabi nya yun.   
  
  
  
  
“may dala na naman kaming damit para sayo, anak :).” She took a out a pair of pajamas from this bag she brought. Yung face ni Jeremy oh, hindi na mapinta. ??? ::)   
  
“but I thought you wanted to go home? ???” I asked him.   
  
“hindi. I changed my mind >:(.” Medyo cold pa yung pagkasabi nya. hindi pala medyo. COLD talaga.   
  
“oh pano, tapos na daw ang visiting hours.” Tito Ramon said. “let’s go.” He held tita Amy’s hand.   
  
“oh hija.. pagaling ka ha..” she kissed my forehead. “wag kang masyadong mag-isip, makakasama daw yun sayo.”   
  
“and if you need anything, don’t hesitate to tell Jeremy. He’s gonna be watching you the whole night :).” nag nod na lang ako kahit na wala akong idea kung anong sinasabi nila. feeling ko kase ano eh.. ah ewan! ??? ::)   
  
After nun, si lola naman ang lumapit sakin. “oh Princess, wag kang masyadong makulit ha, alam kong maraming kang tanong, pero wag mong kukulitin si Jeremy, okay? :)” napansin ko lang, si lola kampi siya kay Jeremy tapos yung parents naman nya, nasa side ko. weird? Ganito na ba talaga ang set up kahit na noon pa? ??? ???   
  
Hay! Feeling ko napagod talaga ako :-\.. I mean, just listening to all of their conversations and questions here and there made so many juggling thoughts in my head. Well, as much as I want to remember things fast, I couldn’t. dahil sabi nga ng doctor, it may take some time before everything goes back to normal.   
  
Nung nakaalis na silang lahat, wala namang ginawa itong si Jeremy kung hindi ang mag-walk back and forth sa harapan ko. nahihilo na ko ha. ::)   
  
“what are you doing? ???” I finally asked.   
  
He stopped but didn’t face me. “wag mo nga akong punahin, matulog ka na dyan. Nakakainis naman eh >:(.”   
  
Bakit ang sungit nya? ??? “why are you so agitated by me? ano bang ginawa ko sayo tsaka bakit ka naiinis? ??? :-\”   
  
This time, he faced me na. “Iris. Diba ang sinabi ko, matulog ka na? wag ka ng maraming tanong pwede?! >:(”   
  
“I just wanna know why.. hindi ko naman kasi alam kung anong ginawa ko sayo eh.. kaya if you tell me, maybe I can change it para hindi ka na magalit sakin :-\ :-\..” worried kasi ako, feeling ko malaki kasalanan ko sa kanya. I just couldn’t figure out what.   
  
He took a deep breath. Lalo ko tuloy naramdaman ang tension. “hindi mo ba narinig yung bilin ni lola sayo kanina? Diba ang sabi nya, wag mo kong kukulitin? Hindi ka ba marunong umintindi? Oh baka pati yun nakalimutan mo na rin? ??? >:(”   
  
Oo, alam ko na sinabi yun ni lola, but I can’t help it eh.. it’s bothering me. effect ba talaga ito ng sakit ko? ??? why can’t I just have my memory back kasi, para hindi ako nahihirapan sa kakafigure out kung ano ba talaga ang nangyayare. Tsaka bakit parating si Jeremy na lang ang iniiwan dito? Feeling ko napipilitan lang kasi sya eh :-\.. Sino ba siya at ano ko ba sya? ??? Bakit parang feeling ko inoobligate siya ni tito Ramon to stay with me.. for instance, kanina.. lola could’ve just stayed here with me instead of him.. pero bakit siya yung pinagstay ng Daddy nya dito? ???   
  
“hindi.. oh sige.. hindi na ko magtatanong :-\.” I looked down. I couldn’t look straight at him. natatakot kasi ako. “good night :-[…”   
  
Hindi na siya nagsalita kaya pinilit ko na lang na matulog, kahit hindi pa naman ako inaantok.   
  
Nagising ako in the middle of night. kasi yung nurse pumasok, may kinuha yata. Hinanap ko sya kagad, kasi wala sya dun sa tabi ko, katulad nung pagkagising ko kanina. Dun pala siya sa couch natulog. I stared at his face intently. Kasi naman eh.. why couldn’t I remember things that happened recently? Iris!! Think! Kasi kung sakaling maalala ko, baka mafigure out ko na kung bakit siya galit sakin. I remember meeting him but everything else is a big blur to me.. In a few minutes time, hindi ko napansin, sa kakastare ko sa kanya, nakatulog na ko ulit.   
  
Anyway, ginising nya ko the next day kasi kakain na daw ako. sumunod na lang ako dahil baka magalit na naman siya. After kong kumain, pinaready na nya ko para makaalis na kame sa hospital.   
  
“maghintay ka dito, kukunin ko lang yung release form mo sa labas.” I nodded in agreement. They sat me in the wheelchair kahit na okay na naman ako. ang sabi ng doctor, saka na lang daw nila tatanggalin yung bandage sa head ko, kasi yung sugat ko dun medyo fresh pa. nung nakabalik na siya, he pushed the wheelchair out of the room at sumakay na kami sa elevator. “sigurado ka bang wala ng masakit sayo? ???” he asked habang nasa elevator kami.   
  
“wa.. wala na :-\..” nagstutter pa ko. bakit ganun? Ganito na ba ko talaga kahit noon pa? “uhmm.. Jeremy? Can I ask you something? I know you don’t want to be asked.. sana wag kang magalit :-\..” sorry, but I really have to ask what we are to each other..   
  
“oh sige, pero ayoko ng marami.”   
  
“uhmm :-\..” medyo naghesitate pa ko nun, but then I realized, it will just bother me more if I don’t ask now. “si..sino ka ba? :-\ ??? I.. I mean.. an.. ano ba kita? Bakit ikaw yung nagbabantay pati pinapabantay sakin ??? :-\..?” please don’t get mad… pleaseee! :'( :'(   
  
Ang tagal nyang quiet. Kaya lalo tuloy ako natakot. Ang bilis na nga ng heartbeat ko eh, feeling ko it’s about to explode na. gosh! He terrorizes me talaga! :'( “hindi mo naalala? ??? 8)” I wrinkled my forehead because I was trying to remember but I couldn't talaga, kaya I shook my head then he snickered. Bakit kaya? Siguro kasi nakakatawa yung face ko. I was still very very clueless when he bent down to face me. “let me refresh your memory, BABE 8).” babe? :o :o Bakit babe? “boyfriend mo ko at girlfriend kita 8) ;)..” then he winked at me.   
  
He’s my boyfriend?! ??? :o “you’re my boyfriend!? :o”   
  
“yes! BABE 8).” Inemphasize pa nya talaga yung word na babe.   
  
“really? bakit parang hindi naman? :-\ ???” hindi talaga ako makatingin sa kanya ng direcho. I tried, but his eyes are really scaring me.. “I mean, the way you treat me..” may boyfriend ba na laging galit sa girlfriend nya? pati anong klaseng boyfriend yung gustong iwanan yung girlfriend nyang may amnesia.. or ano ba yung term na ginamit nung doctor? M.. MT… MTBI? Basta. Diba? what kind of a boyfriend treats his girl so badly like the way he’s been treating me ever since I opened my eyes yesterday? ??? ??? Siguro ba to sa sinasabi nya? baka niloloko lang ako nito?? ??? :-\   
  
“the way I treat you? ???”   
  
“yea.. bakit kung kausapin mo ko parang hindi mo ko girlfriend? ???”   
  
“sus. Parang yun lang, magdududa ka na? ??? 8)” panong hindi, eh wala nga akong maalala ::). “ganon talaga tayo, parang aso’t pusa kung magturingan. Lagi kasi tayong nagaaway 8) >:(.”   
  
We always fight? Bakit kaya? “lagi tayong magkaaway? Bakit? ???”   
  
Bumukas na yung elevator door kaya he pushed the wheelchair out. “eh kasi dahil sayo 8). Sira ulo ka kasi.. lagi mo kong pinapahamak >:(.”   
  
“I’m crazy? ???” hindi naman siguro.. “why would I put you on the spot?”   
  
“eh ganon ka eh.. mahilig magkalat at gumawa ng kalokohan, tapos ako ang umaayos palagi >:(.”   
  
“really? ???” he nodded. Gosh. I feel so bad. Bad pala ako sa kanya.. now I understand why he’s so masungit and I can’t blame him for being one :-\.. “sige from now on, promise magbebehave na ko :-\..”   
  
“aba dapat lang, dahil kung hindi, hihiwalayan na talaga kita 8).”   
  
“ha!? :o bakit naman?” nagulat ako dun. Bakit nya ko hihiwalayan?   
  
“eh siempre. Lagi mong pinapasakit ang ulo ko eh 8).”   
  
“hindi na nga diba.. nagpromise na nga ako eh :-\..” I raised my right hand. “peksman! :)” wait.. I remember that word.. san ko ba yun narinig? ???   
  
Natawa naman siya dun sa sinabi ko. “talaga lang ha. may papeksman peksman ka pa dyan, alam mo naman ba kung anong ibig sabihin nun? ??? ::)”   
  
Tumahimik ako for a while. I know that word. I know I do.. I heard it somewhere before.. pero hindi ko maalala. “hindi :-\.. pero kahit na.”   
  
“wala, galit ako sayo 8) >:(.” He said. “pinahirapan mo ko.”   
  
“san ka galit? ??? Dahil nasugatan yung hand mo dahil sinave mo ko?” his hand is still wrapped with a bandage. Hindi nga nya mabend ng maayos eh, makapal kasi masyado yung benda. “uy, wag ka ng magalit.. I’m sure I didn’t intend to fall pati hindi ko naman gusto na may sakit ako eh.. sorry na oh :-\.” he didn’t say anything. Nako, pano ba to? ??? Hindi pa rin siya nagsasalita until we reached the front. Yung car nya nakapark sa harap namin, then he assisted me while I was getting in. “are you mad? ??? :-\” I asked when he turned the ignition.   
  
“diba sabi ko sayo utang mo sakin ang buhay mo? 8)” yeah, I remember that. I kept silent to allow him to speak more. “at sabi mo sakin, you don’t know how you could ever repay me diba?” I remember that too. “well, since that’s the case.. may naisip na kong paraan para makapagbayad ka 8) 8).”   
  
I remained silent but I’m confused. Err. I don’t understand myself! “sige, just tell me :-\.”   
  
“easy lang 8).” he started driving. “you’ll be a good girlfriend. Ibig sabihin, hindi mo ko bibigyan ng sakit sa ulo, sama ng loob, mga problema… susunod ka sa lahat ng sinasabi at inuutos ko, hindi ka magcocomplain, dahil hindi ka pwedeng umangal. Hindi ka rin pwedeng maginarte kahit saan, kahit kailan 8) 8)…”   
  
Sunod sunod nyang sinabi yun, without even pausing for air. Kaya naman I decided to cut him off saying, “wait.. slow down..”   
  
“yun nga 8).” Tinuloy naman nya.   
  
“okay..” I think it's logical that he wants me to be a good girlfriend and do all those things he just said.. but... I don’t know if this is right, but okay if he says so :-\..   
  
“...and most of all, hindi pwedeng magalit si Daddy sakin, dahil kapag nagalit siya sakin, ikaw ang may kasalanan 8) >:(.” Ako? bakit ako? “at kapag nagkataon, magagalit ako sayo.. hindi mo naman siguro gustong mangyare yun diba? ??? 8)”   
  
“bakit magagalit sayo ang Daddy mo? ???” hindi ko maintindihan kung anong connection naming dalawa sa daddy nya. tsaka, bakit kapag nagalit yung dad nya, ako ang may kasalanan? ??? ???   
  
“basta. Tama na ang tanong. kanina ka pa tanong ng tanong eh. 8) >:(” He slowed down while entering a gate. “so ano? maliwanag ba yun? 8)”   
  
I don’t know about this.. pero sige na nga. Since I owe my life to him, dapat lang na sundin ko yung conditions nya diba? we stared at each other for a moment bago ko sinabi na, “oo.. sige, I’ll do it..”   
  
“okay, that a girl 8).” tapos nagsmile siya, while he pulled the handbrake. “oh nandito na tayo sa inyo.. bukas, sasamahan kita sa hopistal ulit para sa check up mo, pero bago yun pupunta muna tayo sa office.”   
  
“okay..”   
  
Lumabas siya and went around to open the door to my side. “I’ll pick you up at exactly 7 in the morning, gusto ko pagdating ko dito nakaready ka na 8).” he walked on my side tapos nakahawak siya sa dalawang arms ko to give me support. 7 am? Ang aga naman masyado? ??? :'(   
  
“but that’s too early ???..”   
  
Nagstop siya kaya ako rin napastop. “bakit? may angal ka? Ha BABE? ???” tumingin siya sakin.   
  
Oh darn. :-X   
  
“ha.. wa.. wala :-\..”   
  
“wala ano?” he gave a sharper look. “what do you say, BABE? 8)”   
  
“ha.. ano.. sige.. I’ll be ready by 7 am :-\ :)..”   
  
“yun lang? wala ka bang nakakalimutan? ??? 8)”   
  
I gulped, then I repeated what I said again. “uhmm :-\ :-\… sige.. I’ll be ready by 7 am…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
BABE :) :-\..” then I tiptoed to give him a kiss on the cheek.. :-\ :-X :-\   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“uhmm :-\ :-\… sige.. I’ll be ready by 7 am… BABE :) :-\..”   
  
  
She gave me a kiss on my cheek kaya nainis na naman ako. Langya naman oh! >:( >:( ilang beses ko bang sasabihin na ayoko na hinahalikan nya ko kung saan saan lalo na’t hindi ko pa alam!? ??? >:( Naku!! Nakakapanggigil talaga itong babaeng to! “Iris, don’t kiss me >:(.” hinawakan ko yung balikat nya. “walang occasion, kaya you don’t just kiss me out of nowhere.” Nakatingin lang siya sakin na para bang nasa outer space na naman siya. Seriously, side effect ba ng amnesia ang pagiging abnormal? ??? Eh kasi, tignan mo siya, nakatulala lang. Ni hindi ko nga alam kung naiintindihan nya yung sinasabi ko eh.   
  
“bakit… bawal? ??? :-\” bigla nyang sinabi. Ahh. Siguro may 5-second interval ang brain function nito. Ang tagal bago nya masagap ng husto yung mga sinasabi ko eh!! “sa cheeks lang naman eh.. it’s not like we’re making out.. hindi naman masama yun diba? I mean.. that’s what boyfriends and girlfriends do to each other.. right?”   
  
“eh iba nga tayo eh. we only do that pag maraming tao. Lalo na sa harap ng Daddy ko, ng Lola mo at yung David na yun. Okay? ??? >:(” oo tama. Ganun yun. “pero kapag wala ng tao sa paligid, kanya kanya na tayo. Bawal mo kong i-kiss, i-hug, pati lambingin 8) >:(.”   
  
“that’s… odd ??? :-\..”   
  
“anong odd ka dyan, ikaw nga may gusto nun eh! 8)” Ni-wrinkle lang nya yung noo nya. I’m sure hindi nya naintindihan yung sinabi ko. ah! bahala na nga. Naiinis ako dahil I’m stuck taking care of her. At hindi lang basta basta alaga, babysitting ang lagay nito!! >:( >:( Kasalanan nya to lahat eh, kung hindi nya kame pinagpanggap na may relasyon, eh di sana malaya ako ngayon na gawin lahat ng gusto ko. lintek na pagpapanggap yan, now I have to be the ‘responsible’ boyfriend. Sus! Hiwalayan ko to eh! 8) 8)   
  
Pero hindi pwede, ni hindi nga ako pinaniwalaan ng Daddy ko na nagpapanggap lang kame eh. nagalit pa siya kamo. Dahil porket may sakit lang daw si Iris, iiwanan ko na. anong klaseng tao daw ako. Bwiset! At eto pa ang masama. Ang sabi ni Dr. Robles, hindi daw siya pwedeng madisappoint, dahil makakaapekto daw yun sa utak nya, at hindi daw pwedeng bawiin yung mga sinabi na sa kanya, at mga pinaniniwalaan nya simula ng magising siya. So ibig sabihin nun, hindi ko na pwedeng sabihin sa kanya na nagpapanggap lang kami. Paniwala nya talaga, totoo itong relasyon namin. 8) >:(   
  
Sa bagay, okay na rin tong may sakit siya. Ako ngayon ang batas. At siya, sunud sunuran lang. kaya ko syang paikutin at kaya ko siyang pahirapan ng hindi siya nagrereklamo. Gusto mo ng boyfriend ha, sige. Ibibigay ko sayo ang hiling mo. 8) 8)   
  
Tama, pahihirapan ko na lang siya para sya na mismo ang makikipaghiwalay sakin. Oh diba? tutal, hindi ko na pwedeng bawiin ang mga sinabi ko, sa ganitong paraan na lang ako babawi sa kanya, kaya humanda siya sa gagawin ko. Pagsisihan nya talaga na nakilala nya ko at ginamit nya ko for her own sake, at para mapaalis lang yang David na yan. Kaya eto ngayon ang mapapala nya sa pagpasok nya sa sitwasyong ito. Kaya tignan lang natin ngayon kung hindi siya mismo ang susuko sa ‘relasyon’ na to. >:( >:(   
  
Pumasok na kami sa loob. Nandun si Ella. Wala si lola.   
  
“couz!! Oh my God, sobrang nagworry kami sayo! :D” niyakap nya si Iris. Pero si Iris, nakatayo lang dun na parang poste. Hindi nya siguro mamukaan si Ella. “si Ella, pinsan mo!” tinuro nya yung sarili nya. at after ilang seconds, ngumiti naman itong si Iris.   
  
“couz? ??? :)” um-oo naman si Ella. “pasensya ka na ha, yung… yung.. amnesia ko eh :-\..”   
  
Hinug siya ulit ni Ella. “okay lang yun, couz.. as long as you didn’t forget me, dahil kung nagkataon, itataktak ko yang ulo mo dito sa sahig!! ;D ;D” tumawa siya ng malakas.   
  
At dahil sa tumatawa si Ella, ito naman si Iris, nakitawa din. I bet you she didn’t understand a single word from Ella. “wait…what? ???” mahina nyang sinabi. See. told you. 8) ::)   
  
“nothing! It was a joke! :D” tumawa siya ulit, pero si Iris, nakatanga lang dun. Hindi pa rin nya na-gets yun, panigurado. “Jeremy, thank you sa paghatid mo sa kanya dito ha. Pasensya na, wala si lola eh, maaga umalis :).” Nagsmile sya sakin. “kumain ka na ba?” Sasabihin ko sana oo kahit na hindi pa, kaso hinila na nya ko kagad papuntang dining room. Naiwan pa nga si Iris sa may door eh. “tara, kain tayo nagluto si David ng breakfast bago sya umalis. sayang hindi nya naabutan si Iris ::)..” Sus, buti naman at wala yun dito. Kumuha siya ng isa pang plato kasi dalawa lang yung nakaset. “ay teka, si Iris naiwan :o.” Binalikan nya si Iris kung san siya naiwan at pinaupo sa tabi ko. “sorry couz ha, naiwan kita..”   
  
Nagsmile lang siya kay Ella. “is that… omelette? ???” tinanong nya, pero sakin siya nakatingin.   
  
“oo. Gusto mo?” truth be told, I kinda like Iris like this, yung mahinhin, hindi pasigaw kung magsalita.. tahimik lang.. more like how a real lady should be.. Hindi tulad noon. >:(   
  
“yes, please :).” Ang sabi nya. tignan nyo, at ang galang pa ha! :o ::)   
  
Kaya naman ginanahan akong i-serve siya ng pagkain. Ayan, kung ganito siya palagi, eh di magkakasundo kaming dalawa. “more? ??? :)” I asked when I almost filled her plate with rice.   
  
“no, thanks, that’s enough..” hinatian ko siya ng omelette at nilagay ito sa plate nya.   
  
All the while, nakatingin lang samin si Ella na parang nagtataka siya. Hindi ba nya alam? ??? Oh baka alam nya? ??? ewan ko, tatanungin ko na lang siya siguro mamaya. “ikaw, Ella?” I offered her the omelette.   
  
“ah hindi na, diet ako eh :D.” ang sabi nya. “cereal lang ako.” at nagbuhos siya ng cereal dun sa bowl nya.   
  
“si.. David nga pala san nagpunta? ???” I decided to ask.   
  
“ayun, kasama ni lola.. naghanap ng apartment o condo na matitirahan nya habang nandito siya.” Mabuti naman at wala yun. ang yabang kasi nun eh.   
  
“how long is he staying here? ???”   
  
“sandali lang daw eh, yun ang sabi ni lola. Kasi kailangan din nyang bumalik sa LA, nakabakasyon lang kasi siya dun sa work nya..” she took a spoonful of cereal to her mouth. “sabay siguro sila ni Iris babalik sa LA. :)”   
  
Aha. So babalik pala siya sa LA. Kailan kaya? ??? “babalik siya sa LA? ??? ???”   
  
“oo, diba 3 months lang siya dito. May isang sem pa kasi siyang natitira bago grumaduate.”   
  
“…in her condition? ??? :-\” pano kaya yun, may amnesia nga sya. Hindi naman ata safe yun.. diba? ??? ???   
  
“ah yan ang hindi ko alam.” She said. Napatingin kaming dalawa kay Iris na parang wala siyang naririnig sa pinaguusapan namin. Tuloy tuloy lang ang kain nya. “has she been like that? ???” tanong ni Ella. Bakas sa mukha nya yung concern. Sa totoo lang, pati ko nag-aalala na rin. Parang ibang tao kasi itong katabi namin ngayon. Hindi ko alam kung ito ba talaga yung effect ng amnesia or MTBI na yun or what.. “tahimik kasi siya eh, hindi naman kaya siya ganyan ???.”   
  
“may check-up siya bukas.. tatanungin ko na lang yung doctor. Pero usually daw ganun talaga, dahil medyo confused pa nga..” tumungo lang si Ella. Obvious naman siguro na confused nga itong si Iris. Di mo malaman kung anong tumatakbo sa isip nito eh.   
  
Hinawakan nya bigla yung braso ko kaya napatingin ako sa kanya. “can you pass me the juice please? :)” bigla nyang sinabi.   
  
Dahil sa hindi siguro makapaniwala si Ella sa nakikita nyang pagbabago kay Iris… “couz? Okay ka lang? ??? ???” sabi niya.   
  
She gave her an innocent look, yung bang parang bata na walang kamuwang-muwang sa mundo…   
  
Anyway, inabot ako ng hanggang hapon sa bahay nila. pano, ang daldal kasi ni Ella. Ni hindi ko nga alam na nagsasalita pala siya eh ???. nung highschool kami nyan, halos hindi ko narinig yung boses nya. tahimik lang kasi siya, pati lagi pang nakasimangot noon. Tignan mo nga naman ngayon at pinsan na ang tawag sakin. ::)   
  
Hinatid namin si Iris sa kwarto nya, kasi daw inaantok siya. Nung una pa nga eh, ang sabi nya hindi daw nya yun kwarto dahil ang kwarto daw nya, may canopy. Wala naman kaming ginawa ni Ella kung hindi ang magtinginan na lang ::) ::).. malamang ang naaalala nya eh yung room nya sa LA. At nung tinanong ko si Ella, ganon nga raw yun. grabe. so bale konti lang pala ang naaalala nitong si Iris dito sa Pinas.. buti ako namukaan at nakilala nya.. ??? :)   
  
“babe, aalis ka na? dito ka muna.. dito ka na lang magdinner :-\ :)..” sabi nya nung nakahiga na siya sa kama at nung nakita nya na palabas na ko ng pinto. Hay, pakiramdam ko nagchange na ko ng profession eh. Isa na kong dakilang babysitter ngayon >:(. Hindi ba nya naiintindihan yung pinagusapan namin kanina? Hindi ba malinaw sa kanya yung mga sinabi ko sa kanya na hindi sya pwedeng maginarte kahit kailan, kahit saan!? Eh bakit ginagawa nya ngayon!? ??? >:(   
  
Anong oras na no. hindi pa ko nakakauwi samin. antok na antok na kaya ako! Ano ba naman to, buong araw na kaming magkasama, ayaw pa rin magpaiwan. “uhh.. ano kasi.. tumawag si Mommy.. pinapauwi na ko 8).” sinabi ko na lang, kahit naman na hindi. Sus, knowing my Mom? Baka nga gusto pa nun dito na ko matulog para maalagaan ko itong si Iris eh. ewan ko ba kung bakit special ang tingin nila sa babaeng ito.   
  
“ohh..I see :-\..” she looked down. Oh come on now, like that’s gonna work on me! “si…sige na. pakisabi na lang kay tita thank you for visiting me yesterday :) :-\..” then she flashed a smile. “tsaka.. pakisabi babawi na lang ako sa kanya.. I’ll visit her pagka medyo okay na ko :).”   
  
“hindi na kailangan. I’m sure hindi ka naman na hahanapin nun, she’s very busy, you know? 8) 8)” hindi totoo yun. actually, my mom owns a flower shop kaya laging nasa bahay lang siya. she works from home kasi, at dinadala na lang paminsan ng staff nya yung mga papeles na kailangang tignan o pirmahan. Minsan naman, pumupunta siya sa opisina para lang magcheck.. yun lang. meron siyang isang shop malapit lang dito, kaya lang hindi naman kailangan na nandun siya araw araw dahil may mga tao naman siya dun. At yung flower farm naman nya, may kalayuan yun sa probinsya kasi kaya naman once or twice a week lang siya kung magpunta dun.   
  
“ah ganun ba.. well.. bigay mo na lang sakin yung number nya, so I can call her.. you know.. to say thank you and stuff :)..” ang kulit naman nito eh! bakit kaya hindi na lang sya matulog no? tutal naman inaantok naman siya diba? eto na naman tayo sa pangungulit eh! >:( >:(   
  
“hindi mo na kailangang mag-thank you. okay na yun. she’s not expecting it anyways 8) >:(.”   
  
“but.. but I want to say thank you :-\…” she said softly.   
  
“alam mo Iris, matulog ka na. ang kulit mo eh noh? ??? ???” she stared at me. oh that stare I hate the most. Nakakainis! Wag ka na kasi magpaawa eh!!! >:( >:(   
  
“sss..sorry.. sige, matutulog na ko. thanks for taking me here :-\.” inayos nya yung higa nya sa kama pati hinila nya yung kumot nya. Ayan mabuti, you better recognize na ako ang batas dito. Nung malapit na kong lumabas ng kwarto nya, tumingin ako ulit sa kanya to make sure na natutulog na sya. Pero hindi pa rin. Nakatingin siya dun sa singsing sa kamay nya.. yung para kay Tricia sana.. :-\ :-\ tinitignan nya ito ng maigi. Parang nagtataka siya kung ano yun.   
  
“bakit mo tinitignan yan? ???” sinara ko ulit yung pinto at lumapit sa kanya.   
  
Medyo nagulat siya kasi akala nya siguro nakaalis na ko. “ha? uh.. this? ???” tinaas nya yung kamay nya at nag-nod naman ako. “wala lang.. it’s very pretty..” naalala kaya nya yung pinagusapan namin tungkol dyan? ??? “my Mom gave this to me, you know? :)” she smiled. “she didn’t buy this ring, though. she only found it.. but it was the greatest present I’ve ever gotten from her.. it means she really cares for me..” Hindi ko maintindihan yung sinasabi nya. teka, so tama ako na yung mommy nya nga yung katabi ko nung panahon na yun :-\… “she told me the person who owned this ring was very very sad.. and he left this ring on purpose :-\..” tuloy tuloy nyang sinabi. Hindi ako nagsasalita, feeling ko kasi may sense yung sinasabi nya, at gusto kong pakinggan yun. “sabi pa nga nya sakin.. she heard him say..” she wrinkled her forehead. Siguro she’s trying to remember kung ano yun. tahimik lang ako hanggang sa nagsalita sya ulit. “whoever finds this.. may your life be far less complicated than mine :)…” ako ang nagsabi nun ah! :o “she tried to run after him, but he didn’t look back.. I guess he really wants to let go of this ring..” tama, may narinig ako na tumawag sakin pagalis ko dun sa bench.. pero hindi ako lumingon. “my Mom gave this to me because she wants my life to be less complicated.. para sakin daw mapunta yung sinabi nung guy.. it was a form of goodluck or charm. Na hanggang ngayon hindi pa rin nangyayari :-[ :-[..” malungkot yung muka nya.. bakit? hindi ba sya masaya? Eh mahal nga siya ng lahat ng tao eh. ??? :-\   
  
“ahh.. ganun ba :-\…” yun lang sinabi ko.   
  
“oo. But you know what? I’ve always wondered what this crack is for ???..” tinuro nya yung crack sa ring. Kasi nga diba nahulog yun sa may bato nung hinahabol ko si Tricia.. kaya nagkaganyan :-[. “I don’t know if it’s a design or what.. that’s why I would really want to find the person who owned this.. so I can ask him.. and maybe give this back.. because I think it was meant for someone else..” hindi ko alam kung anong sasabihin ko.. gusto nyang ibalik.. sasabihin ko ba na sakin yan? ??? :-\ “you know I heard something about this ring not so long ago, but I just couldn’t remember what..” hindi nga nya naalala.   
  
“don’t stress yourself trying to remember things.” I told her. Hindi ko sinabi sa kanya na akin ang singsing na yun. Eh kasi naman muka talaga siyang bothered dahil nga sa gustong nyang maalala ang isang bagay. Impusible naman yun ngayon. “oh sige, aalis na ko. magpahinga ka na at wag kang masyadong mag-isip. Maalala mo rin yun.” she smiled at me tapos tumayo na ko para umalis. “wag mo nga palang kakalimutan bukas.. 7 am okay? ayoko ng late. Gusto ko bukas pagdating ko dito ready ka na.”   
  
“yes babe :).” Halos ayoko ng marinig yung babe na yan.. bakit kasi tinawag pa nya kong babe eh. ayan tuloy.   
  
Lumabas na ko ng kwarto nya at bumaba na.   
  
“hoy!” nagulat ako kasi may biglang tumawag sakin. Paglingon ko.. “what do you think you’re doing? ??? ::)” si Ella pala.   
  
“ha? ano.. uuwi na. tulog na siya eh.”   
  
“Jeremy, I know what’s going on. Alam kong hindi totoo na kayo ng pinsan ko.” she said straight up. Alam pala nya.. akala ko ba ang usapan namin ni Iris eh walang makakaalam nito? Girls. >:( >:( Sa bagay, sinabi ko rin naman kay Anthony eh.. kaya patas lang 8). “and last thing I was aware of, you two absolutely hate each other.” She hates me? so she’s talking crap about me behind my back? Ang sama talaga ng ugali ng babaeng yun. >:( >:(   
  
“I know, pero yun ang alam nya pati alam ng lahat. Hindi ko pwedeng bawiin yun, marami ng nakakaalam >:(.” Last time I checked, buong opisina alam na may relasyon kami ni Iris. At hindi malabong bukas o sa makalawa eh buong mundo na ang may alam.   
  
“ah.. ganun ba ::)..” nagseryoso na yung muka nya. “pasensya ka na dito sa pinsan ko ha. pati ikaw tuloy nadamay pa sa kalokohan nya.”   
  
“oo nga eh. pero ayos lang. wala na akong magagawa eh.” hindi ayos to! talagang gagantihan ko siya! >:(   
  
“but thanks for taking responsibility.. kahit hindi to totohanan, I hope you treat her right.. lalo na ngayon na may sakit sya :)..” seryoso nyang sinabi. Hindi naman ako hudas para magtake advantage no.   
  
“okay lang.” nagsmile siya kaya nagsmile din ako.   
  
Tapos tinap nya ko sa shoulder ko. “welcome to the family, ins! :D :D” ins? As in pinsan? No way! ayoko ngang maging part ng family ni Iris! ::) >:(   
  
Pagkatapos nun, umalis na ko. I had to end the conversation, otherwise, I bet you I would’ve stayed longer. Grabe, hindi ko inaakala na madaldal din pala itong si Ella. Akala ko dati kasi since tahimik nga siya, si Iris lang ang exception sa pamilyang to. alam nyo naman yun, parang manok kung dumakdak. ;D ::)   
  
Malapit ng mag gabi nung nakauwi ako sa bahay. Pagpasok ko pa lang sa pinto, naamoy ko na yung niluluto ni Mommy kaya dumiretso na ko sa kusina. “oh hijo, nandito ka na pala :)..” she kissed me. “how’s Iris?”   
  
hanggang dito ba naman maririnig ko pa rin yung pangalan na yan!? ??? ???“she’s fine. Nasa bahay na siya, nagpapahinga.”   
  
“oh that’s good.” Sinabi nya habang naghuhugas siya ng kamay.   
  
Napansin ko maraming nakaluto. May occasion ba? “Ma anong meron? ???” marami kasing nakahanda, may kare-kare, sinigang, menudo at kung ano ano pa.   
  
“oh these..” nagpunas naman siya ngayon ng mga kamay nya. “akala ko kasi dadalin mo si Iris dito, kaya nagluto ako :).” hinandaan nya si Iris? Naku, pwede ba? she’s not worth it. >:(   
  
“nagpagod ka pa Ma, eh hindi naman kumakain ng pagkaing pinoy yun 8).” sinabi ko lang yun kahit na alam kong patay na patay si Iris si sinigang at kaya nyang mabuhay na yun lang ang pagkain nya. ::)   
  
“naku, ikaw na bata ka.. bakit ang negative mo masyado sa girlfriend mo ha? ??? ::)”   
  
“hindi naman sa ganon Ma, talagang hindi siya mahilig dyan eh.”   
  
“well.. in that case, tuturuan ko siyang kumain ng Filipino food. Dalin mo siya dito bukas ha, para makapagkwentuhan kami :)..” si Mommy naman, feeling close na kagad kay Iris eh. kung alam lang nya yung totoong ugali nun, I’m sure siya na mismo ang magsasabi sakin na hiwalayan ko siya.   
  
Anyway, nagstay lang ako sandali sa kusina para makipagkwentuhan kay Mommy. Umakyat na din ako sa kwarto ko after dinner para makatulog na ko. hindi kasi ako nakatulog ng maayos kagabi dahil ang masyadong maliit yung couch sa ospital..   
  
Next day.   
  
Nagising ako kinabukasan ng 6 am. I took a quick shower at nagbihis kagad kasi ang usapan namin ni Iris, susunduin ko siya a las siete. 9 kasi ang appointment nya sa doctor. Bakit maaga? Eh kasi balak kong dumaan sa opisina muna para maumpisahan ko na yung pagbabalance ng financials namin para sa opening, ayos na ang lahat. Dapat kasi kaming dalawa ang gagawa nun, kaso, ayan, tinamaan ng malas. Kaya sakin tuloy bumagsak lahat ng trabaho. Naman kasi itong si Iris eh, wrong timing kung maaksidente!! >:( >:(   
  
Umalis ako sa bahay ng 6:30 para eksaktong 7 nasa bahay na nila ako. at ayun nga, 3 minutes before 7, pinark ko yung kotse ko sa harap.   
  
Pinapasok naman ako kagad nung maid nila at nilead ako sa may garden kung nasan si lola. “good morning po.” Binati ko siya sabay kiss sa pisngi.   
  
“oh hijo, good morning.. ang aga mo ata? May lakad ba kayo ni Princess? ???” tinanong nya.   
  
“sasamahan ko po siya sa doctor.. ready na po ba sya? ???”   
  
“ha? Eh tulog pa siya eh…hindi ko ginising kasi masarap ang tulog.. akala ko kasi dito lang siya sa bahay ngayon..” tulog pa?! ??? ??? lintek naman oh, ang usapan alas siete eh! >:( “mabuti pa siguro ikaw na ang gumising sa kanya.. nagmamadali na kasi ako hijo eh.. wala na si Ella at David kaya ikaw na lang ang gumising kay Princess :).” It’s obvious that she really is in a hurry, kaya pumayag na ko na ako na lang ang gigising kay Iris. Talagang makakatikim sakin yang babaeng yan!!! >:( >:(   
  
Pagkaalis ni lola, umakyat na ko kagad sa kwarto nya. Kumatok ako ng ilang beses bago ko binuksan yung pinto at ayun nga.. natutulog pa ang mahal na Prinsesa! “IRIS WAKE UP! >:(” I shook her hanggang sa magising sya. “ANO KA BA? ANONG ORAS NA HA!? DIBA SABI KO SAYO ALAS SIETE!? ??? >:(”   
  
Medyo natagalan pa siya bago nakasagot, naalimpungatan siguro ito. “huh? ??? alas siete? ??? 7? Oh my God :o..” she stood up that instant and started panicking. “I…I’m sorry…I’ll just take a quick shower..” sinabi nya habang kumukuha sya ng damit sa closet nya.   
  
Nakakainis! >:( Ilang beses ko siyang niremind kahapon tapos ganito!? eto pa na naman ang number one na kinaiinisan ko, yung mga late! “BILISAN MO, I’M ONLY GIVING YOU THIRTY MINUTES TO GET READY, DAHIL KUNG HINDI IIWAN KITA! MAG-ISA KANG PUMUNTA SA DOCTOR! >:( >:(” bwiset! Sinigawan ko siya. I don’t care. Talagang pinupuno nya ko eh! >:(   
  
Hindi na siya sumagot dahil dumeretso na siya sa banyo para maligo. Aba, hindi porket may sakit siya, pagbibigyan ko na siya!   
  
After 20 minutes, lumabas siya ng banyo. She was only covered with a towel. Ano ba naman to, bakit hindi siya nagbihis sa loob ng banyo? :o ??? Ano sya may balak na magbihis sa harapan ko!? ??? :o “what do you think you’re doing?” tinanong ko siya habang nagsusuklay siya ng buhok.   
  
“nagsusuklay..” ang sabi naman nya. Yeah, I can see that. Hindi ako tanga no. >:(   
  
“alam ko. Pero bakit nakaganyan ka lang? magbihis ka nga dun sa banyo!! >:(”   
  
“ohh :-\.. sorry kasi I remember brushing my hair first before getting dressed eh :-\..” sus! Ngayong lang ako nakarinig na nagsusuklay muna bago magbihis. Ang weirdo talaga nitong babaeng ito!   
  
“PUMUNTA KA SA BANYO AT MAGBIHIS KA NGAYON NA! >:(” tinuro ko yung banyo. “MAMAYA KA NA MAGSUKLAY, ANG ARTE MO NAMAN EH! ??? >:(”   
  
“okay.. okay :-\..” nagmamadali siyang pumasok sa banyo.   
  
Lagpas na yung time limit ko sakanya nung nakaalis kami sa bahay nila. Almost 8 na nun. ang problema pa nito, traffic na ngayon at medyo malayo pa naman yung ospital sa bahay nila. Bwiset naman oh. Now I don’t have time to pass by the office and do work. Dahil sa kanya, nadelay na naman ako. >:(   
  
At talagang hindi ko siya titigilan. Sinira nya yung umaga ko. “bakit ba hindi ka gumising ng maaga ha? ??? >:(”   
  
“sorry babe… hindi ako nagising sa alarm clock eh :-\..” nakayuko na siya nun.   
  
“wag mo nga kong matawag tawag na babe! >:(”   
  
“sorry na talaga.. wag ka ng magalit :-[ :-[..”   
  
“sorry ka ng sorry! Sa susunod na malate ka pa, iiwanan talaga kita! Tandaan mo yan! >:(”   
  
“yes.. babe :-\ :-[..” mahina nyang sinabi. Kahit na sobrang asar na asar ako sa kanya, hindi ko parin talagang makuha na magalit talaga. Nakakaawa kasi yung muka nya eh :-\.. hindi na siya makalaban ngayon. Unlike before, walang preno ang bibig. Ayos din naman pala itong pagkakaron nya ng amnesia eh. instead na mahirapan pa ko na ipaintindi sa kanya yung mga bagay bagay, ngayon madali na lang kasi oo na lang siya ng oo. Nung malapit na kami sa ospital, bigla nyang sinabi na.. “Jollibee! :D Babe, kain tayo.. gusto ko ng palabok :D..” hinila nya yung braso ko na parang bata. ano ba naman to! ::)   
  
“ano ka ba! bitawan mo nga ako. baka maaksidente pa tayo dyan sa ginagawa mo eh! >:(” hinila ko ulit yung braso ko. “hindi pwede, malelate ka na sa appointment mo! kasalanan mo to eh, kung nagising ka ng maaga eh di sana marami pa kong nagawa sa opisina at makakakain ka dyan sa Jollibee >:( 8).”   
  
“sige na.. kahit sandali lang.. I’m hungry na kasi.. I didn’t eat breakfast :-\..” pakiusap naman nya sakin. Sabing hindi na pwede eh! ang kulit naman! pati nalagpasan ko na yung Jollibee at mahirap ng bumalik.   
  
“kumain ka na lang pagkatapos ng check-up mo. Kahit sampu pa, ibibili kita.”   
  
“promise? ??? :D” parang talagang bata to. pa promise promise pang nalalaman eh.   
  
“oo na.”   
  
“yehey. Thank you!! :D” nagclap pa siya ng kamay nya, muka pa siyang excited na excited. Parang palabok lang eh. “thank you!! thank you!! you’re so nice talaga! :D” nice!? She called me nice? Nice pa ba yung ginagawa ko sakanya? Eh para ko na nga syang alila kung sigaw sigawan eh, nice pa yun sa kanya!? ??? ???   
  
“sa susunod ayokong nalelate ka ha. tignan mo nangyare tuloy, eh di gutom ka. Makakasama pa yan sayo. Ikaw kase eh >:( :-\.”   
  
“hindi na po mauulit :)..” nagsmile siya tapos tumingin na siya sa daan.   
  
Dumating kami sa ospital eksaktong 9. pumasok na kami sa loob ng office ni Dr. Robles para ipaalam sa kanya na dumating na kami.   
  
“good morning, Iris, Jeremy.” binati nya si kaming dalawa. “how are you feeling?” tinanong nya si Iris.   
  
“better :).” Ang sagot naman nya.   
  
“mabuti naman kung ganon :).. let’s go this way..” he led us to this room where they do all sorts of tests. “we’re going to run another series of tests para matignan kung may progress ka na okay?”   
  
Um-oo lang si Iris. As if naman na may magagawa siya diba. anyway, while they were doing whatever tests they’re running, nagring bigla yung phone ko kaya lumabas muna ako. bawal kasi ang telepono sa loob. pagtingin ko naman, si Alicia, yung secretary ko. bakit kaya? ???   
  
“oh Alicia. Bakit? ???”   
  
“sir.. may kailangan ho kasing i-release na check for payment today, eh kailangan ho ng signature.”   
  
“oh? eh bakit ako ang tinawagan mo? Eh diba si Daddy ang pumipirma nyan? ???”   
  
“yun na nga po. Wala si Chairman, kaya kayo ho ang pinapareview at pinapapirma nya.”   
  
Ako? ako ang pinapapirma ni daddy? “really?” nagtaka pa ko nun, pano, never naman akong binigyan ng authority ni daddy para pumirma ng mga company checks eh. since when did I become a signer? ??? ano kayang nakain nun at biglang nag-iba ang ihip ng hangin? ??? ::) Hindi ko alam kung matutuwa ba ko o magtataka eh, ngayon lang kasi ako pinagkatiwalaan ni Daddy na maglabas ng malaking pera.   
  
“yes sir. Pero hindi naman po sya rush. Makakapghintay naman ho ito hanggang sa dumating kayo.”   
  
“ah hindi. Ngayon ko na pipirmahan yan. Baka kasi maging busy pa ko mamaya so, I’ll be there.” Binaba ko na yung phone at pumasok ulit ako sa room. “uhmm.. excuse me Dr. Robles, there’s an emergency at work, I need to be there. Kung pwede sana, iwanan ko muna si Iris dito tutal naman mukang matatagalan pa kayo eh. babalikan ko na lang sya as soon as I take care of that emergency.”   
  
“oh sige, kami ng bahala sa kanya.”   
  
Lumapit ako sa Iris para magpaalam. “oh. Iris, aalis muna ko ha. may emergency sa opisina, they need me there. Dito ka lang ha. wag kang aalis. Just stay here, kahit anong mangyari, dito ka lang. okay? ??? :)”   
  
“iiwan mo ko? ??? :-[”   
  
“yeah, pero babalikan naman kita kagad..”   
  
“how long are you gonna be gone? Sasama na lang ako sayo :-[ :-[..” pinilit nyang tumayo, pero pinigilan ko siya.   
  
“hindi pwede, Babe. Tignan mo nga oh, they’re in the middle of running a test, hindi naman pwedeng itigil yan.” Ang hirap namang magpaalam sa kanya! ??? ::)   
  
“okay.. sige na nga. Pero babalikan mo ko ha? ??? :-[”   
  
“oo. Kaya dito ka lang, okay? hintayin mo ko. wag kang aalis at lalong wag kang sasama kahit na kanino. Pagdating ko kakain tayo sa Jollibee. :)” She nodded kaya umalis na ko.   
  
Nung nakarating ako sa opisina, my goodness! :o ??? Ang dami pa lang checks na kailangang pirmahan! Natagalan nga ako eh, dahil isa isa ko pa yun tinignan, to make sure na tama ang lahat. Dahil kung hindi, lagot ako. first time ko pa naman ito, ayokong madisappoint si Daddy.   
  
Almost two hours din akong nagrereview pati nagpipirma ng mga checks. Grabe, nakakapagod din pala ito, kahit na pipirma ka lang. hindi ko nga napansin na ganun na pala ako katagal eh.   
  
shoot. Nakalimutan ko! Si Iris nga pala! :o :o Tapos na siguro yung check up nya at kanina pa siguro sya naghihintay! Nako. Hindi pa naman kumakain yun, I’m sure gutom na gutom na yun. :-\   
  
Pagkapirma ko ng huling check, umalis na ko kagad. Nagmadali akong magdrive nun. when I got to the hospital, dumiretso kagad ako sa office ni Dr. Robles. Pero wala sya dun. Kaya naman pumunta ako sa nurses’ station para magtanong. Ang sabi nila, may emergency daw kaya kinailangan si Dr. Robles sa emergency room. Teka, nasan si Iris? ??? ???   
  
“nurse.. eh yung pasyente ni Dr. Robles, san nagpunta? ??? :-\”   
  
“si Ms. Martin po ba?”   
  
“oo, sya nga. Nasan siya?”   
  
“ah sir! Nandito lan--- :o” napatigil siyang bigla. “san na sya?” tinanong nya dun sa isang nurse. “nandito lang siya kanina eh..”   
  
“ANO!? :o Eh san nagpunta? Anak ng! Bakit pinabayaan nyo? Alam nyo bang may sakit yun at hindi siya dapat napapabayaang mag-isa? :o >:(”   
  
“eh sir, kanina naman po talaga nandyan siya eh.. nakaupo po dyan :-\.” Tinuro nya yung upuan. “kanina pa nga nagrereklamo na gutom na siya.. eh nung nag-offer naman kami ng pagkain, tinanggihan nya kasi hinihintay nga ho nya kayo..”   
  
“eh ganon naman pala eh! bakit pinabayaan nyong makaalis!? ??? >:(” hindi ko napansin, tumataas na yung boses ko. nasan na kasi si Iris eh!? ??? :-\ “oh? ??? ano pang tinatayo tayo nyo dyan? Tumawag kayo ng security at halughugin nyo ang buong ospital! >:( :-\”   
  
Nagsimula na kong mag-ikot. Kung saan saan na ko nakaabot pero hindi ko siya nakita. Iris nasan ka na ba!? diba sabi ko wag kang aalis!?! Malalagot ako sa ginagawa mo eh!! lumapit naman yung sakin yung isa mga security guards.   
  
“sir, nakaalert napo ang buong ospital, pero hindi po namin siya nakita..”   
  
“ano!? :o Hindi! Maghanap pa kayo ulit! Wag kayong titigil hanggat hindi nyo sya nahahanap! >:( :-\”   
  
I started panicking nung hindi talaga namin makita si Iris.. Nako Diyos ko.. pano ba to… nawawala si Iris :-\ :-\…. Anong gagawin ko!? ??? ???   
  
Saktong sakto nagring yung phone ko..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Patay. Si Daddy. :o :-\   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I fell asleep, as I’ve been told as soon as Jeremy left my room. Medyo napasarap yung tulog ko nun nung afternoon, at nagising lang ako almost midnight na kasi nagugutom na ko. but I didn’t get up, instead, I just kept tossing and turning on my bed, natatakot akong lumabas, kasi ang laki ng bahay ni lola.. I might get lost, and plus.. it’s too dark already and I’m scared to walk on dark hallways. :-\ :-\   
  
So as much as I could, I tried my best to go back to sleep, but after the second growl in my stomach, I decided to finally get up and find the kitchen ::). Dahan dahan pa nga ako nun eh, ewan ko kung bakit ko yun ginagawa, eh bahay naman namin ito ??? ::). Anyways, hindi naman pala mahirap hanapin yung kitchen eh, kasi right after the last step sa stairs, may swinging door just a few more steps away.. tapos yun na, kitchen na. :D :D   
  
Nakita ko may tirang omelette pa dun sa fridge kaya yun ang kinuha ko. masarap kasi. Sino kayang nagluto nito? Kasi parang ngayon ko lang to natikman, or maybe I have, hindi ko lang matandaan. ??? ::)   
  
“hey.. why are you up this late?” nagulat ako kasi somebody spoke behind me :o :o. I almost dropped the plate pa nga eh. nung humarap naman ako, it was a guy, but I couldn’t really tell who it was because it was dark and the only light we had was from the fridge.   
  
“who’s talking? ???” I asked while I walked to get the lights.   
  
“it’s… it’s.. David.. Iris :).”   
  
“David? ???”   
  
“yeah.. it’s me.. do you remember me? ??? :-\” of course. how could I forget… >:( ::)   
  
“uhh.. what are you doing here?” siguro naman, obvious na I remember him diba?   
  
“I went down to get a glass of water.. what about you? ???” tinignan nya yung hawak kong food. “hungry? ???”   
  
“uhmm. Yes.” Tapos umupo ako sa counter.   
  
He walked towards me then he sat beside me. “so you like that omelette, huh..? Ella told me you ate that this morning :) :)..”   
  
“oh..yea.. it’s.. it’s good :).” Okay, fine. So it’s good. But that doesn’t mean that’ll change the way I see and think of him.. if I remember clearly, this guy was the start of my misery. But that’s not important anymore, kasi tapos na yun.. and honestly, I think he’s harmless na naman eh, lalo ngayon, my Mom’s not around to push me to him, and vice versa. And besides, there’s really something odd about this scenario. I know for sure I hate this guy, but why does it seem different now? ??? ??? Bakit parang hindi ako galit like I used to be? Those were the last words I said. After that, hindi na ko nagsalita, at siya din ganun. Good. Buti hindi sya makulit ngayon. Kaya nung natapos na kong kumain, I stood up. “uhm. Good night.”   
  
I was about to head towards the sink to take my plate over there when he said, “I got that..” tapos kinuha nya yung plate sakin at nilagay ito sa sink. “good night Princess, sweet dreams :)..” he smiled at me while he washed the plate. I did nothing by squint my eyes. Si David ba talaga to? bakit parang ang gaan gaan na ng feeling ko sa kanya? ??? ??? :)   
  
Hmmf. Siguro effect lang to ng amnesia ko. I’m sure when my memory is back, I will hate him again. wait, I hate him, don’t I? ??? ??? hay. So much to think and remember. Nakakainis naman kasi, wala talaga akong maalala, lalo na yung accident mismo.   
  
Anyway, I went back to bed na. but before closing my eyes, I set my alarm clock to 6 am kasi 7 am ako susunduin ni Jeremy bukas. Pero hindi pa ko nakatulog that instant.. iniisip ko kasi kung bakit ganun si Jeremy sakin eh :-\ :-\.. did I do something wrong to him? ??? :-\ eh kasi parang galit siya sakin palagi.. he’s so unpredictable, minsan mabait, minsan naman sobrang sungit.. siguro before the accident may ginawa ako sa kanya para magalit siya sakin.. :-\ :-\ but what could it be? What could have I done for him to treat me like this? Or maybe.. just maybe.. this is the way he’s always really been to me… hmmm? ??? ???   
  
Tsaka ang hindi ko talaga maintindihan, bakit bawal kaming maging sweet kapag kaming dalawa na lang? ??? ??? tapos we can only kiss, hug, pati maglambingan when people are around, especially my lola, tito Ramon, and David? parang… baligtad yata… diba? ah basta! Bahala na nga, whatever he wants, I guess I’ll just go with that.. he is in fact my boyfriend at dapat lang na sumusunod ako sa kanya… right? ??? ::)   
  
Err!!! I can’t help but have doubts about this! There’s something wrong.. I could feel it!   
  
“IRIS WAKE UP! >:(” I felt a shake in my entire body. Earthquake!?! EARTHQUAKE!!! :o :o :o “ANO KA BA? ANONG ORAS NA HA!? DIBA SABI KO SAYO ALAS SIETE!? ??? >:(” ohh.. it’s him. ::)   
  
Pero.. wait.. what!? ??? :o “huh? ??? alas siete? ??? 7? Oh my God :o..” I stood up that instant and started panicking. oh darn!!! 7 na!!! “I…I’m sorry…I’ll just take a quick shower..” I hurried to my closet and took my towel.   
  
Nakakatakot yung face nya.. sobrang galit! :o I don’t know why I’m so terrified by him that I get goosebumps when he stares at me! “BILISAN MO, I’M ONLY GIVING YOU THIRTY MINUTES TO GET READY, DAHIL KUNG HINDI IIWAN KITA! MAG-ISA KANG PUMUNTA SA DOCTOR! >:( >:(” he yelled. Grabe. he’s yelling at me! I was in the verge of yelling back, kaya lang baka lalo siyang magalit, kaya hindi na lang. nagshower na lang ako.   
  
Sinabi nya that I have only 30 minutes to get ready.. 30 minutes? Is that even possible? ??? Nagmadali ako, hindi na nga ako nagsecond scrub eh! kaya after 20 minutes, I came out of shower and wrapped myself with my towel. I came out to brush my hair as I recall doing every time, pero nagulat na lang ako ng bigla siyang nagsalita. “what do you think you’re doing?”   
  
Why is he asking? Isn’t it obvious? ??? ::) “nagsusuklay..”   
  
“alam ko. Pero bakit nakaganyan ka lang? magbihis ka nga dun sa banyo!! >:(”   
  
What is he talking about? nakatingin lang siya sakin so I decided to look at myself in the mirror. Ahh.. conservative siya siguro, and he’s not used to seeing me get dressed in front of him ;D ;D.. pero.. wala namang masama don diba? it’s not like I’m totally naked under this towel ::) ::)… “ohh :-\.. sorry kasi I remember brushing my hair first before getting dressed eh :-\..”   
  
“PUMUNTA KA SA BANYO AT MAGBIHIS KA NGAYON NA! >:(” he pointed the bathroom with his index finger. “MAMAYA KA NA MAGSUKLAY, ANG ARTE MO NAMAN EH! ??? >:(” anong magagawa ko? eh sa yun ang naaalala ko eh.. nagsusuklay before I get dressed.. :-\ ::)   
  
“okay.. okay :-\..” sige na nga, pagbigyan ang conservative na boyfriend! I ran to the bathroom and shut the door behind me para makapagbihis. Ni-lock ko pa ha, baka kasi magalit siya kapag hindi ko ni-lock yung door! Ang hirap palang magbihis sa loob ng banyo! Limited lang yung space mo pati parang hindi ka pa makahinga.   
  
Anyway, when I finished getting ready, he grabbed my hand and both of us went outside my room at bumaba na. medyo tight pa nga yung grip nya eh. I could tell he’s not in the good mood. Okay so I learned two things about Jeremy today: he’s conservative and he’s time-conscious. I have to remember para hindi na sya magalit regarding these two things next time. ::) ::)   
  
Wala ng tao sa bahay kundi yung mga maids lang. so everyone’s an early bird in this house.. okay. . tomorrow pala dapat maaga akong gumising para maabutan ko silang lahat.. whoever else lives here.. nagmamadali na siya kaya hindi na ko nakakain ng breakfast. Hmmff! I’m hungry pa naman, I’m craving for that omelette from yesterday! Yung.. yung omelette ni David… :) :-X   
  
Nung nakasakay na kami sa car nya, nilagyan nya ko ng seatbelt kagad. Okay, I think I could’ve done that.. hindi naman part ng memory loss ko yung common sense eh! hm. “bakit ba hindi ka gumising ng maaga ha? ??? >:(” he said while he pulled out of the driveway.   
  
“sorry babe… hindi ako nagising sa alarm clock eh :-\..” damn that clock! Hindi man lang nag-alarm!! Kainis! >:( :-\   
  
“wag mo nga kong matawag tawag na babe! >:(” uh-oh.. now he’s really mad. Bakit ayaw nyang tawagin ko siyang babe? But isn’t that what we call each other? ??? :-\   
  
“sorry na talaga.. wag ka ng magalit :-[ :-[..” hard as it was, I had to say sorry.. :-\   
  
“sorry ka ng sorry! Sa susunod na malate ka pa, iiwanan talaga kita! Tandaan mo yan! >:(”   
  
“yes.. babe :-\ :-[..” grabe, para akong bata na pinapagalitan.. I remember how I used to be reprimanded by mom when I was a kid.. ganitong ganito. I felt bad because I only did a simple thing and yet he’s getting mad at me like I committed a crime. kahit na naiiyak na ko, I tried my best not to :-[ :-[.. kasi.. ewan. Nung nakita nya na parang nalulunod na ko sa sobrang guilt, his face softened na. buti naman, dahil kung hindi, I might as well die here of tension!! :-\ :-\ Kaya naman I decided to just look out the window para mawala yung takot at guilt ko. okay na naman kami anyways.. on our way to the hospital, nakakita ako ng Jollibee! Chicken joy!! Palabok! Pati peach mango pie! I remember those! Favorite ko yung mga yun eh!!! :D :D“Jollibee! :D Babe, kain tayo.. gusto ko ng palabok :D..” I pulled his hand like a little kid. :D   
  
Pero agad naman nyang tinanggal ito. “ano ka ba! bitawan mo nga ako. baka maaksidente pa tayo dyan sa ginagawa mo eh! >:(” binalik nya ulit yung hand nya sa steering wheel. “hindi pwede, malelate ka na sa appointment mo! kasalanan mo to eh, kung nagising ka ng maaga eh di sana marami pa kong nagawa sa opisina at makakakain ka dyan sa Jollibee >:( 8).” ahh.. so kaya pala siya galit kasi he was supposed to do something else other than taking me to the doctor.. hindi naman kasi madali na magka amnesia ka eh :-\.. yung wala kang alam, tapos pag nagkamali ka, sobrang magagalit siya. He could’ve talked to me nicely naman diba? hay.. sige na nga. Fault ko na. fault ko na na galit siya, and it’s my fault why I didn’t get to eat breakfast. :-[ :-[   
  
“sige na.. kahit sandali lang.. I’m hungry na kasi.. I didn’t eat breakfast :-\..” nagugutom na ko ehhhh!!! Sige na pumayag ka naaaa!!! Hmmff!!! :-[ :-[   
  
“kumain ka na lang pagkatapos ng check-up mo. Kahit sampu pa, ibibili kita.” sampu? Ten yun diba!? wow, ang sweet naman nya, bibili nya ko ng sampung Jollibee. ::) ;D   
  
“promise? ??? :D”   
  
“oo na.”   
  
“yehey. Thank you!! :D” okay, hindi na ko nagtatampo sa kanya. hhehehe! “thank you!! thank you!! you’re so nice talaga! :D” Ano ba yan, ang babaw ko naman, Jollibee lang okay na ko kagad. Hihi! ;D   
  
“sa susunod ayokong nalelate ka ha. tignan mo nangyare tuloy, eh di gutom ka. Makakasama pa yan sayo. Ikaw kase eh >:( :-\.”   
  
“hindi na po mauulit :)..” I smiled at him. I just realized.. he’s so sweet pala :). Kahit na ang sungit sungit sungit sungit nya, naswesweetan pa rin ako sa kanya.. for sure he has a very odd way of showing he cares.. but strange as it is, I like it.. I like him regardless :) :).. hindi siya katulad ni David who just says no without explaining to me why. eh si Jeremy.. he explains to me everything, why he’s mad, why I couldn’t do this and that.. kahit na masungit, he never fails to make me feel I’m being cared for. hay, thank God he’s my boyfriend.. :)   
  
When we arrived the hospital, we went straight to the doctor’s room right away where the nurse led us to. “good morning, Iris, Jeremy.” he stood up and greeted us both. “how are you feeling?” he asked me.   
  
Hmm.. how am I feeling?... “better :).” yes. I feel better. I feel great! :D   
  
“mabuti naman kung ganon :).. let’s go this way..” we went next door. “we’re going to run another series of tests para matignan kung may progress ka na okay?”   
  
I nodded my head at sumunod na sa kanya. when we were all inside, nagring naman yung phone ni Jeremy so he excused himself to take it outside. Bawal kasi yung cell phone sa loob kasi maraming machines. After a couple of minutes, pumasok na siya ulit sa room pero lumapit siya kagad sa doctor. “uhmm.. excuse me Dr. Robles, there’s an emergency at work, I need to be there. Kung pwede sana, iwanan ko muna si Iris dito tutal naman mukang matatagalan pa kayo eh. babalikan ko na lang sya as soon as I take care of that emergency.” aalis siya?? ??? ???   
  
“oh sige, kami ng bahala sa kanya.”   
  
after saying that, sakin naman siya lumapit. “oh. Iris, aalis muna ko ha. may emergency sa opisina, they need me there. Dito ka lang ha. wag kang aalis. Just stay here, kahit anong mangyari, dito ka lang. okay? ??? :)”   
  
“iiwan mo ko? ??? :-[” bakit nya ko iiwan? :'( :'(   
  
“yeah, pero babalikan naman kita kagad..”   
  
“how long are you gonna be gone? Sasama na lang ako sayo :-[ :-[..” tatayo na sana ako, but he stopped me.   
  
“hindi pwede, Babe. Tignan mo nga oh, they’re in the middle of running a test, hindi naman pwedeng itigil yan.”   
  
“okay.. sige na nga. Pero babalikan mo ko ha? ??? :-[” parang ayokong umalis siya.. natatakot kasi akong mag-isa lalo na't wala akong kilala kahit na sino dito.. :-\ :-\   
  
“oo. Kaya dito ka lang, okay? hintayin mo ko. wag kang aalis at lalong wag kang sasama kahit na kanino. Pagdating ko kakain tayo sa Jollibee. :)”   
  
Nung narinig ko ulit yung Jollibee, naexcite na ko. okay. sige na nga, magpapaiwan na ko! hmf. Kaya after nyang magpaalam, umalis na siya kagad.   
  
Well, anyway, pinahiga lang ako ng doctor sa isang moving machine. “oh Iris, we’re going to do an MRI again, okay? the first time we did this, tulog ka kaya hindi mo namalayan..” then he went to the back and started manipulating buttons. Bigla naman umandar yung hinihigaan ko and it was heading towards a tunnel. A VERY DARK AND SECLUDED, ALMOST AIRLESS TUNNEL!!! :-[ :o :-[   
  
I started sweating in places I never expected to, my heart started raising its heartbeat and my pulse began to rise, it was high enough to make the doctor stop the moving machine instantly. He hurried towards me. by time he got to me, I was already hyperventilating and shaking at the same time. Nakahiga ako, feeling like I’m slowly running out of breath. I was so terrified; I thought I was going to die if he didn’t stop the machine from moving towards that tunnel.   
  
“Iris? Are you okay? :-\” he asked. Does it look like I’m okay?   
  
Hindi ako makapagsalita, other than the fact that I could barely catch my breath, sobrang nakaramdam talaga ako ng takot. “I.. I.. I’m.. o..oo..okkkayy :-[ :-[..” I stuttered.   
  
Nilabas nya kagad yung stethoscope nya pati yung flashlight. He listened to my heartbeat with the stethoscope and he used the flashlight to see my pupils. “are you claustrophobic?”   
  
Am I claustrophobic? ??? :-\ “uhh.. I think so..” napaisip naman ako nun. well, actually, I am.. I know that for a fact, I remember going to a doctor before para mawala yung phobia ko eh, pero ang sabi nya, wala namang cure dito. I just have to get used to closed places… but since then, I haven’t tried getting used to such places, kasi lagi akong napangungunahan ng takot. And as a result, I shake, I hyperventilate, I sweat, and worst case, I faint. “yes I.. I am :-\..” I started having trouble releasing my words. Ganito ako kapag inaatake. I remember.   
  
“kaya pala nag-increase bigla ang heartbeat mo.. that’s not good Iris.. hindi magandang may phobia ka. An increased heart rate may cause to major problems, hija..” I know, I’m aware of that, marami ng doctor ang nagsabi sakin nyan. But what can I do right? :-\ I’m claustrophobic, there’s nothing I can do about it, but avoid closed places.. “hindi madaling maalisan ng phobia, kaya as much as possible, stay away from places you know will cause your panic attack.. okay? as I have seen, mahina ang resistensya mo sa atake mo. Madali kang mawalan ng oxygen.” He looked so worried. Ano ba yan, many things are wrong with me.   
  
“yes, doc.” That’s all I said. I pretty much know everything I have to know about claustrophobia, kaya nga as much as possible, umiiwas ako sa mga lugar where I might have an attack.   
  
“anyway, pwede kitang bigyan ng sedatives para makalma ka habang ginagawa natin yung procedure.. pero kung ayaw mo naman ng ituloy, we can do the procedure next time.” I shook my head saying no. ayokong magpa MRI ngayon. “oh sige, I will reschedule na lang sa next appointment mo.” pinatayo na nya ko and instructed me to sit down after he took a folder containing my information. “according to your tests’ results two days ago, wala ka ng dapat pang ipagalala.. everything is working and functioning properly, kaya safe ka na. don’t worry so much, kasi baka makaapekto pa yun sa recovery mo.. just take it slow and easy, at madaling maibabalik ang memory mo.” Then he touched my head. Tinanggal nya yung bandage, tapos pinalitan nya ng mas maliit na lang. “always remember to clean your wound para makaiwas sa infection.”   
  
“opo.”   
  
After ng check up ko, tinawag si Dr. Robles ng nurse sa labas. Dr. Robles. Finally, I remembered his name! ;D ;D wow. After a while, bumalik sya sa loob. “Excuse me Iris, there is an emergency, kailangan ako sa emergency room.” He took out a piece of paper and pen from his drawer and wrote something. “your next appointment is in two days, okay?” inabot nya sakin yung paper na sinulatan nya. “I prescribed you some medications na makakatulong sa recovery mo. And after all these, let’s get you a help with your phobia.”   
  
“thank you po :).” I smiled at him. tapos lumabas na kami. He told me to sit down on a bench in front of the station so the nurses could keep an eye on me.   
  
Isang oras na akong naghihintay pero hindi pa rin dumadating si Jeremy. Hindi ko naman dala yung cell phone ko para matawagan siya! Heck, I don’t even know his number.. eh bakit naman kasi hindi ko dinala yung cell phone ko eh!! Iris naman! ayan tuloy.. :-\ :-\   
  
After another hour, may lumapit sakin. “ma’am, gusto nyo po? :)” may isang nurse ang nag-offer sakin ng donut.   
  
Pagtingin ko pa lang dun sa donut, I felt a growl in my stomach na kagad. Nagugutom na ko. anong oras na ba? almost 12 noon na, I haven’t had breakfast or lunch yet, konti lang din ang nakain ko last night. :-\ :-\   
  
“no thanks..” nagsmile lang ako sa kanya. nakakahiya naman kasi kung makikikain pa ko sa kanila noh, eh ang dami kaya nila. tapos bigla kong naalala, I saw a Jollibee on our way here. sa labas lang yun eh.. so I stood up and hurried out. I’m starving, I could eat a lot of palaboks! Plus peach mango pie of course!! :D :D   
  
Nung nakalabas na ko sa hospital, I turned my head to the left and then to the right and I tried to remember which way was it. Well, luckily, nakita ko naman sya kagad kaya naglakad na ko papunta dun. Good thing I didn’t forget to bring my purse and money. Makakain na ko! yehey! ;D ;D   
  
“uhmm.. I’ll have a palabok, 2-piece chicken joy with rice, and.. 2 peach mango pies, please. :) :)” Tumingin sakin yung cashier na parang nagtataka siya. Why? a skinny girl can’t eat this much? Pssh. you swear. I could eat half of this store if I were really starving! 8) ::)   
  
“you want the meal with that?”   
  
“oh, yes of course ;).”   
  
“and what kind of drink? Ma’am?”   
  
“uhmm… a large coke please :).” Inabot ko na yung bayad ko. after that, I found a seat para makakain na ko. yummm.. chicken joy! Ang saraaappp! :D :D I kept on eating until I finished the chicken joy and the palabok. Grabe, I ate a lot. when I glanced to my watch to check the time, 12:30 pm na. whoa, I ate those in 30 minutes only? Wow. :D :D   
  
Dumating na kaya si Jeremy? Naalala ko bigla, bawal pala akong lumabas.. nako, I’m sure if ever he’s back, magagalit yun sakin kasi hindi ako sumunod sa sinabi nya. So I stood up and hurried my way out. pero as soon as I opened the door, may nakita akong isang bata babae na nakatingin dun sa hawak kong food and I felt sorry for her. :-\ :-\   
  
“palimos po :-[..” she said.   
  
“sige, sayo na lang to :)..” I didn’t think twice in giving her what I had in my hand.   
  
Pagkabigay ko nun, another 4 of them came towards us. they looked like they haven’t eaten for days :-[ :-[.. hindi naman kinaya ng conscience ko, I couldn’t give them money, because they might spend it on something else other than food.. kaya I called all of them to go inside Jollibee para pakainin silang lahat. There were 5 of them, 3 girls, and 2 little boys. Di bale ng pagalitan ako ni Jeremy. My conscience would be killing me if I didn’t help these poor kids..   
  
Pinaorder ko sila ng kahit anong gusto nila, which they did. umupo na kami tapos I watched all of them while they were eating what each of them had ordered. Natutuwa ako, because in the littlest way I knew how, I was able to help these kids.   
  
“ate ganda, salamat po.” Sabi nung isang bata. Kaya lalo naman akong natuwa, kasi tinawag nya kong ate ganda. Hehehe. ;D ;D   
  
“you’re welcome, sige kain lang kayo ng kain :).”   
  
“ate, ano pong pangalan nyo?” another one said.   
  
“Iris.. I’m ate Iris.. :)” I said. “kayo, anong mga pangalan nyo?”   
  
“ako si Joy! :D”   
  
“ako si Maggie. :D”   
  
“Karen naman ako :).”   
  
“ako si Jonas.”   
  
“Im glad to meet all of you! ;)” napansin ko, yung isang bata, hindi nagsabi ng name nya. kaya nilapitan ko siya. “and you little boy, what’s your name? :)”   
  
“Tam :-[.”   
  
At ayun, for the next hour, wala na kaming ginawa kung hindi ang kumain, pati ang magkwentuhan. I barely know these kids, but I had fun. Hindi ko na nga namalayan yung oras eh. and before I knew it, it was already 2 pm.   
  
uh-oh. :-X :-X   
  
“nako, kids.. kailangan ko na kasing umalis eh.. baka hinahanap na ko ni Jeremy.. :-\”   
  
“ate sino Jeremy? ???” sabi ni Maggie.   
  
“ha.. si Jeremy, siya yung boyfriend ko.. :)”   
  
“ate love mo sya? :D” si Joy, tinanong ako.   
  
“love? :o ???” love ko ba si Jeremy? Parang hindi naman ata ako sanay sa word na yan.. tsaka ano.. hmm.. “ewan ko… :-\” actually, I really don’t know. Do I love him? how come I never said it, nor did he? Oo nga noh :-\.. kung boyfriend ko sya, tapos girlfriend nya ko, bakit hindi ko naririnig na sinasabi nyang I love you sakin? Or kahit ako? bakit hindi ko sinasabi yun? ??? ???   
  
“bakit hindi mo alam, ate? Matagal na po ba kayo? ???” sabi naman ni Jonas.   
  
“ha? uhmm.. siguro.. hindi ko alam eh :-\..” ano bayan, grabe naman kung maginterview itong mga batang to! “eh kasi meron akong amnesia.. naaksidente ako eh, tapos wala akong maalala.. kaya hindi ko alam :-\ :-\..”   
  
“ahh…” sabay nilang sinabi lahat.   
  
“eh ano pong itsura nya? ???” Karen asked sabay lapit sakin.   
  
Anong bang itsura ni Jeremy ::).. “hmm.. he’s tall, maputi, well, hindi masyadong maputi.. yung tama lang.. has nice eyes, meron siyang dimple sa left cheek nya.. nice hair. laging decent yung damit nya and.. gwapo.. sobrang gwapo ;) :).” I described him as if he was right before me. Napasmile pa nga ako eh.. ewan ko kung bakit. “pero masungit siya eh :-\. tsaka minsan lang siya nagsasmile..” Yeah, I couldn’t leave that part out. “but even though he’s mean to me, he’s still my prince charming.. niligtas nya ko eh, alam nyo ba yun? ::) ::)” I smiled even more. Yeah.. Jeremy, he is my Prince Charming. :)   
  
“talaga po?” Tam said, “niligtas nya po kayo? Wow! :D”   
  
“oo.. he’s my hero nga eh.. kaya sobrang lucky ko kasi siya ang boyfriend ko, pati inaalagaan pa nya ko :D :)..”   
  
“wow, ate ang swerte nyo po pala kay Kuya Jeremy! :D” sabi ni Karen. “Superhero pala siya eh! :D :D” natutuwa ako kasi tinawag nilang superhero si Jeremy. :) :)   
  
“swerte din naman si kuya kay ate Iris eh, kasi maganda siya pati mabait pa :)..” aww.. na touch naman ako dun sa sinabi ni Joy.. “tignan nyo oh, muka syang Princess.. tapos si Kuya Jeremy naman yung Prince Charming.. oh diba? bagay na bagay! :D :D” lalo naman akong natuwa dun. Wala lang, ang sarap kasing pakinggan eh.. ::) ::)   
  
“ate siya po ba yung nakatayo dun?” biglang sinabi ni Maggie, sabay turo dun sa may door.   
  
Oh darn. That’s him. he was standing by the door, kinakausap yung security guard. Hinahanap nya siguro ako. patay! :-X :-X   
  
Kaya naman tumayo na ko kagad para puntahan siya. Nakita ko yung face nya, he looked so worried so I ran towards him. “Babe!” at lumingon siya kagad and his facial expression changed that instant from worried to angry.   
  
Kaya natakot na ko. I know I’m in a big trouble! Hinawakan nya kagad yung kamay ko at hinila na ko papalabas ng Jollibee. I didn’t even get to say goodbye to the kids :-\ :-\..   
  
While we were walking to the car, bigla naman siyang sumigaw. “DIBA ANG SABI KO SAYO, WAG KANG AALIS KAHIT NA ANONG MANGYARI!? ALAM MO BANG KANINA PA KITA HINAHANAP!? >:( >:(”   
  
“sorry.. eh kasi.. eh kasi.. nagugutom na ko eh :-\ :-\..” I almost ran out of breath while saying that, hindi ko kasi alam kung anong sasabihin ko. I’m too scared to even say anything right now.   
  
“KAYA BIGLA KA NA LANG UMALIS NG HINDI MAN LANG NAGSASABI SA MGA NURSE?! GANON BA HA?! >:(” hindi ko na talaga alam kung anong sasabihin ko.   
  
“eh kasi :-\..”   
  
“eh kasi ano!? >:(”   
  
“eh.. kasi.. ayaw ko yung donut.. gusto yung palabok pati chicken joy..”   
  
“AT YUNG TELEPONO MO, ILANG BESES KO BANG SASABIHIN SAYO NA PALAGI KANG MAGDADALA NG CELL PHONE HA!? >:(”   
  
“nakalimutan ko kasi nagmamadali ako kanina :-\ :-[…”   
  
“IKAW! >:( GUSTO MO TALAGA AKONG MAPAHAMAK NO!?” Lalo pa yata siyang nagalit dun sa sinabi ko. “SIGURO SINASADYA MO ANG LAHAT NG TO PARA LALONG MAGALIT SAKIN SI DADDY! >:( >:(”   
  
“hindi ah :-[ :-[…” okay, I know it’s a very lame excuse, pero yun naman talaga ang totoo. And it will never be my intention to get him in trouble.. lalo na sa Dad nya. Actually, hindi ko nga alam kung bakit ganun lang ka strict si Tito Ramon sa kanya eh.. He took a deep breath tapos binuksan nya yung door sa car.   
  
“GET IN! >:(” grabe, nakakahiya. Sinisigawan nya ko sa harap ng maraming tao. Di bale, hindi naman nila kami kilala eh.. or do they? ??? ???   
  
After a brief silence in the car, I decided to say sorry. Kasalanan ko naman talaga eh.. “I’m sorry :-[..”   
  
hindi nya ko pinansin, he just continued driving instead. Grabe, I’ve never been in this situation wherein you feel like you’re almost drowning with tension :-[ :-[. Sobrang natatakot na ko, kasi hindi ko alam kung anong iniisip nya ngayon. Mas takot pa nga ako sa kanya kaysa kay lola or kay Mommy eh.   
  
“I know I shouldn’t have left just like that.. pero kasi, talagang nagugutom na talaga ako eh :-\ :-\.. and I didn't plan on staying there for so long.. kaso nung nakita ko yung mga bata, naawa ako kaya pinakain ko sila :-[ :-[..” I spoke again, okay lang kahit hindi siya sumagot, I just want him to know why I left, para kung sakali, hindi na siya magalit.. valid naman yung reason ko eh.. :-\ :-\   
  
“babalikan naman kita eh.. diba yun ang sinabi ko sayo? Bakit hindi mo na lang ako hinintay? ??? :-\” nagulat ako because I wasn’t expecting him to respond.   
  
“I really waited for you, eh sobrang tagal mo, hindi ko na talaga nakayanan yung gutom ko.. hindi ako nagbreakfast diba? :-\”   
  
Tumingin siya sakin bigla. Yeah, he probably forgot that he didn’t let me eat breakfast this morning because we were in a hurry. “kahit na, hindi ka dapat lumalabas at nagpupunta kung saan saan..” he said calmy. “alam mo namang hindi ka pa magaling diba? :-\ Eh pano na lang kung may nangyare sayo? Hindi mo pa naman dala yung telepono mo.”   
  
“sorry na.. hindi na mauulit, next time, kahit sobrang hungry na ko, hihintayin pa rin kita :-[ :-[..”   
  
“Iris, hindi ko naman sinabing magpakagutom ka eh..” he sighed, “okay, I’m sorry din, I was a little insensitive at hindi ko inintindi yang gutom mo. Sa susunod kasi, sumunod ka sakin, para hindi tayo nalalagay sa alanganin.. lalo na ko.. naiintindihan mo ba yun? ??? :-\” I nodded. his face looked a little bothered, but then he smiled at me.   
  
grabe, the more he smiles, and the more he gets mad at me whenever I screw things up, the more I’m liking this feeling… whatever this feeling is. :) :) I may not know what this feeling means, but I know for a fact that I’m happy. He makes me happy kahit na palagi na nya kong pinapagalitan, pinagsasabihan, sinusungitan, and eventhough he thinks I mess everything up.. I’m happy.. kasi kahit ganun, hindi nya pa rin ako iniiwan.. dahil kung tutuusin, pwede naman nya kong iwanan na lang nung hindi nya ko nakita sa hospital, or he could have left me for good because I have amnesia.. :) :)   
  
I just stared at him as he drove.. I couldn’t stop thinking how fortunate I am for having him.. tama nga yung bata.. he is my superhero and my Prince Charming… :) :)   
  
“are you still mad at me? ??? :-\”   
  
Tumingin lang siya sakin tapos umiling-iling siya. Ano kayang ibig sabihin nun? galit pa kaya siya? after a few minutes of driving, he pulled over to a house. Where are we? Kaninong bahay to? ??? ???   
  
Nung pinatay na nya yung engine, tinanggal nya yung seatbelt nya at humarap sya sakin. “ayoko ng mauulit yung nangyari kanina okay?” that’s all he said. Hindi naman niya sinagot yung question ko eh! pero okay lang kahit hindi! “pinakaba mo ko eh.”   
  
“yes babe..”   
  
He sighed, tapos inayos nya yung hair ko. gulo gulo kasi eh ::).. “oh wag ka ng malungkot, hindi na ko galit sayo :).”   
  
So I smiled at him habang tinatanggal ko yung seatbelt ko. teka, bakit ko ba tinatanggal yung seatbelt ko? nasan ba kasi kami? “where are we? ???” I really have to ask kasi hindi familiar sakin yung house na to.   
  
Lumabas na siya ng car and he walked around to open my door. Nakatingin lang ako sa kanya looking so clueless. Pagkabukas nya ng door ko, saka lang nya sinagot yung question ko.   
  
“sa bahay namin 8).” sa bahay nila? anong gagawin namin dito? ??? ???   
  
“why are we here? ???”   
  
“eh kasi hinihintay ka ni Mommy..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Magbobonding daw kayo…” wow! his Mom and I are bonding!! ::) ::)   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Nung nakita kong tumatawag si Daddy, hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko. sasagutin ko ba o hindi? Eh pano kung hanapin nya si Iris? Anong sasabihin ko? nawawala!? ??? ::) :-\   
  
But I picked it up anyway. Tumabi muna ako sa gilid at tinigil pansamantala ang paghahanap ko kay Iris. Naisip ko kasi, pano kung importanteng tawag pala to? at kung hindi ko sagutin yung tawag nya, baka kung ano pang isipin nun.   
  
“Dad.” Siempre, kunyareng okay ang lahat.   
  
“oh hijo, tinawagan ka ba ni Alicia? Pasensya ka na at naabala ka pa, alam kong magkasama kayo ni Iris ngayon..” ang sabi nya.   
  
“ah.. okay lang, Dad. Actually napirmahan ko na nga yung mga pinapapirma nila eh.”   
  
“that’s good. So nasan na kayo ngayon?”   
  
“nandito sa ospital, for check up.” sana hindi nya hanapin si Iris!! :-\ :-\   
  
“eh hindi ba alas-nueve ang appointment ni Iris dyan? Pano ka nakapunta sa opisina? Iniwan mo siya?” I knew it, he was going to ask. Bakit ko pa kasi sinabi na nandito ako sa ospital eh!! ayan tuloy.   
  
“ha.. ah.. yes Dad. Pero nakabalik naman ako kagad :-\.”   
  
“so iniwan mo si Iris!? Ikaw naman, alam mo namang hindi sya pwedeng iwanan eh!” bakit ba lagi na lang nya kinakampihan si Iris!? ??? >:(   
  
“eh Dad, hindi rin naman ako pwede dun sa room eh. they’re doing an MRI at siya lang yung pwede dun.” Ganun naman talaga yun diba? ewan ko! >:( >:( “The checks needed to go out before lunch so iniwan ko muna siya sandali. Tsaka, nandito na naman ako eh :-\.” pinaliwanag ko naman siya kanya. ano bang magagawa ko eh sya naman kaya ang dapat pumirma non! >:(   
  
“asan na siya? pakausap ako.” bigla nyang sinabi. Ni hindi ko nga alam kung pinakinggan nya yung paliwanag ko eh. hala!! Anong gagawin ko? think fast Jeremy! :o :-\   
  
Pinagpapawisan na ko nun, at pakiramdam ko mahihimatay ako ng di-oras. Asan na ba kasi si Iris eh!! :-\ :-\ hindi ko alam kung anong sasabihin ko kay Daddy kaya ang sinabi ko na lang, “Uhm.. ano kasi.. Dad :-\..” diyos ko. pano ba to! “uhmm.. nasa loob pa. hindi pa tapos yung procedure eh! yeah! Tama. Hindi pa tapos. Nandito ako sa labas, hinihintay siya 8).”   
  
Pakiramdam ko hindi siya naniniwala. Pano ba naman, sunod sunod kong sinabi yun, at mukang halatang nagsisinungaling ako. ah basta, bahala na. if I get in trouble, eh di ganun na lang. kesa naman mamatay ako sa takot dito.   
  
But then after a few moments of silence, sinabi nya na, “ah ganun ba? oh sige, pagkatapos nyo dyan pinapapunta kayo ng Mommy mo sa bahay, pinagluto daw nya si Iris and she wants to spend time with her..” mabuti naman at sinakyan nya yung palusot ko. dahil kung hindi, nakikita ko na ngayon pa lang kung anong mangyayare sakin.. :-\ panigurado nyan, sa lansangan ang bagsak ko.   
  
“ah okay, sige Dad, we’ll be there.” Ang sabi ko naman. pagkatapos nun, binababa ko na yung phone. Whew! That was close! :o :-X   
  
Pero teka, kung nakalusot ako ngayon, kung hindi ko naman makita si Iris, eh talagang sa kalsada ako pupulitin mamaya. Hindi lang ako lagot sa tatay ko, kundi sa buong angkan ng mahal na prinsesa. Nasan ba kasi siya eh!? ??? :-\   
  
Lalo tuloy akong kinabahan ng magsibalikan yung mga security guards na inutusan ko kanina. Hindi talaga nila mahanap si Iris, nilibot na daw nila ang buong ospital, pati na yung rooftop, at parking area. :-\ :-\ Tawag naman ako ng tawag sa kanya, nagriring lang yung phone. Naku!! Malamang hindi na naman nya dala yung telepono nya! sa susunod talagang isasabit ko na yung phone sa leeg nya para hindi nya nakakalimutan. Nakakabadtrip eh! >:( >:(   
  
Kaya naman nagdesisyon na ko na lumabas ng ospital, inisip ko nun kung saan ba sya pupunta kung sakali. Wala naman pumasok sa isip ko, kasi wala naman siyang alam na lugar dito. Kahit na noon na wala pa siyang amnesia, wala din naman talaga siyang alam, dahil bahay at opisina lang ang napuntahan nya. hindi ko na alam kung anong gagawin ko kaya tumawag ako kay Anthony para magpatulong. Ayoko namang tumawag sa pulis, dahil I’m sure irereport nila yun kagad sa pamilya ni Iris. Eh pano kung saan na yun nakarating at hindi nya alam ang daan pabalik? ??? Pano kung nakidnap siya? ??? narape? ??? :o Langya naman o! :-\ :-\   
  
ANONG GAGAWIN KO!?! ??? :-\   
  
After ilang rings, sinagot naman nya yung phone. “oh ‘tol! Napatawag ka?” tahimik yung background nya, nasan kaya tong mokong na to? ???   
  
“nawawala siya pare, tulungan mo kong maghanap! :-X :-X” nagpapanic ako habang sinasabi yun. :-\ :-\   
  
“ha? sino? Sinong nawawala?”   
  
“si Iris! Kanina pa ko naghahanap sa kanya, hindi ko siya mahanap!” parang awa mo na tulungan mo ko!!   
  
“ano!? Si tisay nawawala?” grabe naman, sa lakas ba naman ng boses ko, hindi pa nya narinig yun?   
  
“oo, iniwan ko lang siya kanina sa ospital eh tapos pagbalik ko wala na siya :-\ :-\..” pakiramdam ko sasabog na yung dibdib ko sa sobrang pag-aalala.   
  
“eh tungak ka pala eh, bakit mo iniwan?!”   
  
“pare nagkaemergency sa opisina eh, kailangan ako dun.” Sandali, nagbabasa kaya si Iris? Pumasok kasi ako sa isang bookstore, nagbabakasakaling nandito siya. “iniwan ko siya habang chinecheck up siya, tapos pagbalik ko wala na siya dito sa ospital, chineck na lahat ng security guards pero hindi siya nakita. Bro I don’t know what to do, hindi ko alam kung saan ko siya hahanapin!! :-\ :-\” lintek na yan, nalibot ko na yung buong store, hindi ko parin siya nakita! :-\   
  
“relax tol!” bigla nyang sinabi. “sige, ganito gawin mo. Kung ikaw si tisay, saan ka pupunta?”   
  
Inisip ko naman nun kung ako nga si Iris. Saan ba ako pupunta? Sa mall? ??? ::) “eh malayo naman ang mall dito eh! impusibleng makarating yun dun!” tsaka hindi naman nya alam yun eh..   
  
Hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit ganito na lang ang kaba ko ngayon. Hindi ako mapakali, feeling ko maiihi ako sa salawal ko :-X. “baka naman kumain lang?” he said. Napatigil ako sa paglalakad. “lagpas na ng lunch time bro, baka nagutom yun.” as soon as he said that, biglang nagliwanag yung isipan ko. I think I know where she is! :o   
  
“I think I know where to find her.” Kanina, nagaaya siyang pumunta ng Jollibee diba? tama. Baka nandun yun.   
  
“oh ano okay ka na?! tawag ka ulit kapag hindi mo pa siya nakita.”   
  
“oo sige. Thanks.” I clicked the phone and ran as fast as I could to Jollibee.   
  
Pagpasok ko pa lang nakarinig na ko ng ingay. Ang ingay sa loob, may mga batang nagtatawanan pati nagkukulitan. Lumapit ako kagad sa security guard para magtanong.   
  
“uhm. Excuse me bossing. May nakita ka bang babae, mga ganito yung height.” Tinaas ko yung kamay ko hanggang chin ko para idescribe yung height ni Iris. “tapos mestiza, mahaba yung buhok, may bandage sa ulo, baluktot magtagalog----”   
  
Nagulat ako ng may biglang sumigaw. “Babe!” at pagkalingon ko, nakita ko siya, tumatakbo papunta sakin. Nawala bigla yung kaba ko at napalitan ito kagad ng galit, asar, inis, at kung ano pa ang pwedeng itawag dun! Lintek na babae to! Makikita nya talaga! >:( >:( >:(   
  
I grabbed her arm right away at hinila siyang palabas ng Jollibee. Surprisingly, hindi siya pumapalag. I guess I just have to get used to the new Iris. This new Iris I’m beginning to hate! Naku! Puro sakit na lang talaga ng ulo ang binibigay sakin ng babaeng to. akala ko pa man din, dahil sa may sakit siya, mas madali siyang i-control. Eh yun pala, mas mahirap pa. >:( >:( “DIBA ANG SABI KO SAYO, WAG KANG AALIS KAHIT NA ANONG MANGYARI!? ALAM MO BANG KANINA PA KITA HINAHANAP!? >:( >:(” ewan ko kung bakit ko siya sinigawan. Basta ang alam ko lang ngayon, halos mamatay ako sa sobrang kaba sa paghahanap sa kanya. tsaka, ikaw ba naman ang maghanap ng dalawang oras sa ganitong katinding init, hindi ba iinit ang ulo mo? >:( >:(   
  
“sorry.. eh kasi.. eh kasi.. nagugutom na ko eh :-\ :-\..” eto na naman tayo sa sorry eh! so nagugutom siya kaya siya umalis? Eh may cafeteria naman sa ospital, bakit pa siya lumabas?! Pasawayyy!!!! >:( >:(   
  
“KAYA BIGLA KA NA LANG UMALIS NG HINDI MAN LANG NAGSASABI SA MGA NURSE?! GANON BA HA?! >:(”   
  
“eh kasi :-\..”   
  
“eh kasi ano!? >:(”   
  
“eh.. kasi.. ayaw ko yung donut.. gusto yung palabok pati chicken joy..”   
  
Palabok at chicken joy? Namimili pa siya ng kakainin, eh samantalang may inooffer naman pala sa kanya. ano ba siya, donya!? “AT YUNG TELEPONO MO, ILANG BESES KO BANG SASABIHIN SAYO NA PALAGI KANG MAGDADALA NG CELL PHONE HA!? >:(” napansin ko lang, sa mga dinaanan namin papunta sa kotse, maraming tao ang napapatigil sa paglalakad kasi sinisigawan ko siya. yung iba pa nga dun bumubulong na kesyo kawawa naman daw itong si Iris, wala daw akong modo blah blah. Paki ko ba sa kanilang lahat. >:( 8)   
  
“nakalimutan ko kasi nagmamadali ako kanina :-\ :-[…”   
  
Lalo akong naasar dun sa sinabi nya. so ano, pinapalabas pa nya ngayon na ako may kasalanan ng lahat ng to!? “IKAW! >:( GUSTO MO TALAGA AKONG MAPAHAMAK NO!?” tumigil kami sa paglalakad kasi nasa harap na kami ng kotse ko. humarap ako sa kanya at tinuro siya. “SIGURO SINASADYA MO ANG LAHAT NG TO PARA LALONG MAGALIT SAKIN SI DADDY! >:( >:(” baka nga nagkukunyaring may amnesia lang to eh para pahirapan ako! >:(   
  
She looked at me so innocently. Lalong nakakainis! “hindi ah :-[ :-[…” medyo nagluluha na yung mga mata nya, pero hindi siya umiiyak. Grabe, sa lakas ng sigaw ko sa kanya, hindi siya naiyak? Bato talaga to. walang pakiramdam!   
  
Pero ako, pakiramdam ko talaga ngayon, malapit na kong atakin sa puso. Sumisikip ang dibdib ko dito kay Iris eh! para talaga akong nagaalaga ng bata! A toddler to be exact! kaya instead na kung ano pa ang masabi ko, huminga na lang ako ng malalim bago ko binuksan yung pintuan ng kotse. “GET IN! >:(” yun lang ang sinabi ko. sumunod naman siya na parang bata na gumawa ng kalokohan.   
  
Pinaandar ko na yung kotse. Di ko alam kung san ko sya dadalin ngayon. Kung pwede nga lang eh itatapon ko na to sa dagat para matapos na yung problema ko sa kanya. >:( >:( but on the other hand, I felt sorry kasi kung hindi sana ako nagtagal sa opisina, eh di sana hindi siya magugutom at magpupunta sa Jollibee :-\. Oo na, sige na, ako na ang masama. >:( :-\ Pero talagang nagalala lang ako nung hindi ko siya nakita kung san ko siya iniwan kanina. Siempre, kahit papano, ayoko rin naman na may mangyaring hindi maganda sa kanya.   
  
“I’m sorry :-[..” bigla nyang sinabi. Unbelievable din itong si Iris eh.. ang lakas ng fighting spirit, hindi titigil hanggat hindi nya naririnig na hindi ako galit. kahit ano talagang gawin ko, I can never stay mad at her :-\. Hindi ko alam kung bakit. pag nakikita ko siyang tahimik at nagsosorry, lalong sumasama yung loob ko. feeling ko, napakasama ko. at dun ako naiinis. Kasi hindi ko sya matiis. >:( :-\ “I know I shouldn’t have left just like that.. pero kasi, talagang nagugutom na talaga ako eh :-\ :-\.. and I didn't plan on staying there for so long.. kaso nung nakita ko yung mga bata, naawa ako kaya pinakain ko sila :-[ :-[..” mga bata? Sinong mga bata? Nagpakain siya ng mga bata? Si Iris ba to? ??? ???   
  
“babalikan naman kita eh.. diba yun ang sinabi ko sayo? Bakit hindi mo na lang ako hinintay? ??? :-\” I calmly said.   
  
“I really waited for you, eh sobrang tagal mo, hindi ko na talaga nakayanan yung gutom ko.. hindi ako nagbreakfast diba? :-\” napatingin ako bigla sa kanya :o :-\. how could I be so stupid! Hindi ko pala siya pinakain ng breakfast!! Malamang eh gutom gutom nga siya. kawawa naman siya, I’m sure nalipasan siya ng gutom. Kapag nagkaron siya ng ulcer, kasalanan ko yun. :-\ :-\   
  
“kahit na, hindi ka dapat lumalabas at nagpupunta kung saan saan..” guilt trip!! Ano bayan! Talo na naman ako! :-\ :-\ “alam mo namang hindi ka pa magaling diba? :-\ Eh pano na lang kung may nangyare sayo? Hindi mo pa naman dala yung telepono mo.”   
  
“sorry na.. hindi na mauulit, next time, kahit sobrang hungry na ko, hihintayin pa rin kita :-[ :-[..”   
  
“Iris, hindi ko naman sinabing magpakagutom ka eh..” wag mo na kong konsensyahin pa lalo.. dahil sobrang sama na ng tinign ko sa sarili ko ngayon. “okay, I’m sorry din, I was a little insensitive at hindi ko inintindi yang gutom mo. Sa susunod kasi, sumunod ka sakin, para hindi tayo nalalagay sa alanganin.. lalo na ko.. naiintindihan mo ba yun? ??? :-\” hindi ko alam kung pano ko mapapatawad ang sarili ko dahil pinaghintay at ginutom ko sya. Pero ayoko din naman kasing ma-badshot kay Daddy… :-\   
  
Nagsmile ako sa kanya. oh siya sige na, she’s off the hook. Kaya iniba ko yung daan namin naalala ko, hinihintay pala siya ni Mommy. Ewan ko ba kung bakit gustong gusto siya ni Mommy pati ni Daddy.. eh ordinaryong babae lang naman itong si Iris.   
  
“are you still mad at me? ??? :-\” makulit din siya eh noh?   
  
Hindi ako nagsalita until we pulled over to our house. Saka lang ako nagsalita nung pinatay ko na yung engine. Humarap ako sa kanya at siya naman eh halatang lost in space na naman. natutuwa tuloy ako. kasi ang cute nya eh.. parang inosenteng bata. ;D ;D“ayoko ng mauulit yung nangyari kanina okay? pinakaba mo ko eh.”   
  
“yes babe..” medyo papilit pa yung pagkasabi nya nun. halata mong masama yung loob nya dahil galit ako. oh sya sige, hindi na ko galit. ::) ::)   
  
Inayos ko yung hair nya kasi sobrang gulo. Hindi nya ginalaw magmula ng kaladkarin ko siya papalabas ng Jollibee. Siguro sa sobrang takot, hindi na sya nakagalaw.. Pati yung braso nya, bakat pa rin hanggang ngayon yung kamay ko. sobrang higpit ba ng pagkakahila ko sa kanya kanina at ganyan na lang kung mamula yung braso nya?? Ang sama ko talaga. :-\ :-\ pero kung nasasaktan naman siya, bakit hindi siya nagsalita kanina? O kaya lumaban.. bakit pinapabayaan lang nya akong tratuhin ng ganon na lang? ??? :-\   
  
“oh wag ka ng malungkot, hindi na ko galit sayo :).” galit naman ako sa sarili ko. what I just did to her was very disrespectful.   
  
As soon as I said that, her face lit up. Yung ngiti pa nga nya eh from ear to ear. Nakita ko na naman yung dimples nya. I guess that’s what she was waiting to hear. Na hindi na ko galit. Truth be told, hindi ko naman talaga sinasadyang kaladkarin pati sigawan siya eh. nadala lang ako ng sobrang pagaalala.   
  
“where are we? ???” she asked as she was unbuckling her seatbelt.   
  
I stepped out and went around to get her door. At pagkabukas ko, dun ko lang sinabi sa kanya kung nasan siya ngayon. “sa bahay namin 8).”   
  
“why are we here? ???”   
  
“eh kasi hinihintay ka ni Mommy. Magbobonding daw kayo…” medyo clueless pa siya nun, pero muka naman siyang masaya at excited, kaya kinuha ko na yung kamay nya para makapasok na kami sa loob. This time, hindi na mahigpit, dahil sa kamay ko na siya mismo hinawakan.   
  
Sinalubong naman kami kagad ni Mommy, naka apron pa nga siya eh, mukang sobrang busy siya sa kusina talaga. “hi Iris! :)” niyakap nya si Iris sabay beso.   
  
“hi po :)..” nahihiya pa nyang sinabi.   
  
Pinaupo siya ni Mommy kagad sa couch. Hanep din tong nanay ko eh, dumating lang si Iris, parang hindi na nya ako anak. “how are you? how’s the check up? ???” hello Mommy! Ako hindi mo kakamustahin?   
  
“okay lang po. The doctor said it’ll take a little while to get my memory back, but I’m on the right track with taking all my medications accordingly..”   
  
“that’s good hija.. wag kang masyadong magpapagod ha, kasi makakasama yan sayo. Tutal naman eh nandito si Jeremy para alalayan ka palagi eh. right son? :) ;)” aba, at napansin nya ako bigla! Hay. ::)   
  
Nakatingin sakin si Mommy kaya humarap sakin si Iris. “yes Mom.”   
  
Kaya nilapitan naman nya ako para yakapin. “my son is wonderful, I’m sure he will take good care of you Iris, so don’t you worry, you’re in good hands :).”   
  
“I know and I’m lucky :).” Bigla naman nyang sinabi. Napatingin ako kasi I didn’t expect her to say that. Lucky!? ??? Sus. Tingin nya lucky pa siya sa lagay na to? eh parati ko nga siyang inaapi at kinakawawa eh. lucky daw. ::)   
  
Tumingin siya sakin tapos nagsmile siya. Naisip ko lang, pag bumalik na kaya yung memory nya, masasabi pa rin kaya nyang lucky sya? ??? :-\ I don’t think so. Baka nga tadyakan pa ko nyan eh, dahil sa maraming beses kong pagsigaw at pagkawawa sa kanya. ::) :-\   
  
“kumain na ba kayo? ???”   
  
“yes I did tita, pero si Jeremy po, hindi pa nakakain :-\..” she remembered me, despite the way I acted earlier. “nakakahiya nga po eh, hindi ko po siya hinintay :-\..”   
  
“okay lang yun :)..” nagsmile ako sa kanya then I placed my hand on her back at ni-rub ito. “I’m okay :)..”   
  
“oh anak, bakit hindi ka pa kumakain? Sige dito kayong dalawa at tikman nyo tong niluto ko.” pinaupo kami ni Mommy sa dining area. Pumasok siya sa kitchen para kunin yung niluto nya. marami siyang nilabas, may kare-kare, adobo, at…   
  
“wow! Is that sinigang na pork!? :D :D” sabi na nga ba eh. malakas talaga ang radar nitong si Iris sa sinigang na ‘pork’.. ano bayan, pati tuloy ako, nagagaya na sa weirdong terms niya. ;D ::)   
  
“oo, hija.. pasensya ka na ha, hindi pa tapos yung pasta, nasa oven pa lang.. I know you don’t eat Filipino foods, pero try mo lang, baka magustohan mo :).” Sabi ni Mommy. Oo nga pala, sinabi ko sa kanya na hindi kumakain ng lutong bahay si Iris. ;D   
  
“are you kidding me tita? ???” napatigil bigla si Mommy at mukang hindi nya maintindihan si Iris. “I would die for sinigang na pork! It’s my favorite!! :D :P” tuwang tuwa pa nyang sinabi. Kaya si Mommy, ayan, natuwa na rin.   
  
“talaga? ??? :)” tumingin sakin si Mommy at sumenyas na ‘lagot ka sakin mamaya’ “sabi kasi si Jeremy, hindi ka raw kumakain ng lutong bahay... ::)”   
  
  
Si Iris oh, mukang hindi makapaniwala sa naririnig nya. ::) ::) so I decided to break this revelation. Oo na, nahuli na ako na siniraan ko siya kay Mommy ::). “alam mo tikman mo tong kare-kare ni Mommy. The best yan ;).” Sabay scoop ng ulam sa plato nya.   
  
“is this the one you eat with shrimp paste? ???” shrimp paste? Anong shrimp paste? Ahh! Bagoong. ::)   
  
“oo. We call that bagoong here.” binuksan ko yung bote ng bagoong at nilagyan siya ng konti sa plato nya.   
  
“bag-o-ong? ??? ???”   
  
“no, you say it like this. Ba-go-ong.” Para naman akong teacher nito.   
  
“bag-ong? ???” Well, she tried, pero hindi nya talaga mabigkas ng tama yung bagoong. ;D ;D “did I say it right this time? ???”   
  
“close enough ;D.”   
  
“oh, you kids look so good together :).” Nagulat naman ako kay Mommy. Ang akala ko kasi pumasok sya ulit sa kusina eh, yun pala eh kanina pa sya nakatayo dyan at pinapanood kami.   
  
“Ma naman ::).” si Mommy talaga oh.   
  
“alright, alright. I’ll leave you two alone ::).” Tinanggal nya yung apron nya. “I’ll just take a shower kasi amoy ulam na ko eh.”   
  
“thank you for this meal tita.. :)” mukang nagustohan nya ata yung kare-kare ah. she took another scoop to her plate.   
  
Lumapit si Mommy sa kanya at niyakap siya. “you’re welcome hija.. I’m glad you like it. :)”   
  
“it’s really good po.. :)”   
  
“oh pano, I have to leave..”   
  
“oh? san ka naman pupunta? ???” akala ko ba gusto nyang makabonding si Iris? ??? ???   
  
“tumawag kasi yung secretary ko, ngayon daw dadating yung delivery the tulips kaya dapat nandon ako.”   
  
“you sell flowers tita?”   
  
“she owns a flower shop, Iris.”   
  
“that’s right, hija.. you know what, maybe you could come by sometime para tignan yung shop ko. it’s just nearby.. :)”   
  
Pagkarinig naman nya non, humarap siya sakin. “babe, can I go? ??? :D” I was surprised that she’s even asking for my permission. Kung tutuusin, hindi naman na kailangan. Grabe naman ang pagkasubmissive nito.. napapangiti tuloy ako ng wala sa oras.. :) :)   
  
Even my Mom’s surprised.   
  
“ha.. ahh.. oo sige, if you want ??? :)..”   
  
In the corner of my eye, nakikita kong nakangiti si Mommy. “oh sige, just let me know kung kelan. Pasensya ka na Iris ha, I know I told your tito Ramon na magbobonding tayo ngayon, kaya lang biglaan to eh..”   
  
“it’s okay po..”   
  
Niyakap nya ulit si Iris at pagkatapos nun, she patted me on my shoulder. “Now, you two have fun. And Iris, if you want more, there’s more food in the kitchen.. feel at home, hija.. :)” nagsmile siya at inexcuse ang sarili nya samin.   
  
All the while, pinapanood ko lang silang dalawa. My Mom seems to like Iris a lot.. hindi tulad nung kay Tricia noon, matagal bago naging ganyan si Mommy sa kanya.. samantalang kay Iris… unang kita pa lang,gusto na siya kagad. ahhh ewan!   
  
Habang kumakain si Iris, napansin ko bigla yung braso nyang namumula. Hanggang ngayon pala, hindi pa rin naaalis yun.. so I stood up and got an ice pack from the freezer. nakonsyensya naman kasi ako. :-\   
  
“what’s this? ???” nagulat siya nung pinatong ko ito sa namumulang part ng braso nya.   
  
“para matanggal yung pamumula.. :-\” tumingin siya sa braso nya. ni hindi nga nya yata alam na namumula na pala yun. mahirap pa lang higpitan ang hawak sa kanya, kasi madaling bumakat. Baka isipin pa ng ibang tao eh sinasaktan siya kapag nakita yan. “Iris, yung tungkol dyan.. hindi ko yun sinasadya :-[..” halos hindi ko nga matignan eh, hindi ko inaakalang ganun pala kahigpit yung pagkakahawak ko sa kanya.   
  
And it just took her a couple of seconds to give me a response. “okay lang yun. bad girl naman ako eh.. I deserved it :) :-\.”   
  
“Iris ano ka ba, kahit gano ka pa ka-bad, hindi ka dapat sinasaktan sa kahit anong paraan. Tandaan mo yan ha. kaya ako nagsosorry sayo, dahil mali yung ginawa ko :-\..” nakatingin lang siya sakin, tingin ko naman hindi nya naiintindihan yung sinasabi ko eh.. “pero hindi ibig sabihin nun na tama yung ginawa mo kanina.. dahil mali yun, at hindi mo yun dapat ginawa.. hindi mo pwedeng gawin lahat ng gusto mong gawin and get away with it.. dapat alam mo rin kung anong tama at mali. Okay? ??? :-\” she just stared at me with her facial expression saying ‘huh?’ pero di bale na, matatandaan din nya yan. “tsaka pag nasisigawan kita, wag mo sanang isipin na masama ako.. :-\ nagagawa ko lang naman yun kapag hindi ka sumusunod eh..”   
  
It took her about 20 seconds to finally comprehend what I was saying. She placed her head on my shoulder, hindi ko alam kung para saan yun. “don’t worry babe, I understand.. none of your actions hurt me.. :)”   
  
di ko siya maintindihan. Kung ako siguro yung sinisigawan pati nasasaktan, magagalit ako. pero siya, kahit ilang beses kong sigawan at pahiyain, hindi siya nagagalit.. siya pa nga yung nagsosorry eh. and it bothers me, because this isn’t her. :-\ :-\   
  
Nakakatakot lang kasi na baka pagdating ng panahon na matandaan na nya ang lahat, eh ibato nya sakin yung lahat ng ginawa ko sa kanya :-\. kung tutuusin, wala naman siyang ginawang masama sakin eh. naiinis lang ako sa kanya, kasi she’s being loved by everyone without her forcing herself to anybody. Basta ganun lang, siya si Iris, love her or hate her, she would careless.   
  
Hindi tulad ko. I struggle for my father’s appreciation. :-[ :-[   
  
Pucha naman! nagdadrama na naman ako eh!! Well, anyways. After namin kumain, iniwan ko siya sa family room na nanunood ng movie. nagpumilit pa nga na siya ang maghuhugas ng pinggan. Siempre hindi ko pinayagan. Hindi naman siya katulong para gawin yun. ::) Umakyat muna ko saglit sa kwarto ko para magshower. Amoy pawis na ko eh. pagkatapos ko naman maligo, tumawag si Anthony.   
  
“oh pare, ano nahanap mo na ba?” ang ganda naman ng bati nitong gungong na to. ::)   
  
“oo nakita ko na, nandito nga siya sa bahay eh.”   
  
“ayos! Sige ‘tol I’ll be there in 5 minutes!”   
  
Binaba nya kagad yung phone. Anong nangyare dun? ??? ??? Hindi ko napansin, almost 6 pm na pala. At eto ang disadvantage sa pagiging magkapitbahay namin ni Anthony eh, dahil eksaktong 5 minutes, nandito na nga siya. himala, at hindi siya late!? ::) ayun sa baba, naririnig ko na. kaya binilisan ko yung pagbibihis ng makakababa na rin.   
  
Pagkababa ko, nakita kong nakaupo si Anthony pero si Iris wala. :o :o   
  
“bro, si Iris? :o ???” don’t tell me nagpunta na naman sa Jollibee!!! Magpapanic na naman sana ako pero narinig ko yung boses nya.   
  
“I’m here, babe.” Paglingon ko, nandon siya sa likod ko, may hawak na baso ng juice.   
  
“nauuhaw ka? Bakit ikaw ang kumuha nyan? ???”   
  
“no, this is for your friend.. :)” binigay nya kay Anthony yung juice. “sorry Anthony ha, hindi ko makita yung maid eh, hindi ko alam kung san nakalagay yung snacks..”   
  
“okay lang yun, thank you ha! :D” sabay sip dun sa baso nya.   
  
I stood there thinking this is so unbelievable. Sira ulo talaga itong mokong na to, utusan daw ba si Iris?! ??? ??? Hinila ko nga sandali si Anthony sa sulok.   
  
“pare ano ka ba, bakit mo naman inutusan si Iris? ???”   
  
“uy! Di ko siya inutusan no! siya yung nagpresenta, hindi na ko umangal baka magalit. 8)”   
  
“ulol ka talaga kahit kelan.”   
  
“oh? bakit affected ka? Hmmm!? ;D”   
  
“ewan ko sayo! Bumalik na nga tayo dun! ::)”   
  
bumalik na kami sa couch. So I take it na naintroduce na ni Anthony yung sarili nya kay Iris. Ilang minuto pa lang sila magkakilala, aba’y akala mo matagal na silang magkaibigan. Close na nga kagad eh. ::) ::)   
  
all this time nakikinig lang ako sa usapan nila. “—ano tisay, sama ka? :D” inimbita kasi ako ni Anthony sa isang party at pinapasama nya si Iris.   
  
and in 5...4...3...2...1... “ano yung ti-say? ???” sabi na eh. ::) ;D   
  
“ahh yun! Slang term for mestiza! :D” paliwanag naman ni Anthony. “maputi ka kasi, kaya ikaw si tisay. Ano? Okay ba? ;D ;D”   
  
Tumawa lang si Iris. “you’re funny. :D” At halatang nageenjoy sya sa company nitong si Anthony.   
  
“so ano, ‘tol? Sama kayo? Friday na naman eh! :D”   
  
“I don’t know ‘tol.. siguro next time na lang, hindi pa pwedeng lumabas labas itong si Iris eh.. :-\”   
  
“ganun? Eh kung mag bar na lang tayo? Ano in kayo? ??? :D”   
  
“okay! :D” biglang sabi naman ni Iris. Pero napatingin siya sakin kagad. “I mean, can we go, babe? ???”   
  
“gusto mo? ??? :)” nag nod siya. “oh sige. Let’s go. Pero hindi ka iinom, okay? 8)”   
  
“okay.. :)”   
  
“tara lets! :D” pansin ko lang ha, parang ang taas ng energy nitong si Anthony.   
  
Sumakay na kami sa kotse ni Anthony para magpunta sa pinakamalapit na bar. Si Anthony na ang nagmaneho kasi pagod na ko pati sya naman ang nag-offer. So bale, kaming dalawa ang nakaupo sa harap tapos si Iris nasa likod ko. Pagkadating namin dun, umorder na kami ng drinks at nagkwentuhan. Si Iris, iced tea lang ang inorder ko para sa kanya. Natatandaan nyo naman siguro kung anong nangyare sa kanya nung huli siyang uminom diba? ??? ???   
  
“excuse me, I’m just gonna go to the ladies’ room.” Ang sabi ni Iris. Tumayo siya at nagpunta na sa restroom.   
  
At pagkatalikod pa lang nya, nagsalita kagad si Anthony. “pare! Anong nangyare sayo? Bakit ang bait mo yata kay tisay? ??? :D”   
  
I knew it. He’s going to ask about my behavior. “wala lang. ano bang masama kung paminsan eh maging mabait naman ako sa kanya? ???” uminom ako ng beer.   
  
“tss!! Am I hearing this? Eh sa pagkakatanda ko, ang sabi mo sakin, pahihirapan mo siya, gagantihan mo siya.. never mo siyang magugustohan---” yeah, I remember saying those things. “anong nangyare? Hindi mo kinaya no!? ;D ;D” tapos tumawa siya. “alam mo, tol. Hindi naman kaya siya katulad nung mga sinasabi mo sakin.. ang bait nga nya eh.”   
  
“ganyan lang yan kasi may amnesia.. pero watch. When she gets her memory back, lalabas din ang sungay nyan 8).” Actually, expected na nga yun eh. baka nga magwala pa yan kapag nalaman nya na hindi pala totoo tong relasyon namin at trinato ko siya ng hindi maganda. I’m sure of that. “tsaka hindi ko siya gusto no.”   
  
“ows? ??? ::)”   
  
“hindi nga.” Paglingon ko sa harap, nakita kong lumabas si Iris galing restroom. She ran her fingertips through her hair and she fixed her bangs to the side.   
  
“talaga lang ha..”   
  
“oo nga, bakit ba? ???” malapit na si Iris samin non. Ngayon ko lang napansin, bagay pala sa kanya yung plain and natural look.. hindi naman sa sinasabi kong panget sya kapag nakaayos siya pati naka make-up, mas prefer ko lang talaga yung natural. :) :)   
  
“sigurado ka? :D”   
  
“oo nga!”   
  
“hindi mo siya gusto? :D”   
  
“hindi!” ano ba, napipikon na ko dito kay Anthony ah.   
  
“eh bakit ganyan ka kung makatingin sa kanya? ;D” ANO!? ??? :o Pano bakit, pano ba ko tumingin sa kanya? Wala namang malisya yun ah.. pati masama ba kung tignan ko siya? ???   
  
“ano bang pinagsasabi mo?” minsan talaga, ang sarap nyang sapakin. ang lakas ng topak eh! “normal lang naman ang tumingin diba? Anong extraordinary sa ginagawa ko?”   
  
“ikaw naman pare, kung magsalita ka, parang hindi ako lalake at hindi tayo lumaki ng sabay ::).” He patted my back. “I know you too well, Jeremy.”   
  
“ewan ko sayo. ang gulo mo!” Hindi ko siya maintindihan. Ano bang iba sa pagtingin ko kay Iris? ???   
  
“sige, dude, okay lang yan… ;D” pareho na kami ngayon nakatingin kay Iris habang naglalakad siya papalapit sa table namin.   
  
“alam mo Ton, iinom mo na lang yan. Tutal naman eh mukang may tama ka na.. ;D ::)”   
  
“sus! Pare. Ako pa!? eh mas matindi ako sayo no. hindi ata ako tinatamaan. 8)” Oo nga, itong si Anthony, beterano na to sa inuman. He’s always the last one standing sa aming lahat. In other words, kung lahat kami bagsak na, siya, tuloy tuloy pa rin. Kaya nga hindi na ko magtataka kung isang araw na lang eh sabihin nya sakin na may liver cancer siya. Ang laki kasi ng bodega nya sa alak eh. ::)   
  
“sorry for taking long, I can’t believe the line in the ladies’ room.” Umupo na siya sa upuan nya. “so what have you guys been up to while I was away? ??? :)” tumingin sya sakin tapos kay Anthony. “wow :o, those are a lot of beer bottles..” Nakita ko sa expression ng muka nya na medyo gulat siya dahil ang daming bote ng beer sa table namin, compared kanina. Eh samantalang wala pang 30 minutes siyang nawala.   
  
Nilagay ko naman yung kamay ko sa likod ng upuan nya, at nirelax ko yung katawan ko. “ganyan talaga yang si Anthony, masanay ka na..”   
  
“hayaan mo Tisay, kapag magaling ka na, one on one tayo! Ano, in ka? :D :D” mokong talaga tong taong to. Hamunin daw ba si Iris ng inuman? Eh isa pa tong lasinggera eh! ::) ::) >:(   
  
“siempre naman, ako pa?! :D” nakakatuwa silang dalawa panoorin. Hindi ko talaga maintindihan kung anong meron dito kay Iris, and why everybody likes her even at first glance. Ano kayang sikreto nya? ??? ??? “---pero kung hindi papayag si Jeremy, sorry na lang! :D”   
  
“sus! Nagaalala ka dyan? ??? ::)” sabay turo sakin. “okay lang yan noh! Akong bahala sayo! Diba ‘tol? :D ;)” kinindatan pa nya ako.   
  
“sira ka talaga Anthony, tuturuan mo pang uminom girlfriend ko ::)..” napatigil ako dahil nabigla ako sa sinabi ko.. girlfriend. :-X “I mean, tuturuan mo pang uminom si Iris.”   
  
“naman tol! Eh pareho lang kaya yun.. girlfriend mo si Iris diba? So iisa lang yun! ::) ;D” tumawa siya pati si Iris, kaya ako rin, tumawa na. oo nga naman, sa mata ng tao, girlfriend ko si Iris. “bangag ka talaga, lasing ka na ata eh! ;D ;D”   
  
“ulol! ;D”   
  
“lasing ka na ba, babe? ???” humarap sakin si Iris.   
  
“hindi no, nakaisang bote pa lang ako eh.” hindi naman talaga ako lasing. Nasa tamang pagiisip pa rin ako.   
  
“naks! Ang sweet! Syet! :D :D”   
  
“loko loko! ;D”   
  
At nagtawanan kaming tatlo ;D ;D. For the next hours, ganun lang ang ginawa namin. Inuman, tawanan, asaran! Siempre yung inuman, si Anthony lang yun. kasi ako tumigil na ko pagkatapos ng pangalawang beer. Si Iris, ayun, yung iced tea ang pinunterya. Sinabi ko kasi sa kanya na bawal pa siyang uminom eh lalo na kapag hindi ako kasama. Sa susunod siguro, baka payagan ko na siya.   
  
Grabe. I don’t remember the last time I laughed like this. Yung bang, okay ang lahat, wala kang inaalala… wala kang naaalala. Yung masaya ka kahit simpleng bagay lang. and by this, I can honestly say I’m enjoying this moment. Tuwang tuwa si Iris kay Anthony. Pano namang hindi, eh kengkoy yun at kung ano anong klaseng pagpapatawa ang ginawa.. ;D ::)   
  
Masaya ako dahil magkasundo ang bestfriend pati girlfriend ko…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I mean.. si Iris pala.. :-X ;D   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
It was past twelve when we left the bar. Anthony dropped us off at Jeremy’s house tapos from there, hinatid naman ako ni Jeremy sa bahay. Nagulat nga ako eh kasi hindi naman nagalit si lola. She was in the good mood pa nga eh… gosh. She’s so weird talaga, she’s starting to freak me out. ??? :o On the contrary though, I really thought this day was fun. I met his best friend Anthony who I think is very cool. Ang bait nya and very funny pa. It’s good that he and I get along very well. It was the first time I saw Jeremy having fun, yung hindi fake or forced yung smile nya. Actually, hindi nga siya nagsasmile lang eh.. he was laughing his butt off, which I think is a good thing. I get so worried kasi that he never laughs nor smiles eh, para kasing sobrang lalim ng iniisip nya often times. :-\ :-\   
  
Anyway, the next days were pretty much normal, I’d say. ::) Nagpunta nga pala ako sa doctor ulit para sa check up ko. Ang sabi ni Dr. Robles, malaki daw yung pagbabago from the last time I went there. actually, may naaalala na nga ako pakonti konti eh.. hindi naman yung totally I remember everything na, more like segments of events that took place before.. kaya sobrang happy naman ako kasi diba at long last, may naalala na din ako. Kahit hindi naman ganun kaaccurate, okay na rin yun.. :D :D   
  
Happy din si Jeremy. Panay nga ang tanong kung ano ang naaalala ko eh, kaya lang hindi ko naman maexplain sa kanya, kasi nga medyo blurry pa yung memory ko. Tinatanong ba naman ako tungkol sa ring ??? ???.. kung may naaalala daw ba ako na pinagusapan namin about dun.. Ilang beses ko ng sinabi na bigay ni Mommy sakin, tapos tinatanong nya kung pano napunta sa Mommy ko to.. eh ano bang malay ko kung saan nya binili to, at tsaka bakit ba? eh ano bang care nya sa ring ko diba? Eh hindi naman kaya siya ang nagbigay nito. why is he so curious about my ring anyway? ??? ??? ???   
  
And speaking of, I spoke to my Mom the other day, pumayag na siya to extend my stay and just continue my school here. :) :) Ang problema nga lang, wala naman akong school na mapapasukan, sasamahan pa ako ni Jeremy na maghanap pati magenroll.. eh mahirap daw yun, lalo na ngayon, I’m sick daw. But that’s okay, at least kasama ko naman si baby sungit ko dito diba? Hehe. ;) ::) ;)   
  
Honestly, the more I spend time with him, the more I see the real him. :) :) Mabait naman pala sya eh, yun nga lang, may times na sobrang sungit at nakakatakot siyang lapitan.. kaya nga as much as possible, sobrang behave ako sa kanya ::) ::)…   
  
oo nga pala, nung nagpunta ako sa doctor yesterday, good mood siya, lagi nga akong inaasar eh. okay lang, hindi naman ako naaasar ::) ::).. which is so bizarre, because as I remember correctly, lagi akong badtrip sa kanya before. At alam nyo ba na hindi na ko na nya ako sinigawan that morning? Siempre kasi maaga ako nagising and we even got to eat at Jollibee for breakfast… ang sweet pa nga nya eh, kasi he ordered everything I asked for… tapos after naman nyang bilin lahat ng sinabi ko, pinagtawanan ako. Miss piggy daw ako kasi ang takaw takaw ko! >:( >:(   
  
Oh say nyo? May improvement diba? ::) ::) It’s just that seeing him so happy that night we went to the bar made me realize how I shouldn’t do anything that’ll make him mad at me. Kaya nga kahit anong sabihin nya sakin, sumusunod ako. Not that I’m doing that just because he said so, but more like a personal will na rin. I feel happy kasi whenever I see him smile eh :).. basta.. masaya ako kapag kasama ko siya, at okay lang kahit sigawan at sungitan nya ko. At wag kayo ha, nagpapakiss na siya ngayon! Oh diba? Sa cheeks nga lang, pero kahit na, hindi tulad noon, kapag kinikiss pati hinahawakan ko yung hand nya, nagagalit siya sakin. Eh ngayon, wala na siyang sinasabi.. so I assumed that it’s okay with him. ::) :-\* ::)   
  
Pero there’s really one question that bothers me a lot though, and even if I tried my best to remember this particular thing, hindi ko talaga maalala. Sa bagay, hindi pa naman ako magaling talaga… :-X :-X   
  
Eh nahihiya naman akong magtanong sa kanya dahil baka sabihin nya ang sama ko kasi yun hindi naalala, eh sa katunayan nga dapat yun talaga ang magsestay sa mind ko kahit anong mangyari eh..   
  
Pano kaya nagstart ang love story namin? ??? ???   
  
How many times have I attempted to ask him, but I never got the chance to, natatakot kasi ako, alam nyo na, baka mabad mood siya bigla. Katulad na lang ngayon, medyo bad mood na naman ang baby ;D ;D. We’re at the mall right now, naglalakad lang. sabi kasi ni Tito Ramon pati ni Lola, sa Friday daw yung grand opening ng MV Telecoms at launching ko sa public. Grabe. I didn’t know I was important to be launched ::). Eh Wednesday na ngayon, so meaning, one day away na lang yung event na yun tapos wala pa kong susuotin.   
  
“babe, sige na punta tayo..” I pulled his hand like a little kid to this store. Gusto ko kasi yung dress, eh ayaw naman nyang pumasok sa loob ng shop.   
  
“papasok ka dyan tapos wala ka naman mapipili! >:(” his eyebrows met each other, which would be a sign of him getting annoyed already. “may gagawin pa ko sa opisina, Iris ha! >:( >:( you’re wasting my time.”   
  
“but :-[…” hinila na nya yung kamay ko papalayo dun sa shop. huhuh. I want that dress! :'( :'( :'( “gusto ko na yung dress na yun eh :-[ :-[…”   
  
He stopped walking so I stopped too. “sa susunod na lang kita sasamahan, o kaya, magpasama ka na lang kay Ella.”   
  
“sige na nga :-[.” Pumayag na lang ako, kasi baka masira pa lalo mood nya. kanina pa kasi kami nandito, eh hindi ako makapagdecide. “are you taking me home right now? ??? :-\” 2 pm pa lang kaya, anong gagawin ko sa bahay if he takes me home already? ??? ???   
  
“oo, eh ano pa nga ba? ???” he started walking again and pulling me with him. “alangan naman isama pa kita sa opisina eh wala ka naman gagawin dun.”   
  
“eh di hihintayin na lang kita :-\..”   
  
“wag na, matatagalan pa ko dun. You’re just gonna get bored.” Binuksan nya yung door ng car nya para makapasok ako. “magpahinga ka na lang sa bahay nyo tapos kapag nagkaron ako ng time mamaya, magdinner na lang tayo.”   
  
“eh wala naman akong gagawin sa house eh :-\.. and besides.. kapag nandon ako sa office mo, I can keep you company kahit gano pa ka late, diba? :)”   
  
He turned the ignition and backed his car. “eh marami nga akong gagawin, tsaka ayoko ng istorbo >:(.”   
  
“istorbo? ??? I’m not gonna disturb you :-\..” ang sama naman nya, istorbo daw ako >:(. “I’ll be quiet, promise.”   
  
“wag na lang.”   
  
“but babe? ??? :-[”   
  
“tsk! >:( Iris ha! nagsisimula ka na naman! >:(” he sounded so annoyed.   
  
Huh? ??? ??? What’s he talking about nagsisimula na naman? “nagsisimula ng ano? ???”   
  
“sa pangungulit mo! >:(”   
  
Ano? ??? Hindi naman kaya. “hindi naman ako nangungulit eh..”   
  
“hindi daw, eh anong tawag mo dyan sa ginagawa mo ha? ??? >:(” bakit? ano bang ginagawa ko? gusto ko lang naman siyang samahan eh, ano bang masama don? ???   
  
“I just :-\.. I just want to spend time with you :-\..” I said softly. Nakakainis naman kasi eh, bakit parang ayaw nya kong makasama? ??? :-[   
  
“spend time with me? eh lagi naman tayong magkasama ha? ??? ???” he said in a very cold manner.   
  
“kahit na :-\..” I guess he doesn’t know what I’m talking about.. “oh sige, di bale na lang :( >:(.” I turned my head away from him and he continued driving. Hindi na ko nagsalita after nun.. which was awkward kasi hindi naman ako sanay na tahimik lang. Nakakainis naman kasi eh. >:(   
  
“oh ano na naman yan? >:( ???” nagulat ako, kasi bigla siyang nagsalita.   
  
So I faced him. “what? ???” I raised my eyebrow.   
  
“yan. Yang ginagawa mo ??? >:(.” Tinuro nya ko pero hindi siya nakatingin sakin. His eyes were on the road.   
  
“I’m not doing anything ??? >:(.” I’m just irritated. >:( >:(   
  
“eh bakit ang tahimik mo?”   
  
“eh anong gusto mong gawin ko? talk to myself? diba ayaw mo ng istorbo?! ??? >:(”   
  
“oh? eh bakit ang sungit mo? ???” humarap siya sakin.   
  
“eh bakit ang kulit mo? ??? >:(” ughh!!   
  
“pano ako naging makulit, eh tinatanong lang kita? ???” tignan nyo nga, sinasabi nya ako ang makulit eh siya kaya mas lalo! >:( >:(   
  
“you know what, just take me home >:(.” Ayoko ng magsalita or even react. Kasi lalo lang ako naiinis. Ewan ko ba kung bakit. ahh! Eh kasi ayaw nya akong makasama!!!! >:( >:(   
  
“ano bang nangyayari sayo? Anong problema mo? ???” he faced me again when the light turned red.   
  
“wala! >:(” napasigaw naman ako bigla.   
  
He laughed. Bakit nya ko pinagtatawanan!? ??? >:( “ahh. I know what this is 8).” he knows what? “siguro meron ka no? ??? ;D” he grinned at me.   
  
Hindi ko naman naintindihan kung ano yun. ano ba yun? “meron ano? ???”   
  
“period.” Ahh okay, I get it. I turned my head towards him with this irritated look on my face. “kaya siguro ang moody mo kasi it’s the time of the month no ;D ::).” Medyo natatawa pa rin siya nung sinabi nya yun. ano bang nakakatawa dun? “grabe kayong mga babae kung magpalit ng mood, not even a blink of an eye! ;D ;D”   
  
Well.. yeah. I have my period. At masakit talaga yung puson ko. Pero kahit na! bad pa rin siya kasi ayaw nya kong makasama! >:( :-[ “shut up :-[.” I felt a warm flush on my cheek.. eh kasi.. nakakahiya. Ngayon lang ako nakakita ng guy who’s sensitive enough to know how a girl is when she’s on her rag. Ako pa ngayon ang mabilis magpalit ng mood ha? eh siya kaya dyan, kanina ang sobrang sungit tapos ngayon ano?! >:( ???   
  
“ikaw.. nagiinarte ka na naman eh ::)..”   
  
“hindi ako nagiinarte okay >:(.” nakakainis na talaga ha. Ang kulit nya.   
  
“umayos ka na nga.” Ano bang pinagsasabi nito? Umayos? ??? ???   
  
“what are you talking about? umayos? Fix what? ??? ???”   
  
“yourself! 8)”   
  
“why would I fix myself? ??? >:(” hindi naman kaya ako sira para i-fix noh! >:( >:(   
  
“dahil hindi ko gusto na nagsusungit ka dyan 8).” Aba! Bakit? siya lang ba may right para magsungit samin dalawa? ??? ??? I have my moments too you know!! >:( >:(   
  
“so what? I don’t care >:(.” He reminds me of how much I hate being dictated!   
  
“IRIS! >:(” he made a full stop somewhere. Ano ba yan. Are we fighting? :o ??? “umayos ka na, bibilang ako hanggang lima.” What the heck is he talking about? “isa.”   
  
I crossed my arms and faced him. “eh pano kung ayaw ko!? ??? 8)”   
  
“dalawa!” he continued counting. Bakit ba siya count ng count?! ???   
  
“ano ba! >:(”   
  
“GUSTO MO BANG MAGALIT AKO SAYO!?!? >:( 8)” uh-oh. okay, now he’s mad :-X :-X. “tatlo! >:(” kitang kita ko na galit na siya talaga. Soo… I got scared. His eyes are killing me kasi! “apat!” his eyes are getting bigger as he went on with the counting. “lim--- ” Talagang serious siya ha.. teka sandali! :-X :-[   
  
so I decided to cut him off already. “alright!” I straightened myself up. “AAYOS NA NGA EH!”   
  
“ANO!? SINISIGAWAN MO BA KO!? >:(”   
  
“ahh :-X.. hindi babe :-X :-[…” ano bayan.. “I’m not yelling at you.. sige.. sorry na :-[.” hindi ko siya sinigawan, nabigla lang ako.. or did I? kasi naman eh! I’m such a wimp talaga. Hmph! >:( :-[   
  
“oh? Akala ko ba aayos ka na? ???” he said, so I looked at him. “eh bakit nakasimangot ka pa dyan? ???”   
  
“hindi ah :-X..” I forced a smile. Grabe. I could feel my heart beat faster and faster every second! Nakakatakot talaga sya pag galit! Hindi ako makalaban! :-[ >:(   
  
“kung masama ang pakiramdam mo, sabihin mo sakin. Hindi yung nagsusungit ka dyan ng walang dahilan.” Pinaandar na nya yung car. Akala ko ihahatid na nya ko, but when we reached the third light, he made a right. Eh hindi naman yun yung way sa bahay namin. Hindi rin ito yung way papunta sa work nya.. or maybe this is a shortcut to get there? wahh! I don’t know! Saan kaya nya ko dadalin? Oh no! :o :o   
  
“where you taking me? ???” I asked.   
  
No response.   
  
Eto na naman tayo! Silent treatment na naman. Gosh! How hate being treated like this!   
  
I grabbed his hand and asked again, I'm starting to really be worried! :-[ “babe where are we going?” bahala na kung magalit sya. Kinakabahan ako eh baka kung saan ako dalhin nito! Malay nyo, baka nililigaw nya ko tapos bigla na lang nya ko itapon somewhere.. diba? ??? :-[   
  
“sa mall, hindi mo ba narerecognize yung dinadaanan natin? Ano kaba? ??? ::)” bigla nyang sinabi. Sa mall? Bakit kami babalik sa mall?   
  
“akala ko ba you have to be at work na? eh bakit tayo babalik sa mall? Did you forget something? ???” sunod sunod kong tinanong. Ang kulit ko no?   
  
“eh di bibili tayo ng susuotin sa launching mo. Dapat ikaw ang pinakamaganda dun 8).” Bibili kami? But did he just tell me he has to be at work for some important reason? Ano ba! Ang gulo nya ha ::) ???. “diba gusto mo yung dress kanina sa shop? ??? 8)” he continued talking. Ano ba to, hindi ba siya nawiweirdohan sa sarili nya? Tapos ako sasabihan nya na I change my mood not even with a blink of an eye, eh sya kaya mas grabe! ??? ??? Kanina ang sungit sungit nya sakin, tapos ngayon… ANOOO BAAA!! Is he playing mind games with me? because I’m telling you girls right now pa lang, I’m losing already! ??? :o :-X   
  
“yeah but---”   
  
He didn’t let me finish my sentence. “my work can wait.” Bigla nyang sinabi. “I don’t like seeing you irritated. Hindi kasi bagay sayo ang nakasimangot, pumapanget ka.” Awww…. Ang sweet ni baby sungit ko!!   
  
Nagpark na kami sa parking lot tapos bumaba ng car at pumasok sa mall. Habang naglalakad kami sa loob, I couldn’t stop myself from being so kilig. Wala lang. ewan ko ba kung bakit kinikilig ako. Heheh! Feeling ko nga yung smile ko from ear to ear na eh! ;D :D   
  
“so you think I’m pretty? ::) :D” yes! Say yes!! :D :D   
  
“hoy. wala akong sinabing ganun. 8)”   
  
“sus.. kunwari ka pa ehh! ::)”   
  
“wag ka ngang feeling!” he grinned at me. Yihiii.. nakita ko ulit yung dimple nya.. ang cute talaga! I want to pinch his face right now!! :D :D   
  
And I did.. nagulat nga sya eh. “ang cute mo, baby :)..” heck yeah!! woot woot! my boyfriend's a hottie! :D :D   
  
He stopped walking kaya pati ako napatigil din.. hala. Bakit serius na naman yung face nya?? Did I say anything wrong?? Uh ohhhh… ??? ??? :-[   
  
I really thought he was going to smack me in the head for saying whatever I just said. He walked towards me and held both my cheeks with his hands..   
  
He looked at straight in the eye. Grabe, nakakatunaw kaya yung tingin nyaaa!!   
  
“ikaw…” and then he pinched my cheeks so hard, I thought they were going to explode. Arayy ko. “ANG CUTE CUTE CUTE CUTE MO!! :D”   
  
“ooooowwwwww!!!! :-[ :-[” Masakit yun!! Pagkatapos nya kong kurutin sa cheeks ko, he turned around and started walking. Ang sama talaga ng ugali nun! iwanan daw ba ko?! ohhhh my poor cheeksss!!!! :'( :'(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“tara na Miss Piggy! 8) 8)” sinigaw nya habang nakatalikod siya. GEEZZ! WHAT A BAD, BAD BOY! ::) ::) Miss Piggy… oh my gosh. Baboy na ba talaga ko?? Huhuhuhu!!! :'( :'( :'(   
  
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Namili kami ng susuotin pati ng kung ano ano pang gamit ni Iris that same day. Grabe! ang dami nyang binili! >:( ::) Muntik ko na ngang mabili yung buong mall sa dami ng pinamili nya. Kung gumastos siya, parang mortal na kaaway nya ang pera! >:( Eh isang event lang naman yun, kung ano ano pa ang pinagkukuha. Eh siempre, no choice naman ako, eh kesa naman sumpungin na naman yun ng toyo nya. >:( :-\   
  
Pero sa totoo lang, nagulat talaga ako nung bigla siyang magsungit kanina.. kinabahan ako, kasi parang siya yung dating Iris na ayaw ko :-\. Gano na kaya kadami ang naaalala nya? ??? :-\ Ang sabi kasi ni Dr. Robles, unti unti ng bumabalik ang memory nya. Pano na lang kapag naalala na nya yung tungkol sa pekeng relationship namin? :-\ ??? Sigurado akong magagalit siya sakin dahil sa mga ginagawa ko sa kanya… :-[ :-\   
  
Teka, bakit ba ko nagwoworry dun, eh siya naman may pakana ng lahat ng to, at kung hindi dahil sakin, malamang pinabalik na siya dun sa America kasama ng David na yun… kaya kung tutuusin, siya pa dapat ang magpasalamat sakin, dahil hindi lang buhay nya ang sinagip ko, pati na rin ang kapalaran nya. 8) :-\   
  
Pero aaminin ko, kung siya natulungan ko kahit papano, sya naman.. She saved me. she helped and saved me in many ways.. I don’t know how, but she really did. Kung sino pa yung pinakaayaw mo, siya pa ngayon ang pinakamalaking naitulong sayo :-\ :). Kaya nga kahit papano, bumabawi ako sa kanya, kahit sa maliliit na paraan lang. Hindi ko na siya sinusungitan pati inaaway masyado. Well, depende na lang kung talagang pasaway siya. dahil yun, hindi ko talaga itotolerate! >:( >:(   
  
Sa totoo lang, nageenjoy na nga ako ngayon kapag kasama ko siya eh :). Hindi tulad noon na pakiramdam ko pasan ko ang problema ng buong mundo kapag katabi siya. Ngayon, excited pa nga ako tuwing umaga bago ko siya sunduin eh… it’s something I began to look forward to every morning.. I don’t know why… ??? ???   
  
Mabait si Iris. Maaalahanin, masunurin, masiyahin, sweet, thoughtful, makulit nga lang ::).. pero hindi siya mahirap pakisamahan :).. Kaya ngayon, medyo naiintindihan ko na kung bakit gusto sya ng lahat ng tao.. because she is a pleasant person.. wag ka nga lang magkakamaling galitin siya, at talagang masisira ang araw mo 8). sa katunayan nga nyan, she’s manageable already 8) 8). Isang sabi lang sa kanya at susunod na siya 8). hindi tulad noon, isang mahabang seremonyas muna ng kaartehan at reklamo bago siya sumunod. >:( >:(   
  
Minsan nga naguguilty na ko sa ginagawa ko sa kanya eh :-\ :-\.. yung nagpapanggap akong boyfriend nya, pati yung tinatrato ko siya ng hindi maayos.. I always yell at her and I always put her down even when it’s not necessary and it’s not her fault at all :-\ :-\… at sa lahat ng ginagawa ko sa kanya, hindi sya nagrereklamo, ni hindi nga siya pumapalag eh.. siguro dahil takot siya sakin, or kaya naman talagang sineseryoso nya yung sinabi ko sa kanya na utang nya sakin ang buhay nya at gusto ko na habang buhay nya itong tatanawin na utang na loob sa akin. :-\ Sa totoo lang, hindi naman nya utang ang buhay nya sakin eh.. ginawa ko yun kasi gusto ko siyang iligtas nung panahon na yun.. :) :-\   
  
Kaya nga paminsan hindi ko na maintindihan ang sarili ko eh.. ano bang gusto kong mangyare? ??? :-\ ??? Gusto ko ba siyang pahirapan o gusto kong pahirapan ang sarili ko? ??? :-\ ang labo. Ayokong dumating dun sa point na kamuhian nya ko at isipin nyang pinagsamantalahan ko yung pagkakaron nya ng amnesia.. ayoko naman mangyari yun, dahil kahit papano, naging malapit na rin sa loob ko si Iris..   
  
Ayokong nakikita siyang malungkot o kaya namomroblema.. kasi pati ako bumibigat ang pakiramdam pagka ganun.. :-\ :-\   
  
Oo nga pala, si David, lilipad na pabalik ng LA next week. Dapat kasama nya si Iris eh, kaso nga lang nagusap sila ng Mommy nya at napagkasunduan na dito na lang nya itutuloy yung naiwan pa nyang subjects sa school para mabantayan ko siya dahil ang sabi ng Mommy nya, sakin lang daw nakikinig si Iris 8) 8).. and speaking of, kailangan ko pa pala siyang ihanap at ienroll sa bago nyang school.. Siempre dun ko siya ipapasok sa dati kong school dahil kilala ko na yung mga teachers dun pati alam ko ang sistema sa school na yun ng sa ganon, talagang bantay sarado sya sakin. Bawal ang kalokohan. Talagang mag-aaral siya. 8) 8)   
  
natutuwa nga ko sa Mommy nya eh.. tita Josephine pala, as she insists to be called. Ang sabi nya kasi, sakin na daw nya pinagkakatiwala muna si Iris habang nandito siya. naisip ko nga, kung alam nya kaya yung totoong set up, ipagkakatiwala pa kaya nya yung anak nya sakin? Malamang hindi. Baka nga paliparin kagad yun pabalik ng America eh. ::) 8)   
  
But you know what’s weird? Mukang okay na silang dalawa ni David ??? :-\.. wala na kasi akong naririnig ng kung ano anong masasamang bagay tungkol sa kanya kay Iris eh. nung tinanong ko siya kahapon kung nakahanap na ba ng matitiran si David, ang sabi nya hindi na nya pinapaalis dahil aalis na naman daw siya next week. Ang sabi ba naman sakin, ‘babe, he’s nice naman eh, he’s a good cook pa, I so love his omelette!’ Ano kayang nakain nun at biglang bumait sya kay David? ??? ??? siguro may kung ano dun sa omelette nya no? ??? :-\   
  
hindi ko tuloy maiwasan ang sarirli ko na magisip :-\ ???.. hindi ko naman ganun kaalam yung istorya nila. ang natatandaan ko lang na sinabi ni Iris sakin eh yung pinagpipilitan siya ng Mommy nya kay David.. at naging sila noon. pero hindi ko alam kung anong kasalanan nitong si David at bakit sobra na lang ang galit ni Iris sa kanya.. eh sa nakita ko naman kay David, mahal nya talaga si Iris.. na kahit hindi maganda ang pakikitungo nitong si Iris sa kanya, nandyan pa rin sya at pinapatunayan na nagbago na siya.. yun nga lang, medyo may pagkamahangin siya. >:( >:(   
  
it’s weird that what’s been happening lately worries me a lot.. it should be a good thing that she and David are getting along, pero hindi ko maiwasan ang magtaka pati… KABAHAN. :-\ :-\   
  
Pano kung talagang maging okay na sila? ??? Ano na kayang mangyayare? ??? Kahit wala na si David dito, kung okay naman sila, eh sure akong magiging magkaibigan sila. At isa pa, alam kong bibisitahin niya si Iris dito kailan man nya gustohin. Hindi naman kasi problema yun sa kanya. Pano kung magkakabalikan sila? ??? :-\   
  
I know it’s a bad thing to say this… pero sana hindi na sila maging okay.. kahit kailan. Dahil kapag nagkataon, alam kong iiwan ako ni Iris.. lalo na sa ugaling pinapakita ko sa kanya? hindi malabong gawin nya yun kapag nagising siya sa katotohanan.. hindi ko na ata kayang mag-isa ulit.. kailangan ko pa si Iris… :-\ :-\ :-\   
  
O! alam ko kung anong iniisip nyo. Hindi ko siya mahal okay? hindi porket ganito ako ibig sabihin na nun mahal ko na siya. I just…. I just care :). Dahil hindi na naman ibang tao sakin si Iris eh.. para ko na siyang… matalik na kaibigan. At isa pa, I don’t think I’m ready for it… for love that is. Takot pa kong masaktan pati maiwan.. Sa ngayon, gusto ko munang i-enjoy kung ano mang meron kami ni Iris. Hindi ko alam kung anong meron kami, pero ang alam ko lang, hindi nako masyadong malungkot ngayon.. :) :)   
  
Hay, tama na nga ang drama, baka isipin nyo pa dyan bading ako eh. ::) ::)   
  
“oh ano? Okay ka na ba sa lahat ng pinamili natin ngayon? ???” nasa bahay nila kami ngayon, kakagaling lang from dinner sa bahay namin. As usual, tuwang tuwa na naman si Mommy sa kanya kasi ang lakas nyang kumain. Biruin nyo, lahat ng nilagay ng Mommy ko sa plato niya, kinain!?! ??? ??? Hanep talaga tong Piggy na to eh samantalang nung nasa mall pa lang kami, kain na sya ng kain habang namimili kami! Minsan iniisip ko, saan kaya napupunta lahat ng kinakain nya? ??? ???   
  
“oo naman babe. Thank you ha. thanks for taking me shopping :).” She smiled while she looked at me through the mirror. Nasa harapan kasi siya ngayon ng salamin eh, sinusubukan nya yung mga iba’t ibang klaseng damit na binili namin. At ako naman, nakaupo sa may bed nya, pinapanood lang siya. “what about this? What do you think? ??? :)” she asked when she placed the dress over her body, pero hindi nya ito sinuot. Pinakita lang nya.   
  
“patingin nga.” So she turned around so I could see her. It was a black dress. Hmm.. I don’t know about this. “okay lang.” parang hindi ko yata gusto. >:(   
  
“okay lang? bakit okay lang? ??? ???” ano ba namang klaseng tanong yan? ??? Anong gusto nyang sabihin ko? na ubod ng ganda? “akala ko pa naman magugustohan mo to. hmph >:(.” Nag pout siya. ano na namang kadramahan yan? ??? >:(   
  
“maganda naman eh :-\..” hindi ko nga lang type.   
  
“eh sabi mo okay lang. hindi mo naman kaya sinabing maganda :-[ :-[.” Nakapout pa rin siya. grabe, para syang bata! Matampuhin at sumpungin! >:( >:(   
  
“oo nga.” Nakatingin lang siya sakin na parang masama ang loob nya. sus, parang yan lang?? ??? ??? “pero hindi naman ibig sabihin nun na pangit na yang napili mo eh. okay lang siya..kaso kasi ang gusto ko sana magstand out ka dun.. eh itim yang susuotin mo, malamang halos lahat ng tao dun nakaitim din 8) 8)..” yun na lang ang sinabi ko. gusto ko siyang magstand out. pero ang totoo, ayoko na yun ang isuot nya sa party. Hindi siya magsusuot ng ganon sa harap ng maraming tao >:( >:(. Okay, so obviously hindi nya nagustohan yung sinabi ko. lalong kumunot yung noo nya eh! >:( ano ba naman to. ganito ba talaga kayong mga babae? Gusto nyo kasi puro puri na lang eh! gusto nyo laging maganda. Hindi ba kayo marunong tumanggap ng criticism? Magtatanong tapos kapag hindi nyo nagustohan yung sagot namin, magagalit o magtatampo kayo! mga spoiled brats! Err! >:( >:( “tsaka pati.. it’s too revealing.. I don’t want you wearing that. Itapon o ipamigay mo na lang yan >:(.”   
  
Tinurn nya yung dress sa direction nya. “anong revealing dyan? ??? It’s just a little cleavage babe ::).” Ni-roll nya yung mata nya. eh ayoko nga! >:( Nung nakita nya yung expression ng muka ko, nagbuntong hininga siya. o? para san yun? ??? ??? “fine! >:( what do you want me to wear then? :-\” medyo iritado na yung boses nya. hay! Grabe. hindi ko na alam kung anong sasabihin ko. “hindi mo pala gusto, sana sinabi mo na lang kanina bago ko binili >:( :-[.” Hindi ko siya maintindihan. Actually I generally do not understand girls at all. Bakit ba pag time of the month eh grabe ang mood swings nyo? Ano ba kasing nararamdaman nyo para maging bugnutin? Feeling ko kasi psychological lang yun eh. >:( >:(   
  
“eh yan na yung pinili mo eh. at isa pa, hindi mo naman ako tinanong pati hindi ko nakita na ganyan pala likod at harapan nyan.”   
  
“so you weren’t paying attention pala? All the while I was showing you dresses nod ka lang ng nod, akala ko naman interested ka, yun pala hindi >:( :-[.” Nag-pout siya ng lips. Naiinis ako, pero every time nakikita kong ginagawa nya yun, nawawala yung inis ko. Ang labo. ??? ???   
  
“bakit? pakikinggan mo ba ko kung sabihin kong iba na lang ang bilin mo? Hindi naman diba? ??? ??? ipipilit mo parin naman ang gusto mo eh.”   
  
“kahit na, you should’ve given me your comments lalo na pag hindi mo gusto.” Nahahawa na ata ako sa pagkairita nya. >:( ???   
  
Pero ayoko siyang patulan. Sigurado akong kawawa na naman siya kung nagkataon. Oh siya, sya sige na. pagbibigyan ko na siya, tutal naman eh paminsan minsan lang to. Pagbigyan na, kasi masama ang pakiramdam ni Piggy ::). Kaya tumayo na lang ako para lumapit sa kanya. “if that’s what you want to wear, then go ahead..” I said calmly, kahit na naiinis na ko at talagang ayokong suotin nya yung damit na yun. “pero hindi ko yan gusto.”   
  
“but this is what I want to wear eh :-\.”   
  
“sige na nga eh. bahala ka na >:(.” Hindi pa rin nya inayos yung muka nya. nakasimangot pa rin siya kaya naman naisipan kong magpunta sa closet nya. baka sakaling may mahanap akong damit dito na gusto kong isuot nya. eh kasi naman, masyadong revealing yung binili nyang damit eh. kita yung likod pati yung dibdib nya. kung nakita ko lang yan ng maagi kanina eh di sana hindi ko yan binili! >:( >:( >:(   
  
“what are you doing? ??? :-\” she asked habang nakasunod siya sakin.   
  
“finding you an outfit 8).” I said while rummaging through her closet. Hmm.. marami syang damit. Hindi ko nga alam kung bakit kailangan pa nyang bumili pa eh saksakan ng dami ang mga damit nya. Hindi ko nga alam kung saan ako magsisimulang maghanap eh! ??? ???   
  
“but we just bought one ???.” inabot nya sakin yung black dress na gusto nga nyang isuot. “eto na nga susuotin ko eh diba? ??? :-\”   
  
“eh ayoko nga yan. It’s too revealing. I don’t want people staring at you in different places >:(.”   
  
“hmf. So what, I have something to show ::) 8)..” ang yabang!! Porket maganda ang katawan nya eh…. ::) ::)   
  
Tinuloy ko parin ang paghahanap ng damit para sa kanya until I stopped to this red dress. Ayos na to, simple lang, hindi kita ang likod pati dibdib nya. “ito. This is what I want you to wear 8).” Ang sabi ko sa kanya habang nakaharap sya sakin.   
  
“but that dress was from last year.. I wore that already >:( ??? :-\..” nagpout na naman siya. Seriously, what is it with her pouting? May ibig sabihin ba yun? oh talagang nagpapacute lang siya? ??? ::)   
  
“oh? Eh ano naman ngayon? ??? Ano bang masama kung susuotin mo ulit? ??? ???”   
  
“it’s outdated >:(.” Anong outdated??   
  
“ano bang pinagsasabi mo? ???”   
  
Nagbuntong hininga siya at tumingin sakin na para ba siyang nakaharap sa isang taong walang alam. Well, in this case, talagang wala akong alam sa pinagsasabi nya.   
  
“baby ::)..” nagtip toe siya at pinatong yung kamay nya sa balikat ko. “it means it’s out of style 8).” Then she smirked. “gusto mo ba sabihin nila na out of style yung suot ng girlfriend mo? ??? ::)” eh ano bang pakialam nila? Sus. Parang damit lang eh, ang daming arte! >:( “I’m sure a lot of people from different professions are going to show up there ::).”   
  
“basta! >:(” tinanggal ko nga yung hand nya sa balikat ko. lumabas na ko ng closet nya dala dala yung red dress at nilagay ito sa kama nya. “yan ang susuotin mo, and that’s final >:( 8).”   
  
“but :-\..”   
  
“no buts. Iris. That’s what I want you to wear.”   
  
“eh bakit nga? Gusto ko yung black dress eh :-\ :-\..”   
  
Ang kulit naman eh!! >:( “ito tandaan mo ha.” Lumapit ako sa kanya. “kapag hindi yan ang sinuot mo sa party, magagalit ako sayo! >:( 8)” paminsan talaga kailangan idaan siya sa sindak eh! 8) >:( “at pag nagalit ako sayo, mapapahiya ka. gusto mo ba yun, ha? ??? >:(”   
  
“no.. hindi, baby. :-\ :-[” biglang umamo naman yung muka nya. wala pala siya eh, takot! Ayan. Matuto siya. dapat malaman niya na sa aming dalawa, ako ang batas. Ako lang ang batas. 8) 8)   
  
“yun naman pala eh 8)..” inakbayan ko siya. “good girl ka naman pala eh 8) :).” She forced a smile. Alam kong hindi nya gusto yung desisyon ko pero yun ang dapat masunod.   
  
Anyway, after ko siyang pilian ng damit na isusuot para sa launching nya, bumaba na kami kasi aalis na ako. medyo late na rin kasi at kailangan ko ng umuwi. Nung palabas na ko ng pintuan nila, hinila nya bigla yung kamay ko na parang gusto nya kong pigilan. Ano na naman?! ??? ???   
  
“uhmm.. babe? ??? :-\”   
  
“o? ???”   
  
Kaya tumingin ako kagad sa kanya. kanina pa kasi siya tahimik, hindi ko alam kung nagtatampo na naman to dahil hindi yung gusto nya ang nasunod o ano. Basta mula pa kaninang sinabi ko na yung red dress ang susuotin nya, napansin ko na medyo nga tahimik siya pati parang ang lalim ng iniisip. ??? :-\   
  
Naglakad siya papuntang swing nila sa garden at naupo dun. Siempre sinundan ko siya. ano na naman kayang problema nito? Nakatingin siya malayo na parang may bumabagabag sa isipan nya. pero matapos ang ilang sandali, nagsalita siya. mahina, pero naintindihan ko.   
  
“I never got to ask.. :-\ :-\   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
...how long have we been together? ??? :-\” bigla nyang tinanong... isang tanong na halos ikalaglag ko sa kinauupuan ko. :o :o   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
...how long have we been together? ??? :-\”   
  
  
I had to ask.. hindi ko talaga kasi maalala. I took the risk, eh kesa naman ma-miss ko yung anniversary or monthsary namin, eh di malaking gulo pa yun.. and besides.. I have the perfect excuse naman eh.. may amnesia ako! ;) ;)   
  
Nagiba bigla yung muka nya :-\ :-\.. para siyang nagulat dun sa tinanong ko. nagulat kaya siya, or nagalit siya kasi hindi ko matandaan yung anniversary namin? ??? ??? Ano ba to. I wish he could just talk rather than giving me that blank, more like shocked face of his. Hindi ko kasi alam kung anong ibig sabihin nun eh.. ayan tuloy!! Feeling ko it was a wrong idea to ask that. Err. Stupid, stupid me!! :-[ :-[   
  
Babawiin ko na sana yung question when he suddenly spoke. “three weeks.” HUH!?!?!? :o :o :o Oh my God?! :o ??? ARE YOU SERIOUS?! ??? ???   
  
“huh!? Three weeks? Just three weeks? :o ???” I swear, my eyes felt like they were going to pop out from their sockets! Three weeks lang kami? What the heck? That’s so weird!? ??? ???   
  
Well, he followed through with my sudden outburst. “oo. Hindi mo ba naaalala? ??? 4 days pa lang tayo when the accident happened 8).” Talaga? geez! Ganon ka ba ka severe yung damage sa utak ko? I really couldn’t recall! Ano ba to. nakakahiya :-X. Three weeks pa lang pala kami eh tapos hindi ko na kagad maalala? Goodness gracious.   
  
Hindi ko na nga lang masyadong pinahalata na shocked ako dun sa sinabi nya.. I just played it like I asked that question to refresh my memory. I wrinkled my forehead as I tried to grasp this unbelievable information ??? ???.. “hmm.. 4 days before the accident :-\.. so.. May 16 pala naging tayo.. really… that’s odd.. para kasing.. ano eh.. matagal na tayo ??? :-[..” hmm.. dapat sa June 16 i-surprise ko siya.. first monthsary namin yun eh.. I want to make it special for the both of us.. ;) ;)   
  
“ah ganun ba.. eh kasi lagi tayong magkasama.. kaya siguro feeling mo matagal na tayo 8)..” tumingin siya sa malayo, I think he was staring at the bonsai plant we have by the pool. Or I don't know, basta he's staring at something over there. ??? ::)   
  
I looked at him while he was looking forward. Eto pang isang tanong. Hopefully his answer won’t be as shocking as his first one :-X :-[.. “eh.. well.. pano mo ko niligawan? Tsaka how long? ??? ???” I bet he really had a hard ass time courting me! 8) 8) aba? Ako pa! high maintenance ata to! 8) 8) si David? he knelt in front of a crowd when he asked me to be his girl! Wait, how come I remember everything about David and I and nothing about Jeremy and I except these past few weeks? That’s odd… ??? ??? :-\   
  
He looked at me from head to toe, then he raised his eyebrow. “ikaw? ??? Isang araw lang no.” he sat back and relaxed himself. wait… WAIT!!! WHAT!? :o :o ???   
  
“talaga?! ??? :o one day lang, tapos sinagot na kita?! Bakit?” sunod sunod kong tinanong. Isang araw!?!?!? ??? ??? I don’t believe this!! How the heck did that happen!?!?! ??? :o And WHYYY!!??! IRISSS!! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HIGH STANDARDS!?!? Huhuhuh!! :o ??? :'(   
  
“oo. Eh kasi patay patay ka sakin, lagi kang nagpapacute, lagi kang nagpapansin.. so isang araw naisipan kong pansinin ka na. hindi mo man lang ako pinahirapan.. sinagot mo ko kagad 8) ::)..” tapos tumawa sya. “cheap ka pa nga eh, isang scoop lang ng ice cream, napasagot na kita kagad. 8) ;D” OH MY GOD!? ??? :o How cheap can I be?! :'( :'( Hindi ko yun maalala. I swear I know I’m high maintenance! But what happened? ??? :-\   
  
“really?? I did that? So.. patay na patay pala ako sayo ??? :-\..” bakit parang hindi?? ano ba to.. ang awkward ng moment.. kaya siguro parang feeling ko one way relationship lang to.. kasi ako pala yung habol ng habol sa kanya… :-\ :-\   
  
“oo noh, ang kulit mo nga eh. lagi mo kong kinukulit. lagi mo pa kong sinusundan kahit saan ako magpunta. 8) ::)” Was I really that desperate?!? Tama na!! I can’t hear this anymore! Where’s your dignity Iris!?!?!? Naman! :o ??? :'( :'(   
  
“so nung.. well.. when you decided to ask me out.. mahal mo na ko non? ??? :-\” ay duh!? Stupid question. Malamang hindi. Ikaw nga ang nagkukulit sa kanya eh. tanga mo talaga Iris! Pero malay ko naman diba.. maybe he realized he loves me too, kaya nya ko inask out.. kasi ganun naman dapat yun diba? Si David kasi mahal na nya ko even before he asked me to be his girlfriend.. so I’m assuming it’s the same thing with Jeremy.. ??? ???   
  
“huh!? :o ???” okay.. based on his reaction, something’s telling me I’m not going to like his answer… “Ano… uhmm.. hindi :-\ :-\.” See. sabi na eh. ang sama naman. hindi pala nya ko love. Hmff! :-[ :'(   
  
“ha? bakit hindi!? So ibig sabihin hindi mo ko mahal?! ??? >:( :-\” yumuko ako. ouch naman yun :-[ :-[… hearing your boyfriend say he doesn’t love you can not hurt more than anything. Seriously. :-[ :-[ :'(   
  
He picked my chin up and faced me towards him. naiiyak ako. nakakainis :'( :'(. Pero pinigilan ko sarili ko. I don’t want him to see me crying. Napakadesperate ko na nga noon eh, papakita ko pa ba yun ngayon? ??? :'( “Iris.. hindi kasi ganon kadali yun.. maski ikaw, hindi mo naman ako mahal eh :-\..” hindi ko siya mahal? ??? Hindi ko nga ba siya mahal? Or do i? ??? :-\ I guess he felt sorry for me when he saw my face that’s why he said that. :-[ :-\   
  
“huh? ??? Pano nangyari yun? why are we together then if we don’t love each other? ??? :-\” because I just don’t see the logic of it at all.. so meaning pala nito, hindi totoo yung relationship namin.. because how can you be with someone you don’t love and doesn’t love you? ??? :-\   
  
“Iris.. maraming dahilan kung bakit tayo ngayon :-\ ..” hindi ko maintindihan. Panong maraming dahilan? Eh wala naman akong maisip kahit isa.   
  
“maraming dahilan? Like what? ??? :-\”   
  
“hindi ko alam.. pero ganun eh :-\ :)..” he looked straight in my eye, ano bayan, pati siya hindi alam. Ano ba tong relationship namin? Laro lang ba to? ??? ??? Kase parang ganun eh :-\ :-\… “sige nga ikaw, can you tell me now that you love me? ??? :-\” I stopped and thought for a moment, mahal ko ba siya? kung hindi, bakit masaya ako kapag kasama ko siya? ??? Tsaka pati gusto ko lagi ko siyang nakikita, dahil kapag hindi, kinakabahan ako :-\ :-\.. parang hindi complete yung day ko kapag hindi ko siya nakakasama or nakikita.. pero kung mahal ko naman sya… bakit parang hindi ko naman masabi? ??? :-\ “see.. yan ang sinasabi ko. di mo masabi noh? ???” nag-nod naman ako, pero… wala lang.. parang ang weird ng feeling :-\.. “kasi hindi mo ko mahal..” he said. I suddenly looked at him when I heard that.   
  
“ganun.. so hindi mo pala natin mahal ang isa’t isa :-\..” I wrinkled my forehead, kasi ang gulo. Hindi ko maintindihan.. “eh bakit pa naging tayo if we don’t even love each other? ??? :-\”   
  
Instead of answering that question, he hugged me. I’m sad for some reason :( :(.. “Iris, hindi yun importante sa ngayon.. basta ang mahalaga, I like being with you. kahit lagi kitang pinapagalitan, pati sinisigawan.. you’re still very special to me… at ganun ka rin naman diba? ??? :)”   
  
“oo :-\..” I nodded, even though I felt a twitch in my chest. I’m hurt. Bakit ko ba nararamdaman to… :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
“so let’s just enjoy our moments together.. and maybe.. one day, magising na lang tayo na mahal na natin ang isa’t isa..” he smiled at me. a simple smile that suddenly made me feel okay.   
  
Natuwa ako sa dun sa sinabi nya.. oo nga, maybe one day he’ll wake up and realize he loves me.. “so special pala ako sayo ha ::)..” I smiled back at him.   
  
Inakbayan nya ko kaya napadikit ako sa kanya lalo. “oo, kaya magpasalamat ka, pinagtyatyagaan pa kita. Kahit ang sobrang kulit at tigas ng ulo mo. Pati kung kumain ka, pang baranggay na eh! Ang lakas mong kumain! Piggy ka talaga! ;D” Tapos ginulo nya yung hair ko. ang sama talaga nito! Hindi na ko kakain talaga!! joke. ;D ;D   
  
So I pulled back and slapped his shoulder lightly. Kidding manner. “ah ganun! Pinagtyatyagaan mo lang pala ako! sira ulo! >:( >:(” feeling nito! Eh siya kaya dyan, sobrang hina kumain, feeling ko nga pag nagka tornado dito, tatangayin sya eh! payatot!! Tingting! Bamboo!! “tsaka.. hindi naman ako baboy eh.. ang sexy ko nga noh!” I stood in front of him and showed my body. Ha! sige.drool like a hungy dog!! 8) 8) “Piggy pala ha! ikaw Bamboo! ;D ;D”   
  
“anong Bamboo ka dyan!? Baka matunaw ka kapag pinakita ko sayo katawan ko! 8) 8) 8)” ugok na to! “ah sus! Sexy daw! Ang yabang! ::)” he pulled me closer to him and hugged me from my waist, sabay tawa. Nakakainis siya! eh sexy naman talaga ko! “pinagtyatyagaan nga.. pero masaya naman diba? ??? :)” oo, kahit ganito siya at magulo ang set up namin, masayang masaya ako. Honestly. :) :)   
  
“hmp! Oo na masaya na! ::)” I pushed his head away from me and he looked up towards me. “so baby, sa June 16 pala yung first monthsary natin.. anong gagawin natin? ??? :) Dapat special yun ah! 8)” nako dapat lang! kasi isusurprise ko siya! hihih! ;D ;D   
  
“basta. It’s a surprise 8).” Naks. How nice naman. he’s surprising me when I’m surprising him! masaya to! pero dapat mas dapat masurprise siya sa gagawin ko! 8) :D   
  
“talaga? ??? isusurprise mo ko? ;D” I excitedly said. “what kind of surprise? :D”   
  
“surprise nga eh! ::)” he slapped my butt slightly. Aba! Sira ulo talaga to! “basta. Just wait and see :) ;)..”   
  
Wait and see ha.. hmmm… ::) ::)   
  
  
[][][]   
  
  
Friday na ngayon. He didn’t pick me up this morning kasi ang gusto nya magrest daw ako para mamayang hapon. May meeting daw kasi siya with a client at siempre ayaw nya ng istorbo. Okay lang. I need to rest din naman eh.. after kong malaman yung story namin before the accident. Woooh! :o Grabe. hindi ko siya matake. I can’t believe I said yes to him in one day. ONLY ONE DAY! :o :o Yun yung hindi ko talaga matanggap! Buti na lang hindi ko na naitanong kung ilang oras or minutes when I said yes after he asked me. baka lalo pa kong mashock. My gosh. I must’ve really liked him a lot already even before we became official.. ::) ::)   
  
Anyway, I went to my doctor’s appointment this morning with David. Oo nga pala, aalis na siya Friday of next week. If I hadn’t already said it yet, him and I are okay now. Wala lang, I just didn’t feel like I was still mad at him. Sincere naman kasi yung sorry nya kaya tinanggap ko na. naisip ko naman kasi, I have Jeremy na, plus my Mom really likes him for me :) :).   
  
nakakainis lang kasi Jeremy doesn’t get bothered when I’m with David, parang no big deal sa kanya yun. ngayon ko lang naiintindihan kung bakit ganun at kung bakit parang wala siyang pakialam sakin most of the time. kasi hindi nya ko mahal :-\ :'(. ngayon ko nga lang yun narealize eh. Ni hindi man lang siya nagseselos. Alam naman nyang ex-boyfriend ko yun. ??? :-\   
  
What we talked about last night really bothers me a lot. no kidding. It’s not just about me saying yes to him right away nor is it about me being head over heels on him.. it’s something else. nararamdaman ko yun :-\ :-[. yung feeling na boyfriend mo nga siya at masaya kayo pareho, but he doesn’t really belong to you :-\ :-\.. Hindi ko yun pinapakita kay Jeremy, but that’s what I really feel. I think I love him na nga eh :-\.. hindi ko nga lang masabi. Parang may pumipigil kasi sakin eh.. siguro kasi I think it’s too soon for me to feel this.. Hindi ko nga alam kung baka side effect lang to ng sakit ko o ano eh :-\ :-\.. whatever.   
  
  
“are you okay? ??? :-\” he asked while he was driving. Pauwi na kami ngayon. This is the third time he asked me if I’m okay since this morning. Napansin nya siguro, kasi kanina pa ko tahimik eh.. :-\   
  
  
  
  
“yeah, I’m fine :-\…” I said while I was looking out the window.   
  
“are you sure? You don’t seem okay to me.. is something bothering you? ??? :-\” oo. Sobra. :-[   
  
“I'm okay, David. I’m fine.” Sinabi ko ulit. Liar. You know what’s weird? ??? Hindi na ko nakukulitan sa kanya ngayon, nor do I feel like he’s interfering with my life whenever he asks me stuffs like this. Ewan ko ba. even I don’t understand myself. ??? :-\   
  
“okay. I won’t ask anymore. But if you need someone to talk to, you can always come to me.” he held my arm. “you know that, don’t you? ??? :)”   
  
“uh huh.” I said. “I’m gonna miss you :-\.” bigla kong sinabi. Ewan ko kung bakit. “I mean, you know. Because we’re okay now and stuff.. I’ll miss your omelette.” Parang ayaw ko ata siyang umalis.. :-\   
  
“don’t worry, I’ll just be a phone call away.. and if you want omelette, I’d be glad to send you one ;).” He winked at me. gumaan nga yung feeling ko eh.   
  
Nagsmile lang ako sa kanya tapos binalik na namin yung eyes namin sa road.   
  
Hinatid lang nya ko sa bahay. Bibili pa daw kasi siya ng mga pasalubong. Hindi na ko sumama, kasi I need to take a shower and fix myself for tonight’s event. Naligo na ko nun, tapos tumawag si Jeremy pagkalabas ko ng shower.   
  
“nasan ka na?” wow, babe. Hello to you too. >:( ::)   
  
“sa bahay.”   
  
“si David kasama mo pa?” he asked. But it wasn’t like he was showing jealousy with the way he delivered that. Hay. Yun pa? magseselos? Ha. that’ll be the day. Alam nyo, I wish nga kahit konti magselos naman siya eh. :-\   
  
“no, he went to the mall para bumili ng mga pasalubong pagbalik nya sa LA.”   
  
“ah okay. anong ginagawa mo?” he asked. I could hear him walking I guess to the parking lot or something. Narinig ko pa nga si Anthony sa background eh, sumisigaw ng ‘hi Tisay!’ sira talaga yun. :D :D   
  
“wala, just got out of the shower.”   
  
“how’s the doctor’s appointment?”   
  
“okay lang.”   
  
“oh.. oh sige. Magpahinga ka muna, maaga pa naman eh. hindi nga pala kita masusundo mamaya, kasi marami pang aasikasuhin sa bahay..”   
  
“oh.. okay lang :-\.” ang sama naman nito, bakit hindi nya ko susunduin!? >:( :-\   
  
“basta dapat nandito ka na by 7:00 pm okay? ipapakilala pa kita sa mga tao.”   
  
“sige babe. I’ll be there by 7.” I said. Then we hung up already. Kaasar naman to. hmf! >:( :-[   
  
Binato ko yung phone ko sa kama pagkatapos kong ibaba ito. I don’t know why I’m so ticked dahil lang dun >:(. Ah basta! Humiga na lang ako sa bed and turned on the TV. Baka sakaling mawala yung pagkainis ko eh pero wala naman magandang mapanood. Ano bayan. >:( >:(   
  
“couz? ??? ???” nagising ako bigla, nakatulog pala ako. napatingin ako bigla sa door, sumilip si Ella sa room ko. she was already dressed up. itong babaeng to, ilang araw ko na siyang hindi nakikita or nakakasama. Eh kasi naman, when I get home she’s already sleeping, and when I wake up in the morning, she’s gone. Kaya ayun, hindi na kami nagkikita.   
  
“yeah? come in.” I said when I turned my head around to face her. Tumingin ako sa time, 5:30. hala. Ang tagal ko palang nakatulog. 3:00 lang kanina eh. “what’s up?” I sat up and brushed my hair, ang gulo kasi, para akong sinabunutan! :o ;D “where’s lola?”   
  
“wala! Namiss lang kita kasi ilang araw na kaya tayong hindi nagkikita noh!? :D :D” umupo sya sa tabi ko. “si Lola? Ay nauna na. kanina pa siya nandon eh.. yung driver ang maghahatid satin.” Then she looked at me and placed her hands on her waist. “eh teka nga muna, bakit hindi ka pa bihis ha? ???”   
  
“oo nga eh.” I said while brushing my hair and watching the TV. “nakatulog kasi ako :-\.”   
  
“so what have you been up to ha?” is it me or is she just full of enthusiasm today? Ang weird. Matagal nga akong nakastare sa TV lang, hindi ko naman maintindihan kung ano yung pinapanood ko.. basta nakaramdam na lang ako ng shake sa arm ko. “huy! Hello? earth to Iris? ??? ???” winave nya yung hand nya sa face ko. “okay ka lang? ???”   
  
“ha? ??? yeah.. oo. Okay lang :-\.” I said right away. Something is bothering me, but I don’t want to ask her kasi malamang hindi naman nya alam. Or maybe she does.. I just don’t want her to know I’m having problems. :-\ :-\   
  
She wrinkled her forehead and stared at me as if she were examining my entire face. Okay, I’m known to be the best one to hide her emotions. Kahit anong gawin nya hindi nya malalaman kung anong nararamdaman ko unless of course if I actually say it.   
  
“sure ka? ???” I nodded. “okay! :D” see. she couldn’t read me. nobody can. “so, ready ka na ba mamaya? Anong susuotin mo? Patingin nga! :D :D” she jumped out of the bed and pulled me up too.   
  
“yung.. yung red dress over there.” Tinuro ko yung red dress na sinabi nyang isuot ko. ayoko ngang isuot yan eh, luma na kasi. Hindi ko nga alam kung magkakasya pa yan sakin, or if it’s going to look good on me. :-\   
  
“ang ganda naman! siya ba pumili nito? ??? :D”   
  
“oo.. hindi ko nga alam kung magkakasya pa yan sakin eh.” I walked over and stopped beside her. “I haven’t worn that since last year. Eh mas payat ako last year eh :-\ ::) ???..” actually, yun naman talaga yung worry ko eh, I gained 7 pounds kaya ever since I got here. si Jeremy kasi eh! >:( ::) lagi na lang ako pinapakain. Ayan tuloy!! >:( >:( Hmffftt. :'( :'(   
  
“eh di isukat mo para malaman mo!”   
  
So sinukat ko naman. actually, I should be getting ready na nga eh. anong oras na noh. Si Ella nga bihis na. and that’s supposedly an event for me, tapos late ako dadating? Nakakahiya noh ::) ::). Nagpunta na ko sa bathroom para magpalit. I don’t know about this, just by staring at this dress, I’m sensing something is not right already.   
  
I slowly slid up the dress over my body, smooth sliding until… \*craccckkkk\* I heard a loud tear all of a sudden.   
  
OH-MY-GOD :o :o.   
  
My dress tore in the side. Uh-oh. :-X :-X   
  
I started panicking, kasi hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko, how am I going to get out of this? Eh ang tight kaya!! “couz? Are you okay in there?” sinigaw nya sa may pinto. Hindi ako makagalaw, I’m stuck in!! huhuhuh. :'( :'(   
  
“Ella!! help me! I’m stuck!!! :'( :'(” I jumped up and down, hoping it’ll help me slide out, pero hindi!   
  
Pumasok siya kagad sa bathroom at tinulungan ako maalis yung dress. “ano bayan, Iris! Ang hirap naman nito! Tumaba ka kasi eh! ;D ;D” sinabi nya while she was helping me get out.   
  
“wow! Way to go Ella! >:( ::)” I said sarcastically. Mataba daw ako? wahhh!!! Noooo!!!! :o :'(   
  
Ayun, we weren’t able to get it off me, kaya kumuha na lang siya ng gunting para i-cut yung dress. Huhuhu. Bye bye my Versace dress!! :'( :'(   
  
“hala, pano yan, couz? Anong susuotin mo? Eh pare pareho ng size itong mga dress mo dito? ??? ???” sinabi nya while she was rummaging through my closet to find me another dress.   
  
“anong gagawin ko? ??? :-[” now I don’t even have anything to wear. I sat back on my bed. Wala na. might as well not go :-\ :-\. Kinuha ko na nga yung phone ko para tawagan si Jeremy to let him know what happened when she suddenly yelled from the closet.   
  
“ito may nakita ako!” lumabas siya and showed me a black dress. The dress Jeremy and I bought in the mall. Yes, the same dress he told me not to wear ever at ipamigay or itapon ko na lang daw because he won’t let me go out wearing that. :-\ :-\   
  
“I can’t wear that :-\..” I shook my head. “Jeremy said not to. ayaw nya yan eh.. baka magalit yun pag sinuot ko yan :-\ :-\.”   
  
“hindi noh! Okay lang yan! Ang sexy mo nga dyan eh! I'm sure ikaw ang pinakasexy nyan mamaya! :D :D”   
  
“yeah, that’s why. kasi daw nakikita yung cleavage ko pati yung back ko.. eh ayaw nya nun eh :-\ :-\..” kakaasar, ang ganda ganda pa naman ng dress na to.   
  
“hay nako, sige isuot mo na yan, akong bahala sayo!” she pushed me to the bathroom so I can change. Okay. bahala na. naisip ko naman kasi, kapag hindi ako nagpunta, lalong magagalit sakin yun. mapapahiya siya eh, kasi I didn’t show up. Diba? mas grabeng galit ang tatanggapin ko nun for sure. ??? :-\   
  
Eh itong dress, konting galit lang yan, maybe a few hours or so.. hopefully not a whole day, though :-\ :-\. Tsaka, wala naman masama sa suot ko eh, nasa nagdadala lang yan. Hindi naman ako mukang whore. Elegant pa nga eh.. 8) 8)   
  
So I went with the dress. Dumating kami sa house nila 5 minutes after 7. okay lang yan, hindi naman kami ganon ka late eh. nasa may gate pa lang kaming dalawa ni Ella, pinagtitinginan na kami ng mga tao. Ano kayang iniisip ng mga to!? ??? ??? ???   
  
Hanggang nakaabot kami dun sa loob, feeling ko unti unting nadidisperse yung crowd until it reached to that point where I saw Jeremy, standing by the piano, with a glass of wine. Nakayuko siya nun, kasi may binabasa sya. Ang plano ko sana, I’m going to sneak behind him and pull him to the side para makapag explain kung bakit ito yung suot ko. pero hindi yun nangyare, kasi he looked up too soon. :-X :-X :-\ :-\   
  
Patay :o :-X. He saw me already. Naglalakad pa lang ako papunta sa kanya, feeling ko malalaglag yung puso ko sa sobrang takot. Ang sama ng tingin nya sakin halos mabasag na nya yung hawak nyang glass. So I gulped.   
  
Uh-oh. I can already see what’s going to happen next. :-X :-X   
  
  
parang ganito oh ---> RIP IRIS.   
  
Geez! I might as well die rather than stand that look he had on his face. Huhuhuh!!! help me, I'm scared!!! :'( :'( :'( :'(   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“halika dito.” He immediately grabbed my arm and took me away from the crowd... :-X :-[   
  
  
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Naku po! :o :-\ I knew it. This day would eventually come na tatanungin nya ang tungkol saming dalawa at kung saan at pano kami nagsimula. ??? :o   
  
Hindi ko alam kung anong isasagot ko sa tanong nya dahil hindi naman kami talaga. kaya binilang ko na lang yung mga araw simula ng bumalik kami galing Davao. Ilang araw o linggo na ba yun?? “three weeks.” I instantly said. Tatlong linggo nga ba? Bahala na. ??? :-\   
  
Nanlaki yung mga mata nya pagkasabi ko nun. gulat? “huh!? Three weeks? Just three weeks? :o ???”hindi siya makapaniwala. Sa bagay, ako rin hindi rin ako makapinawala na three weeks pa lang pala kami ‘together’ .. ::) ::)   
  
“oo. Hindi mo ba naaalala? ??? 4 days pa lang tayo when the accident happened 8).”Sige, magimbento ka lang Jeremy. Kaya mo yan. 8) ;D   
  
She wrinkled her forehead at talagang seryoso yung muka nya sa pagiintindi ng mga sinabi ko. “hmm.. 4 days before the accident :-\.. so.. May 16 pala naging tayo.. really… that’s odd.. para kasing.. ano eh.. matagal na tayo ??? :-[..”   
  
“ah ganun ba.. eh kasi lagi tayong magkasama.. kaya siguro feeling mo matagal na tayo 8)..” pinaglaruan ko na lang yung mga halaman sa tabi ng swing. Hindi ko kasi alam kung pano ko to malulusutan eh.   
  
“eh.. well.. pano mo ko niligawan? Tsaka how long? ??? ???” ano ba! bakit ang daming tanong!? Yan pa ang tinanong nya sa dinami dami ng tanong. Eh hindi ko naman siya niligawan. Kung tutuusin, siya pa nga ang nangligaw sakin, kasi siya ang nagpumilit na magpanggap kami. Oh diba, ganun din yun? so bale, sya ang nangligaw, hindi ako. 8) ;)   
  
Pero sige, ako na nga ang kunyaring nanligaw. Hmm… ano bang magandang sabihin.. isang linggo? Isang buwan? ??? ??? “ikaw? ??? Isang araw lang no.” good one, Jeremy. Good one.   
  
“talaga?! ??? :o one day lang, tapos sinagot na kita?! Bakit?” as usual, hindi siya makapaniwala. Pero sorry na lang, yun ang nasabi ko. whether she believes it or not, kailangan ko na yun panindigan. Pati, nageenjoy kasi ako sa nakikita ko ngayon eh. She’s shocked. High maintenance kasi itong babaeng ito eh. oh ano ka ngayon ha! ;D 8)   
  
“oo. Eh kasi patay patay ka sakin, lagi kang nagpapacute, lagi kang nagpapansin.. so isang araw naisipan kong pansinin ka na. hindi mo man lang ako pinahirapan.. sinagot mo ko kagad 8) ::)..” tapos tumawa ako. natatawa kasi ako sa mga sinasabi ko.. I’m actually enjoying this, and seeing her face while saying these, naku! Priceless!! Para siyang nalugi ng isang milyon! “cheap ka pa nga eh, isang scoop lang ng ice cream, napasagot na kita kagad. 8) ;D” Yun yung time na binilan ko siya ng ice cream bago kami manuod ng sunset sa beach… :) :)   
  
“really?? I did that? So.. patay na patay pala ako sayo ??? :-\..” sobrang bothered na yung muka nya. hahaha.   
  
“oo noh, ang kulit mo nga eh. lagi mo kong kinukulit. lagi mo pa kong sinusundan kahit saan ako magpunta. 8) ::)”   
  
Look at her, hindi na talaga mapinta yung muka nya! “so nung.. well.. when you decided to ask me out.. mahal mo na ko non? ??? :-\” napalunok ako ng di –oras pagkarinig ko nun,. mahal? Nasamid pa ako. :o :-X   
  
“huh!? :o ???” Ano bang sasabihin ko? magsisinungaling ba ko o magsasabi ako ng totoo? “Ano… uhmm.. hindi :-\ :-\.” hindi ko kaya. siguro logical naman yun. tutal three weeks pa lang naman kami, natural wala pang halong love dun. diba? tsaka, hindi ko naman talaga siya mahal eh. and for all we know, pareho lang kami ng nararamdaman. Hindi rin naman nya ako mahal. Kaya patas lang. :-X :-X   
  
“ha? bakit hindi!? So ibig sabihin hindi mo ko mahal?! ??? >:( :-\” yumuko siya. she had a disappointed look on her face. Eh ano bang magagawa ko? ayokong magsinungaling pagdating sa pagmamahal. Ayokong may masaktan.. ayoko syang masaktan dahil sa pagsisinungaling ko. :-\   
  
I held her chin and faced her to me. para naman akong pinapatay sa guilt trip nito eh!! “Iris.. hindi kasi ganon kadali yun.. maski ikaw, hindi mo naman ako mahal eh :-\..”   
  
“huh? ??? Pano nangyari yun? why are we together then if we don’t love each other? ??? :-\”   
  
“Iris.. maraming dahilan kung bakit tayo ngayon :-\ ..” wala na kong masabi. May point naman talaga siya eh.   
  
“maraming dahilan? Like what? ??? :-\” ang hirap pa lang mag explain ng isang bagay na hindi mo rin alam. :-\ :-\   
  
Pano ko ipapaliwanag sa kanya yung kalagayan namin? Hindi naman maiintindihan sa ngayon.. siguro pababayaan ko na lang hanggang sa bumalik na ang alaala nya para kusa na nyang maramdaman na hindi ito totohanan. At pagdating ng panahon na yun, rerespetuhin ko kung anong magiging desisyon nya. :-\ :-\   
  
“hindi ko alam.. pero ganun eh :-\ :)..” I looked straight in her eyes kahit na halos malunod na ko sa sobrang guilt. Hindi ko to dapat sinasabi sa kanya eh, dahil unang una sa lahat, wala naman dapat sabihin sa kanya.. gawa gawa lang ang lahat ng to.. :-\ “sige nga ikaw, can you tell me now that you love me? ??? :-\” she stopped and thought for a moment, nung nakita ko na hindi siya sigurado sa kung ano man yung iniisip nya, hinimas ko yung likod nya. “see.. yan ang sinasabi ko. di mo masabi noh? ???”nag-nod sya, pero… wala lang.. parang kakaiba lang... “kasi hindi mo ko mahal..”   
  
“ganun.. so hindi mo pala natin mahal ang isa’t isa :-\..” she wrinkled her forehead, magulo. I know. And this time, alam kong hindi nya ito naiintindihan.. “eh bakit pa naging tayo if we don’t even love each other? ??? :-\” that’s a good question. Isang tanong na wala akong maisasagot sa ngayon. Hindi ko naman masabi yung totoo.   
  
So I hugged her instead. “Iris, hindi yun importante sa ngayon.. basta ang mahalaga, I like being with you. kahit lagi kitang pinapagalitan, pati sinisigawan.. you’re still very special to me… at ganun ka rin naman diba? ??? :)” hindi ko alam kung pano ko ipapaintindi sa kanya to. kahit hindi nya maintindihan, maramdaman nya sana. Pero yung sinabi ko, totoo yun. I like being with her. Walang halong biro. :) :)   
  
“oo :-\..” medyo alangan yung pagkakasagot nya. malungkot siya.. pero wala akong magagawa. Hindi ko kayang magsinungaling pagdating sa mga ganitong klaseng bagay.   
  
“so let’s just enjoy our moments together.. and maybe.. one day, magising na lang tayo na mahal na natin ang isa’t isa..” hindi ko alam kung bakit sinabi ko yun. I didn’t want to say that kasi ayokong may isa samin ang umasa sa wala. Ayokong sabihin sa kanya na dadating ang araw na mamahalin ko siya kasi hindi ako sigurado pati… hindi ko kaya. Pero wala eh. Bigla na lang lumabas sa bibig ko. :-X :-X   
  
Nakita kong medyo nagsmile na siya nung sinabi ko yun. “so special pala ako sayo ha ::)..” sabi na eh, titirahin na naman ako nito sa sinabi ko eh! ::) ::)   
  
Inakbayan ko siya kaya lalo siyang napalapit sakin. Kakaiba yung naramdaman ko nung malapit sya sakin. Ewan ko ba. ang gulo. “oo, kaya magpasalamat ka, pinagtyatyagaan pa kita. Kahit ang sobrang kulit at tigas ng ulo mo. Pati kung kumain ka, pang baranggay na eh! Ang lakas mong kumain! Piggy ka talaga! ;D” pabiro kong sinabi. Oo malakas nga siyang kumain, which is good. Kahit saang resto ko siya dalhin, alam kong sulit ang binayad ko. pati tuwang tuwa si Mommy sa kanya kasi lahat ng luto nya talagang kinakain nitong si Piggy. Hindi tulad ng ibang babae dyan na sobrang conscious sa katawan nila na halos hindi na sila kumain para lang i-maintain yung figure nila. ??? >:( ::)   
  
“ah ganun! Pinagtyatyagaan mo lang pala ako! sira ulo! >:( >:(” binatukan nya ako. aba lumalaban na ha!! Sira ulo daw ako!? “tsaka.. hindi naman ako baboy eh.. ang sexy ko nga noh!” tumayo siya at umikot sa harapan ko pra ipakita sakin yung katawan nya. oo na. sexy na. “Piggy pala ha! ikaw Bamboo! ;D ;D” BAMBOO!!??! ??? >:( WTF? ??? ???   
  
“anong Bamboo ka dyan!? Baka matunaw ka kapag pinakita ko sayo katawan ko! 8) 8) 8)” pakitaan ko nga to ng katawan ko kahit isang beses lang! tignan lang natin kung hindi nya kainin lahat ng sinabi nya ngayon! “ah sus! Sexy daw! Ang yabang! ::)” ang yabang nito! Porket alam nyang maganda ang katawan nya eh. conceited!! hindi ko na siya ginantihan, nilapit ko na lang yung waist nya sa ulo ko dahil nga sa nakatayo siya at ako naman nakaupo, para yakapin siya ulit.. masarap kasi siyang yakapin eh. may laman. “pinagtyatyagaan nga.. pero masaya naman diba? ??? :)”   
  
“hmp! Oo na masaya na! ::)” tinulak nya yung ulo ko papalayo sa bewang nya. “so baby, sa June 16 pala yung first monthsary natin.. anong gagawin natin? ??? :) Dapat special yun ah! 8)” lintek. Special daw. ::) :-\   
  
She smiled at me. and somehow, seeing that smile made me feel a little better inside.. May 16. yun pala bale ang ‘anniversary’ namin.. so.. sa June 16 ang first month namin.. ano bang magandang magawa sa araw na yun?? ah alam ko na…. ilalabas ko na lang siya para magpunta sa beach at manood ng sunset. Tutal, yun naman ang hilig nya eh, baka sakaling may maalala pa siya kapag dinala ko siya sa beach.. tapos, magdidinner kami sa isang garden na puro bulaklak.. tama. Paghahandaan ko yun. at bukas na bukas din, hahanap na ko ng lugar kung saan ko siya dadalin. :) :) :)   
  
“basta. It’s a surprise 8).”   
  
“talaga? ??? isusurprise mo ko? ;D”she excitedly said. “what kind of surprise? :D” okay surprise nga eh! may surprise bang sinasabi? Minsan talaga, pakaliwa kung magisip tong babaeng to eh!! ::) ::)   
  
“surprise nga eh! ::)” pinalo ko yung pwet nya ng mahina. Nagulat siya, pero hindi siya nagalit. loko talaga to. “basta. Just wait and see :) ;)..”   
  
  
[] [] [] []   
  
Friday na ngayon. Mamayang hapon na yung launching ni Iris sa public. Yung grand opening nga pala, sa Monday pa. Dapat kasi ngayong umaga eh, kaso, minove nila dahil daw mas logical kung sa Monday yun dahil yun ang start ng business week. Ewan ko ba kung sinong nagisip nung Friday na grand opening.   
  
Anyway, hindi kami magkikita ni Iris ngayong umaga. Dahil nga sa ilang araw din kaming laging magkasama umaga’t gabi, eh nagdesisyon na muna kong pumunta ng opisina para magcheck naman dun. Ilang araw na rin kasi akong hindi nakakapasok, at kung pumasok man ako, sandali lang dahil nga kasama ko si Iris at ayoko naman siyang mainip sa kakahintay sakin. At isa pa, may Staff Meeting ngayon, at hindi pwedeng wala ako dun.   
  
Mahal ng mga tao dito sa opisina si Iris. Actually, mas friend pa nilang lahat si Iris kesa sakin. Ma-PR kasi siya eh, lahat ng tao, ultimo janitor, eh kasundo nya. kaya nga nung hindi nila nakita si Iris na kasama ko nung dumating ako, non-stop na ang pagtatanong sakin kung nasan daw sya at kung bakit hindi ko siya kasama ngayon.   
  
“tol, ano? Ready ka na? si Tisay, bakit hindi mo ata kasama? ??? ???” isa pa tong mokong na to. ewan ko ba kung anong meron itong si Iris at kung bakit lahat na lang eh kasundo nya. eh samantalang saksakan ng katarayan at kaartehan naman siya? ??? ::)   
  
Kasama ko nga pala ngayon si Anthony. nagreready kasi kami para sa isang meeting. Oo nga pala, kung hindi ko pa nababanggit sa inyo, Anthony is investing in our company. He’s not a major investor kagaya ni Randy na may ari ng isang malaking telephone company, but he was able to talk to his dad into buying a stock in our company. Hindi ko nga alam kung anong pumasok sa isip nyan at naisipan nyang gawin yun, eh samantalang dati lagi ko siyang binibusiness talk sa paginvest sa kumpanya, wala namang nangyayari..so bale ngayon, kapag naclose yung deal na to, pusibleng lumipat siya dito at maging empleyado na ng kumpanya. itong mokong na to talaga!! ::) ::) And it that case, magiging co-worker na namin siya ni Iris… ako lang pala. Iris is not working until she recovers fully at natapos sa school, which as I remember, kailangan ko pa siyang hanapan ng school na mapapasukan.   
  
At napansin ko lang, lagi na lang si Iris ang una nyang hinahanap pati tinatanong sakin kapag nagkikita kami.. Nakakahalata na ko ha! ??? >:( ::)   
  
“nasa bahay, pinagpapahinga ko buong araw.” Sagot ko sa kanya.   
  
“ah ganun ba..”   
  
“bakit mo sya hinahanap? ???” sinabi ko nung pagpasok namin sa elevator.   
  
Inayos nya yung tie nya tapos humarap siya sakin. “wala lang, napansin ko kasi, halos hindi na kayo mapaghiwalay ngayon eh.. ano na ba to, totoohanan na ba ha? tol? ??? :D” totoohanan…? Totoohanan na ba to? Ano bang klaseng tanong yun. siempre hindi. Of course not. :-X :-X   
  
“hindi no.”   
  
“sus! Wag mo na kasing pigilin. Sige ka, sa kakadeny mo, hindi mo alam, baka may pumorma ng iba sa kanya ::) 8)..”   
  
“sus. Subukan lang nila. pati hindi sila makakaporma kay Iris no, deadma lang yung mga yun sa kanya, loyal sakin yun eh 8) 8).” tumawa ako ng mahina. Aba, sa ngayon, talagang loyal siya sakin, ni hindi nga siya makatingin kung kani-kanino kapag magkasama kami eh! subukan lang nya, talagang makakatikim siya sakin….ng…ng… ah basta! Makakatikim siya sakin! ;D 8)   
  
Tinaas nya yung mga kamay nya ere at tumawa. “I’m just saying!” tapos umiling iling siya. para san kaya yun? ??? ??? “umamin ka na kase pare, you’re falling in love with her! :D :D”   
  
Anong falling in love ang pinagsasabi nitong mokong na to!? “sira! ::)” binatukan ko nga ang loko. “hindi ako inlove sa kanya okay?” hindi naman talaga. mararamdaman ko naman yun kung oo eh. pero hindi. Swear. tsaka, alam nyo naman kung sino ang mahal ko diba?   
  
“joke lang! eto talaga.” tumingin siya sa ceiling tapos nagsign of the cross siya. “sorry Tricia! :D” sira ulo talaga to! pati si Tricia na nanahimik na, dinamay pa! bumukas na yung elevator kaya lumabas na kaming dalawa.   
  
“ulol!”   
  
Tumawa na naman siya. “pero pare, matanong ko lang, hindi ba siya nagtatanong tungkol sa inyong dalawa? Tulad ng anniversary nyo? ??? ???” Psychic ba tong si Anthony? Eh kakatanong lang sakin ni Iris nun eh! :o ???   
  
“yun nga bro eh :-\.” naalaala ko tuloy ng tinanong sakin ni Iris yan. “actually, she did ask about that.”   
  
“talaga? ??? :o anong sinabi mo? ??? ???” chismoso.   
  
“eh di three weeks pa lang kami.. na nung May 16 kami naging kami..” I said.   
  
“at naniwala naman siya? ???”   
  
I nodded. I know, pati nga ako I didn’t think she’d buy what I said. “sa katunayan nga nyan eh sobrang excited na siya sa June 16.. first monthsary daw namin yun. ang corny no? ??? ::)”   
  
“sus! Parang hindi ka naman sanay sa mga babae! You know how they are.. they’re crazy about that stuff. At talagang importante sa kanila yan na kapag nakalimutan mo eh magtago ka na dahil maghahalo talaga ang balat sa tinalupan! ;D :D” tumawa na naman siya ng malakas. Buti na lang at kaming dalawa lang ang naglalakad dito sa hallway. Kung tumawa kasi siya para siya lang ang tao dito eh! “so what do you have planned for the special day?”   
  
Ano nga bang plano ko? yung simple lang siguro, enough to make her feel special. “wala.. ano.. punta lang kami sa beach.. nood ng sunset.. gusto nya kasi yun eh. tapos magdidinner..yun lang. :) :-\” tama na siguro yun diba?   
  
“hanep! Eh mas corny ka pala kesa kay Tisay eh! :D may pa beach-beach pang nalalaman eh! Ang baduy mo tsong! Baduy na, boring pa! ;D ;D” sira ulo talaga to. anong baduy dun? Tsaka kung hindi dun, saan ko siya dadalin? Yun naman kasi ang lagi namin ginagawa ni Tricia noon eh, and she never complained.. in fact, gustong gusto pa nga dun eh, dahil tuwang tuwa siya sa beach. hindi na ko nagsalita. Kinotongan ko na lang siya. ;D ;D   
  
Nasa meeting kami ng halos dalawang oras. Kaya nga pagkalabas namin eh talagang pagod kami. Kahit na nakaupo lang kami dun, nakakapagod pa rin, kasi utak ang pinapaandar mo. Naclose na namin yung deal and next month, part na si Anthony ng kumpanya.   
  
Tinawagan ko kagad si Iris para kamustahin siya habang naglalakad kami ni Anthony papunta sa mga kotse namin. may check-up sya kanina eh, hindi ko man lang siya nasamahan. Kaya ayan tuloy, si David ang kasama nya. kahit na maliwanag sakin na kaibigan lang ang tingin ni Iris sa kanya, ayoko pa rin silang magkasama. Wag na kayong magtanong kung bakit. walang dahilan. basta ganun. Period. >:( :-\   
  
Kasi naman itong Staff Meeting na to eh! hindi ko alam kung bakit kailangan pa ko dito, eh wala naman akong ginawa kundi ang makinig sa mga plano ng kumpanya at report ng iba’t ibang department. So bale, nandun lang ako dahil lang sa head ako ng department namin. Kung tutuusin, hindi naman talaga ako kailangan dun.   
  
“nasan ka na?” tanong ko kagad pagkasagot nya ng telepono. Hindi pa nga siya nakakapaghello eh! at buti naman at hawak nya yung telepono nya, salamat sa Diyos at natandaan nya yung bilin ko. na kahit saan siya magpunta, dapat dala nya yung phone nya dahil kung hindi, isasabit at ididikot ko talaga yan sa tenga nya pag nagkaron ako ng pagkakataon. >:( ;D >:(   
  
Tumahimik siya sandali bago nya sinabi kung nasan sya. “sa bahay.” ano to, wala na naman sa mood? Don’t tell me she still has her period? ??? ???   
  
Tumigil ako bigla sa paglalakad. “si David kasama mo pa?” I don’t want to sound like I’m jealous. Hindi ako nagseselos! >:( Hindi ako nagseselos knowing the fact na mahal na mahal siya ni David at kung magising bigla itong si Iris sa katotoohanan baka sakaling mahalin nya ulit siya. yeah. Hindi ako nagseselos. Hindi. >:( :-\ :-\   
  
“no, he went to the mall para bumili ng mga pasalubong pagbalik nya sa LA.” ayan, that's my girl! buti naman at hindi siya sumama! 8) 8)   
  
Nagsimula na ulit akong maglakad. “ah okay. anong ginagawa mo?” para kasi ang tahimik sa paligid nya, eh usually, maingay dahil kung hindi siya nagtTV, eh loud music naman ang naririnig ko.   
  
Ang kulit pa nga ni Anthony eh, habang kausap ko ba naman si Iris eh biglang nagsabi ng “hi Tisay!!” narinig ni Iris yun, kaya natawa siya.   
  
“wala, just got out of the shower.”   
  
“how’s the doctor’s appointment?”   
  
“okay lang.” okay lang? bakit parang ang tipid nya atang sumagot ngayon? Masama kaya yung loob nya sakin dahil hindi ko siya nasamahan, o dahil sa sinabi ko sa kanya kagabi? ??? :-\   
  
“oh.. oh sige. Magpahinga ka muna, maaga pa naman eh. hindi nga pala kita masusundo mamaya, kasi marami pang aasikasuhin sa bahay..” babawi na lang ako sa kanya mamaya pagdating nya sa bahay.   
  
“oh.. okay lang :-\.” she sounded so disappointed to hear that. Susunduin ko naman dapat talaga siya eh, kaso yung parents ko kung ano ano pang inuutos sakin.   
  
“basta dapat nandito ka na by 7:00 pm okay? ipapakilala pa kita sa mga tao.”   
  
“sige babe. I’ll be there by 7.” halata na parang napipilitan lang sya. Ito ang gusto ko sa bagong Iris eh, hindi na siya marunong magreklamo ngayon. Sana ganyan na lang sya lagi.   
  
Binaba na namin yung phone pagkatapos nun. “tol, kita kits na lang mamaya!” sumigaw ako kay Anthony na nakasakay na sa kotse nya.   
  
“sige bro!” nagnod siya tapos umalis na.   
  
3:30 na marami pa kong aasikasuhin mamaya kaya dumiretso na ko sa shop ni Mommy para pumili ng bulaklak para kay Iris. Papaayos ko kasi yung garden namin, gusto ko kasi puro petals dun. Lalo na dun sa maliit na gazebo sa may gilid. Gusto ko siyang dalin dun after ng party. Wala lang. :) :)   
  
Tulips ang pinadala sakin ni Mommy. Paborito nya kasi yun, at sigurado daw siyang magugustohan ni Iris yun. close sila eh, noh? ::) ::)   
  
Nakarating na ko sa bahay ng alas-cinco. Kung san san pa kasi kami nagpunta ni Mommy. “oh hijo, mabihis ka na, maya maya dadating na yung mga bisita.” Sinabi nya pagkalabas nya ng kotse. “si Iris ba tinawagan mo na? nasan na daw sya? ??? :)” ano ba naman tong nanay ko. eh kung siya na lang kaya ang tumawag sa kanya ng masagot nya yung mga tanong nya? ??? ::)   
  
“ewan ko Ma, mamaya na lang kami magkikita nun.” sinabi ko sa kanya habang kinukuha yung mga bulaklak sa kotse.   
  
“hindi mo ba siya susunduin? Ano ka ba naman hijo? ??? ???”   
  
“eh ang dami ko pang gagawin eh.” aayusin ko pa yung garden, pati yung gazebo! Tinaas ko nga yung mga bulaklak na hawak ko. “aayusin ko pa to oh.”   
  
“oh? eh marami namang katulong dyan na pwedeng gumawa nyan eh ??? ::).” naglakad siya papalapit sakin, “akin na, sabihin mo na lang sakin kung pano mo to gustong ayusin at ako na ang bahala.” Kinuha nya yung mga hawak kong flowers.   
  
Pero kinuha ko ulit ang mga ito sa kanya. “wag na Ma, gusto ko ako ang gagawa eh ;)..”   
  
Nagsmile sakin si Mommy sabay yakap sakin. “nako, ang anak ko, nagpapakaromantiko! ::) ::)” kiniss nya ko sa cheek. “oh sige, gawin mo na yan. At pagkatapos, magbihis ka na okay? :) :)”   
  
Umoo lang ako sa kanya at pumasok na ko sa loob. Inayos ko yung flowers, petals here and there. Lalo na dun sa gazebo. Sana magustohan nya to.. :) :)   
  
  
[] [] [] [] [] []   
  
  
Alas-siete na ng gabi. Ang sabi ni Iris, ganitong oras siya dadating. Pero nasan siya? ??? ??? bakit wala pa siya dito? Eh yung lola nya nandito na kanina pa. panay na nga ang hanap sakin sa kanya ng mga tao dito eh. excited na daw silang makilala ang isa sa mga heirs ng bagong bukas na kumpanya. Maraming tao. Hindi ko nga ineexpect na ganito karami ang pupunta.   
  
“Jeremy, hijo. Tinawagan mo na ba si Princess? Bakit wala pa siya dito? ???” tanong ni lola.   
  
“kanina ko pa nga rin po tinatawagan eh… baka papunta na po yun dito..”   
  
“ganon ba.. oh sige, tawagan ko na lang ulit.. excuse me ha.” naglakad na si lola papuntang loob para tawagan si Iris.   
  
Kanina ko pa siya tinatawagan pero hindi naman niya sinasagot yung phone nya. Ano naman kayang nangyari dun? Tumawag na nga ako sa bahay nila, ang sabi ng katulong, nakaalis na daw. 10 minutes drive lang ang papunta dito eh, bakit hanggang ngayon wala pa siya? ??? :-\   
  
“what a lovely ambiance.” May lumapit sakin na isang babae. Sino to? ??? paglingon ko halos hindi ako makapaniwala sa nakita ko. sa unang tingin, she looks like Tricia. :o :-[ :) Nagsmile lang ako sa kanya. “I’m Amanda Borromeo. And you are? ??? :)” inextend nya yung kamay nya para makipagshake hands. Borromeo… hmm. sounds familiar. ???   
  
“Jeremy. Jeremy Valdez :).” Medyo shocked pa ko nun kaya halos nautal ako nung sinabi ko yung pangalan ko.   
  
“oh! ikaw pala yun. I’m so glad to finally meet you. marami na kong narinig na magagandang bagay about you eh :)..” magagandang bagay? Tulad ng ano? Eh wala pa nga akong nagagawang ‘maganda’ eh. “Anak ako ni Manuel Borromeo, dati silang magkasosyo ng daddy mo sa negosyo..” ahh. Kaya siguro familiar yung last name nya. malamang narinig ko na nga yun noon.   
  
“ohh..” alam nyo sa bagong magkakilala, magaan na kagad ang loob ko sa kanya. ewan ko ba kung bakit. siguro dahil nakikita ko sa kanya yung muka ni Tricia. Magkahawig sila eh.. pareho sila ng mata.. ng labi.. ??? :) :-\   
  
“oh sige, I’ll see you around? :) ;)” bigla nyang sinabi.   
  
“okay. nice meeting you again, Amanda :).” Nakipagshake hands ako ulit sa kanya.   
  
Ng makaalis na siya, medyo matagal pa bago ako nakabalik sa sarili ko. I thought for a while na si Tricia yung kaharap ko kaninang magkausap kami. Parehong pareho sila, the way she talks, the way she moves, pati yung ngiti nya, Triciang Tricia. :o :-\ :-\   
  
Ano ba tong iniisip ko. this night is for Iris na hanggang ngayon eh wala pa, tapos kung ano ano ang nasa isip ko? hay. Nagpunta ako sa may drinks at kumuha ng isang basong wine. Nanahimik bigla yung paligid na parang may kung anong dumaan at naririnig ko na lang eh panay bulungan. Nagtaka ako kaya lumingon ako kung saan sila nakatingin. Kay Iris. Si Iris na hindi nakared, kundi naka black na dress. Yung dress na sinabi kong hindi nya susuotin. Kahit kailan talaga, pasaway itong babaeng to. >:( >:( >:(   
  
Naglakad siya papuntang direksyon ko. siguro nakita nya yung muka ko kaya parang nagaalangan pa siya. habang papalapit siya sakin, may napansin akong kakaiba. Ito nga ba yung sinabi kong dress na ayokong isuot nya? ??? kase… maganda siya, at bagay pala sa kanya yung suot nya. hindi bastusin. Kaya nya palang dalhin.   
  
Hindi ko napansin, nawala bigla ang galit ko sa kanya dahil sa suot nya. tumigil siya sa harap ko na hindi sigurado kung anong gagawin nya. “halika dito.” lumapit ako sa kanya at hinila siya papalayo sa crowd.   
  
“babe… I can explain :-[ :-[..” narinig kong sinabi nya habang hawak ko ang braso nya. “babe.. eh kase yung red dress napunit eh.. ang taba ko na kasi.. hindi na pala kasya sakin.. and this dress is the only one that fits me :-[ :-[ :-\ :-\..” takot na takot nyang sinabi. I could feel her tension right now. Pero hindi pa rin ako nagsalita. Sa totoo lang, hindi naman ako galit eh. nagagandahan pa ko sa kanya. “baby, kung gusto mo maglalagay na lang ako jacket or blazer para hindi kita yung likod pati chest ko.. oh kaya kung gusto mo, hindi na lang ako magpapakita sa mga tao, para hindi ka mapahiya :-[ :-[..”   
  
Tumigil kami sa paglalakad. Dadalhin ko kasi siya kila Daddy pati dun sa iba pang mga tao para ipakilala ko siya. akala naman nya siguro eh kung anong pagpaparusa ang gagawin ko sa kanya. “mapapahiya? pano ko mapapahiya? ???”   
  
“eh kasi yung suot ko eh :-\.. diba sabi mo ayaw mong mapahiya? Eh diba ayaw mo yung suot ko? ??? :-\” humarap ako sa kanya pagkasabi nya nun. I felt sorry for her. Ganito ba ang takot nya sakin? ??? :-\ Halos hindi na nya malaman kung anong gagawin nya at kung pano nya ipapaliwanag sakin kung bakit iba yung suot nya. “tatawag na lang ako sa bahay, I’ll tell the yaya to bring me something to wear over this :-\.”   
  
“hindi na kailangan.” Sinabi ko sabay talikod sa kanya. “maganda ka. Bagay sayo.” hindi nya nakikita, pero nakangiti ako nun.. :) :)   
  
“what? ???” hinila nya yung kamay ko kaya napatigil ako sa paglalakad. “what did you say? ???”   
  
“ang sabi ko, maganda ka, bagay sayo :).” Inulit ko ulit yung sinabi ko at humarap ako sa kanya. “bagay na bagay :) :).” I smiled at her. At wala pang isang segundo, lumiwanag bigla yung muka nya. para siyang nabunutan ng malaking tinik at daig pa nya ang nanalo sa lotto! ;D ;D ::)   
  
“talaga babe!? :o :D Hindi ka galit?” galit? Hindi naman ako galit ahhh..   
  
“galit? Bakit ako magagalit? ??? Eh ang ganda ng kaharap ko ngayon ;)..”   
  
She tiptoed and kissed me on the cheek. “thank you! :D :D I’m glad you understand..”   
  
At ayun, pinakilala ko siya sa mga tao. Sa lahat ng tao sa bahay. Grabe. ang dami nun. at siempre, as expected, gustong gusto nila si Iris. Maganda daw siya. siempre naman, girlfriend ko yan eh. nyee! ::) ;D ;)   
  
Pagkatapos ko siyang ilibot sa bawat isang table, eh naupo na kami sa wakas. Saka lang kami nakakain nung matapos yung introduction nya pati yung pagpapakilala ko sa kanya sa bawat isang tao dito.   
  
Habang kumakain kami, nilapit nya yung ulo nya sakin at may binulong. “babe, kailan ba matatapos to? ??? I wanna change na eh.. hindi na ko makahinga dito sa suot ko :-\.” panong hindi siya makakahinga, eh sa dami ng kinain nya eh, di malabong mapunit din yung suot nya pag hindi pa siya tumigil! ;D ::)   
  
“ayan kasi! Lamon ka ng lamon! Ayan tuloy, hindi na nagkasya sayo yung mga damit mo.” Sinabi ko sa kanya habang kumakain ako. “sige, pag hindi ka pa tumigil sa kakain mo, lalo na ng chocolates, kailangan mo ng bumili ng mga bagong damit! ;D” tumawa ako. totoo naman eh, ang lakas kasi nyang kumain. Hindi naman siya talaga mataba, actually, gusto ko nga yung katawan nya ngayon eh.. may laman na, d na nga kita masyado yung collar bone nya eh, hindi tulad noon. :) ::)   
  
“you're so mean! >:(” nagpout siya. eto na naman tayo sa pout nya. ::)   
  
“oh ngayon, eh d may patunay na ko na Piggy ka! So naniniwala ka na? ??? ;D” inasar ko pa siya lalo. Ang sarap kasi nitong asarin eh, pikon! ;D   
  
Sumimangot siya sabay drop ng fork nya. “sige, hindi na nga ako kakain! Hmp!! >:( :-\” aba? At nagdabog pa! eh nagsasabi lang naman ako ng totoo? “maghahunger strike ako! >:( :-\”   
  
“sus! Ito na naman, nagiinarte ka na naman eh. sige na! ubusin mo na yan! Alam ko namang hindi mo kayang hindi kainin yan eh! ::) ;D” may tira pa kasi sa kinakain nyang cake.   
  
“hindi na! sabi mo Piggy ako eh! >:( :-\”   
  
“tsk! Oo nga! sige na nga! ::)” kinamot ko yung ulo ko at tumayo ako sa harap nya kaya siya rin eh tumayo. “sasabihin ko na ::).”   
  
“anong sasabihin mo? ???”   
  
“anong sasabihin ko? ??? sasabihin ko na Piggy ka talaga! :D ;D” tumawa ako. at siya naman, halatang nagalit dun sa sinabi ko. magkasalubong yung kilay eh! ;D ;D   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Pero ikaw naman ang pinakamaganda at sexy na Piggy na nakita ko ;) ;)….”   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Pero ikaw naman ang pinakamaganda at sexy na Piggy na nakita ko ;) ;)….”   
  
  
Aww.. I felt chills down my spine when he said that ::) ::). It’s cheesy, I know, pero natuwa parin ako regardless. He’s so sweet talaga. Yup, that’s my baby Bamboo. ::) :D   
  
He held my hand then led me to the dance floor after saying that. We were dancing to a slow song. When I Met You.. I love this song, I even have it in my iPod :) :). I was just smiling the whole time we were dancing. I don’t even know why. Eh samantalang insulto yung sinabi nya sakin. Para akong crazy noh? ??? ::) Just a while ago, I was too nervous to even come near him, tignan nyo ngayon, parang ayaw ko na yatang maglet go. I rested my head on his chest. Wala naman syang ginawa, he just let me.. so I assume, it’s okay with him that I did that.. I hope this song never ends.. When I Met You.. this is my song for him.. :) :) :)   
  
When I met him, everything changed.. every little thing changed.   
  
“tara, I want to show you something :)..” he held my hand and we walked away from the dance floor. Not knowing where we are going, I didn’t say anything, I just followed him. Malaki yung garden nila, and towards the center, there’s a white gazebo covered with vines and different things. We went inside, and looking at it from afar, I could already see how neatly it was arranged and designed. There were flower petals all over the place.. tulips to be exact. I mean, it was just amazingly breath taking. :D :o :)   
  
“wow :o :)…” was all I could say.   
  
He let me go in first. As soon as I stepped in, I felt this weird tingling feeling down my spine. I absolutely have no idea what that was for, but yeah, I felt it. “you like? ??? :)” he asked when he went in.   
  
“you did these :o ???…” I looked around, and then to him. “for me? ??? ???” the place was dimly lit, candles, flowers… I think this is the most romantic thing ever. :) :)   
  
He smiled at me as he walked closer. “well, yung flowers galing sa shop ni Mommy.. sya din ang pumili kung anong klaseng petals ang gagamitin ko…” he shrugged his shoulders, and placed his hands in his pockets. “all I did was to fix it like this 8) ;)..” then he winked at me. wow! Shady!! ::) ::)   
  
“well, in that case :)..” lumapit ako sa kanya, “I love it :) :).” Nagsmile siya then he hugged me from the back.   
  
I’m happy, but at the same time, worried and sad din.. this is what I don’t like about Jeremy, he can be so sweet and romantic but who knows what his intentions are. It could be that he just cares about you, or he just wants to make you feel special. That’s it. Nothing more. It bothers me a lot eh.. it’s the fact that he always makes me feel special lately and it scares me kasi ginagawa nya ang lahat ng to and yet he says he doesn’t love me, nor do I feel the same way about him.. pero parang hindi naman ganun eh.. based on his actions and words, iba yung pakiramdam ko.. and honestly, the more he does these things, the more I think I’m really… falling for him… :) :-\   
  
I’m falling for him faster than I thought and expected.. it worries me because I don’t know if he’ll ever catch me, or pababayaan lang nya ko mahulog and who knows, baka iwan nya ko. ayoko naman yun. I want him to stay that’s why I’m trying to agree with what he feels.. if he says we don’t love each other, then we don’t.. at least he doesn’t. :-\ :-[ :-\   
  
But then again, I’m thinking… at least he’s mine right? Kahit hindi nya ko mahal, I’m hoping eventually he’ll learn to love me.. maswerte pa rin ako kahit papano, unlike other girls na naghihintay at umaasa na mapansin or gawing official ng guy yung ‘special something’ nilang dalawa.   
  
Alam nyo ba yung feeling na hindi nag coordinate yung mind and heart nyo? My mind tells me one thing, and my heart is telling me another. :-\   
  
I really want to tell him right now that I’m falling for him, but something is stopping me….   
  
I’m so confused kasi iba yung nakikita ko sa nararamdaman ko. I wish I remember our story and how we started para maintindihan ko kung bakit ganito yung mga bagay bagay. Kasi, kahit anong gawin ko talaga, hindi ko maalala.. hindi ko maalala nung sinagot ko siya, hindi ko maalala na tinanong nya ko, hindi ko rin maintindihan kung bakit parang pakiramdam ko this whole thing is just a lie. In denial lang kaya ako kasi hindi ko expected na ganun kabilis or talagang… hindi nangyare yun? ??? :-\   
  
But I don’t want to accuse him for lying or making stories, kung yun naman talaga yung nangyare, eh di yun.. pero bakit hindi ko nga maalala, when I do remember things eventually? ??? ??? Lalo na yung kay David.. our story is fresh in my memory.. and by that I mean every single detail.. from the day I met him, the day I fell in love with him, up to the day I despised him.. siguro dahil it was so long ago and the doctor said I only lost memories from recent events.. it only sucks because I really want to remember my present, hindi puro past. Ayoko na yun eh, hindi na yun important sakin.. ayoko na kay David.. si Jeremy na ngayon ang important, pero wala akong maalala.. :-\ :-\   
  
But I’m getting better, though.. . I remember getting in trouble at school because of Professor Drummond, I remember maxing out my credit cards because I went shopping the whole day. Gusto ko pa ngang bumili ng bagong car eh because my car has this tiny, but ugly dent in front. Naalala ko na nga ngayon nung first time kong dumating dito eh. I know I was mad at my Mom for sending me here. si Chris pa nga ang sumundo sakin sa airport eh, tapos meron akong nabanggang isang guy na sobrang sungit, and very ungentleman. nalalaglag pa lahat ng gamit ko eh pero hindi nya ko tinulungan. And then it turns out, that guy from the airport was Jeremy pala, nabangga nya ko ulit sa office nila Lola eh, I was on the floor tapos ininsulto pa nya ko rather than giving me a hand. Tapos pinagmerge yung company namin. And then we went to Davao for a conference.. and I also remember Randy, the bigtime, hot shot French investor from MCI :D :D.. hanggang dun lang for now, but I know I’ll remember more soon..   
  
Sana sa susunod, yung tungkol naman samin ni Jeremy ang maalala ko… :-\ :-\   
  
“anong iniisip mo? ???” I snapped back to myself when he said that. I didn’t realize I zoned out for quite a while there. Kasi naman, it’s not easy to have amnesia, you’re always curious of things, things that sometimes do not require immediate explanation… at minsan, ang mahirap pa dito, hindi mo makuha yung gusto mong explanation, kasi hindi nila sinasabi sayo yung totoo at alam mo na ganun nga. :-\ :-\   
  
“nothing.. I was just thinking of things that I remember :-\..” I sat down and so he did.   
  
“bakit? :o ??? ano bang naalala mo? ???” he looked bothered. Bakit kaya? “masama ba ang naalala mo? ??? Part ba ko dun? Naalala mo bang may ginawa akong masama sayo? ??? :-\”   
  
“huh? ??? ???” I looked at him that instant. Bakit nya tinatanong kung may naalala ba akong ginawa nya sakin na masama? ??? Meron ba dapat akong maalala? ??? ???“hindi.. actually, babe, wag kang magagalit ha..” siguro naman hindi siya magagalit pag sinabi ko sa kanyang hindi ko maalala yung tungkol samin diba? mas masama naman siguro if I lie pa. :-\ :-\   
  
“bakit?” hinimas nya yung likod ko. “are you okay? parang ang lalim ng iniisip mo :-\..”   
  
Humarap ako sa kanya ang held his hand. “magpromise ka muna na hindi ka magagalit :-\..”   
  
He sighed. “babe, ayokong magpromise.” Seryoso yung muka nya. bakit ayaw nyang magpromise? ???... “kasi baka hindi ko naman magawa.” Tumingin ako sa kanya nun. so magagalit nga siya kapag sinabi ko sa kanyang hindi ko maalala yung tungkol samin? ??? :-\ “ganito na lang :)..” inayos nya yung pagkakaupo nya, “I’ll try my best not be mad.” Hinimas nya ulit yung likod ko. “okay ba yun? ???” nag nod ako. “ano ba kase yung problema? ??? :-\”   
  
I took a deep breath and then looked away. “it’s my stupid memory :-[.” I leaned forward tapos nilagay ko yung hands ko sa head ko. “I can’t remember things that I’m supposed to :-X :-\..”   
  
“yun lang ba? ??? ::)” natawa sya ng konti. Okay? what’s so funny about that? ??? Serious naman yun eh :-\.. “ang sabi ko naman sayo eh, wag mong pipilitin, babalik din naman lahat yan :) :-\..” he paused for a while, “sige ka, lalo kang mahihirapan at matatagalan ang recovery mo kapag ganyan ka.”   
  
“you don’t understand, Jeremy :-[ :-\.” My face was still buried with my hands, gosh. how I feel so embarrassed right now... :-\ “I don’t remember anything about you…about us.. when I do remember everything else :-\ :-\..” okay, there. I said it. Sana hindi sya nagalit. I counted from one to five in my head. Kapag ako nakaabot ng ten, ibig sabihin galit nga siya. geez. Kase naman eh! :-\ ??? :-\   
  
Narinig ko siyang tumayo. Nakacover pa rin kase ng yung face ko eh.. “it’s okay. actually, expected ko naman yun eh :) :-\.” huh!? What’s he talking about? expected? ??? Pano? :-\ ??? “Iris it’s not important if you can’t remember me..kung wala kang maalala, okay lang. I’m not gonna take it against you.” lumapit siya sakin tapos nagsquat siya sa harap ko. so ako, I looked at him. “ang mahalaga, hindi mo ko makalimutan ngayon. What we have right now.. ayokong makalimutan mo to :) :-\.” actually, nung narinig ko yun, medyo gumaan na yung pakiramdam ko. “kase kapag itong present natin ang nakalimutan mo, talagang magagalit ako sayo :) 8)..” nagsmile siya sakin.   
  
“really? ???”   
  
“yes. Really :).” He got into his feet and then he stood me up as well. “kaya tama na yang pagiisip mo, okay? ??? :)” he pinched my cheek and chuckled. “sige ka, papangit ka. Piggy ka na nga, panget ka pa. yuck!! ;D ;D”   
  
Sira ulo talaga to! lagi na lang nya ako inaasar! >:( >:( “hindi naman ako Piggy eh!! >:(” I punched his shoulder nga. So he immediately placed his hand over it. Okay, medyo napalakas ng konti lang. hehe. ;D ;D   
  
“oh hindi na, hindi na ::).” natatawa pa rin siya. what a meanie!! >:( >:( “pa-hug nga :).” Tapos niyakap nya ko ulit.   
  
We stayed there for like an hour or so pa bago kami tinawag ni Tita Amy. Hinahanap daw kasi kame ng mga bisita kasi magpapaalam na sila. I like Jeremy’s mom because she treats me so nicely. Unlike David’s mom. Naku. Isa pa yun, lagi na lang ako napapansin, I’m super maarte daw, pati I’m such a spoiled brat. Whatever. spoiled brat my ass >:( 8) ::). Siempre, she only had to put up with me because of my Mom. Actually, money lang pala ng Mommy ko. Stupid socialites!!! >:( >:(   
  
“babe, I’m just gonna powder my nose, okay?” I said when we went inside. Bathroom break. Hehe.   
  
So ayun, nauna na siya sa loob tapos ako nagpunta ng restroom para makapagayos. Medyo kasi matagal kami sa labas, and who knows, baka magulo na yung hair ko. And voila! My instincts were correct. Magulo nga yung hair ko! ::) ;D imagine lumabas ako dun ng ganito yung hair ko? My God :o. I faced the mirror and started fixing myself.   
  
In fairness, ang laki ng restroom nila. It has multiple cubicles, 2 sinks and a big mirror. Looks like it was really intended to be like this. I guess they host a lot of parties and gatherings, that’s why. Convenient nga naman. That’s a good idea. While I was putting my make up on, may pumasok sa restroom.   
  
“oh sorry.” Hindi ko kasi na lock yung door. Err. Stupid me. eh pano kung nakaupo ako sa toilet, eh di nakita na ko kung sino man yun. ::) ::)   
  
“it’s okay, I’m about to leave anyways..” I finished putting on my lipgloss and gathered all my stuff so I could go and so she could use the restroom.   
  
Nung palabas na ko, I noticed how she was staring at me. okay? ??? ??? What’s wrong with her and why is she looking me at like I’m from out of space or something? ??? ???   
  
“is there any problem? ???” I decided to ask when the door was already halfway open.   
  
Nagsmile sya sakin. Ewan ko kung bakit. “you’re Madeleine right? Jeremy’s girlfriend? ??? 8)” pano nya ko nakilala? ??? ???   
  
I closed the door and went back in. “yeah, you know me?” well, it is a little stupid question to ask. Sinabi na nga nya yung name ko, obviously, she knows me nga. ??? ::)   
  
“of course, who wouldn’t know you? You’re so famous that you have no idea ::) 8)..” So I’m famous ha… I just smiled at her, I don’t know, I don’t really feel good about this girl. “I’m Amanda Borromeo, by the way :).” She extended her hand after she introduced herself to me. I shook her hand even though I’m feeling kinda weird around her. Eh kasi naman, there’s this look on her face that I couldn’t read.   
  
“nice meeting you.”   
  
“I’m so glad to finally meet you.. can I call you Iris? Kasi napansin ko yun yung tawag sayo ng mga tao eh…” she said. “you speak tagalog, right? ???” I nodded.   
  
“yea, but I’m not so good at it.. getting better everyday :).” Sinabi ko. sometimes kasi nahihiya akong magtagalog in front of other people eh, kasi sometimes I misuse the word tapos yun pala may iba ng meaning. ;D ;D   
  
“good. So it’s okay to call you Iris diba? ??? 8)” is it me or is she just too friendly?   
  
“oh sure. Actually, I’d rather prefer you call me that. Madeleine is too formal.” So, I’ve been wanting to ask who she is, like you know.. WHO-SHE-IS-AND-WHY-IS-SHE-HERE, kinda thing. “so, are you like one of the business people here? ??? :)” I finally decided to spill.   
  
“oh..” napatawa siya. Wala namang nakakatawa sa tinanong ko ha? “well, in the future I wil be. I’m Manuel Borromeo’s daughter, we did good business with the Valdez’.. Actually, late last year lang kami nakapagpatayo ng sarili naming company, yung sa pangalan talaga ng pamilya. We have been business partners kasi since.. I don’t know. Basta matagal na 8).”   
  
“I see. What kind of business do you guys own? ???”   
  
“mortgage company.” Pagkasabi nya nun, may isang girl na nagopen ng door. kasi naman, hindi nakalock kaya kung sino sino yung pumapasok.   
  
“oh.. wow :).” Big time pa la tong girl na to eh. Is it me or is it just really hot and crowded in here? ??? ???   
  
“uy Amanda, nandito ka pala.” Who’s this girl now?   
  
Inintroduce naman nya ko. “Iris this is Lisa, Lis, si Iris. Siya yung…” siya yung ano? they made an eye contact, which I don’t know the purpose of, then she turned to me. “are you okay? ???” she asked.   
  
“me? ???” I asked her back “yea, I’m fine. It’s just a little stuffy in here that’s all :-\ :-\.” I fanned myself with my hand. It is getting stuffy! :-\ :o “well, it was nice to meet you two, Amanda and Lisa, but I gotta get going..” binuksan ko na yung door para makalabas na ko. I need air badly. Ang init kasi sa loob ng restroom, I’m starting to sweat and feel dizzy. “Jeremy and the guests are probably looking for me..” oo nga, kasi kanina pa ko nandito eh.   
  
“alright. Nice to meet you too. I’m sure they’re all anxiously waiting for you out there..” nagsmile ako sa kanya then I turned my back. Actually, it was more of a sheepish smile than a sincere one. ewan ko ba, I have negative vibes on this girl ???. Hindi pa ko nakaalis talaga when I heard that Lisa girl ask Amanda.   
  
“sino yun?”   
  
“it’s the new Tricia 8).” Say what? :o ??? New Tricia? ??? ??? Who’s Tri… :o :o   
  
  
\*\* FLASHBACK \*\*   
  
Habang naglalakad ako, I heard something.. “sssmmfmfmfm” hindi naman galing kay Ella, or sa background nya. More like.. like someone’s talking? Wait? Who’s talking? Well, I checked him one more time, only to find out that he was the one I’m hearing.   
  
He’s sleep-talking!!   
  
Eh kaso hindi ko naman marinig yung sinasabi nya, so I moved closer to him. yung phone ko nasa may ear ko pa rin, si Ella kase, may kinukwento. When I was close enough that I could hear what he’s saying..   
  
“sorry..” he moved his head, but his eyes remained closed. He must be dreaming? “sorry..” who’s he saying sorry to!? And why is he saying sorry!? “sorry I didn’t mean to….   
  
---Sorry.. Tricia….” And I suddenly lost grip to the phone.   
  
\*\* END OF FLASHBACK \*\*   
  
  
TRICIA. Yeah, I remember hearing that name from Jeremy ??? :-\. Actually, I think I heard him say her name a couple of times already.. but who is she and why is he saying her name while he’s asleep? ??? ???   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Could it be? ??? No… but he would’ve… :-\ :-\ :-\   
  
  
  
  
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Naghiwalay kami pagpasok namin galing sa gazebo. Magrerestroom daw muna siya, kaya nauna na ko sa labas kasi hinahanap na kami ni Mommy at ng ibang mga bisita. Simple lang si Iris, mababaw ang kaligayahan.. Natutuwa ako dahil nagustohan nya yung ginawa ko para sa kanya. At hindi yung klaseng tuwa na panandalian lang. masaya siya, nakikita at nararamdaman ko yun.   
  
Ako din naman eh, masaya ako. Kaso hindi ko maalis sa isip ko na magalala sa pagiging masaya nya. Lalo akong naguilty. Hindi kasi totoo :-\ :-\. Kung masaya man sya, yun ay bunga ng isang malaking kasinungalingan lang. Kung baga, epekto lang yun ng pinaniniwalaan nya. Alam nyang girlfriend ko siya at alam nyang dapat na maging masaya siya sakin. Pero hindi ganun yun eh :-\. Hindi ko kayang ibigay sa kanya yung kaligayahan na para sa kanya. All I could do is to make her happy at certain points and occasions, but not at a maximum level. Yun lang ang kaya kong ibigay sa kanya.. gustohin ko man syang mahalin, hindi ko naman kaya… hindi pa ko handa. :-[ :-[   
  
Kinakabahan ako dahil marami na siyang naaalala ngayon.. buti na lang at wala pa siyang natatandaan na tungkol sakin. Hindi ko nga alam kung magagalit ba ako dahil wala siyang maalala tungkol sakin.. saming dalawa o matutuwa at magpapasalamat dahil wala pa siyang naaalala. Magpapasalamat muna ako siguro sa ngayon… :-\ :-\   
  
Pano na lang kung yung susunod nyang maalala eh yung ginawa ko sa kanya? ??? :-\ pano kung maalala nya na hindi pala totoo na may relasyon kaming dalawa? Na niloloko ko lang siya at sinasakyan ko lang yung nasimulan nya para makaganti… :-[ :-[   
  
“hijo where’s Princess?” si Mommy, nakiki-Princess na rin ngayon kay Iris. Yung lola nya kasi eh, ang unang pakilala sa kanya lagi eh Princess. ::)   
  
“sa restroom, Ma.”   
  
“Son, magikot ka pa dun.” Tinuro nya yung mga tables sa bandang dulo. “marami pang naghihintay sa inyo.” Hindi pa pala namin napupuntahan ni Iris yung mga tao dun. Kasi naman eh sobrang dami nila, hindi ko na matandaan kung sino sino yung naintroduce ko sa kanya.   
  
Maraming kumakausap sakin. Yung iba hindi ko naman kilala, pero kilala ako. pati si Tricia. Katulad nalang kanina, may nagtanong ba naman sakin kung si Iris na daw ba ang pinalit ko kay Tricia :-\. Pakialam ba nila? Hindi porket nandito si Iris hindi ibig sabihin nun nakalimutan ko na si Tricia. Magkaiba naman silang dalawa eh. Magkaibang magkaiba. :-\ :-\   
  
Hindi ko nga alam kung saang lupalop ng mundo nila nakuha yung idea na yun. hindi si Iris ang ipapalit ko kay Tricia dahil sa simula pa lang, hindi na yun ganun. I’m not about to use Iris to forget Tricia. Hindi naman kasi tama yun. kung baga, kung masaya man ako kay Iris ngayon, hindi yun dahil sa gusto kong makapag-move on kundi dahil sa simpleng dahilan na masaya ako. period. :) :-\   
  
Oo, inaamin ko, nung umpisa ang balak ko talagang gawin ay pahirapan siya, na ipakita sa kanya na hindi siya isang Prinsesa katulad ng tawag nila sa kanya, kundi isang ordinaryong tao lang na katulad nating lahat. Na hindi lahat ng tao ay mamahalin, rerespetuhin at pagsisilbihan siya dahil siya si Iris Martin. Hindi ganun. Galit na galit ako sa kanya dahil immature siya at sobrang taas ng tingin nya sa sarili nya. I wanted her to learn the true value of life. Gusto ko siyang baguhin. I wanted her to suffer and wish she never have gone here and met me. >:( 8)   
  
Pero nagbago yun ng maaksidente sya at nagkaamnesia. Nagbago ang lahat dahil wala na kong gustong gawin ngayon kundi ang ispoil, pasayahin at pagsilbihan siya. I want her to be the Princess that she really is. :) :)   
  
Hindi ko siya mahal okay. I think. ??? :-\   
  
“Apo, puntahan mo na kaya si Princess? Aalis na kasi yang mga yan eh..” sabi ng lola ni Iris.   
  
“sige po.” Tapos tumingin ako ulit sa parents ko, “si Anthony ba nakita nyo na? ???” langyang mokong na yun, hindi sumipot! >:( ::)   
  
“hindi hijo eh.. siguro naman parating na yun.” parating.. eh matatapos na nga yung party! ::)   
  
Tumalikod na ko sa kanilang tatlo at pumasok na sa loob ng bahay. Ang tagal naman kasi ni Iris eh, ang sabi nya magpopowder lang siya ng nose. Magpopowder? Yung nose lang ba ang pinapowderan ng mga babae? ??? ??? Weirdo talaga kayo. Eh halos isang oras na siyang nagpopowder ng nose sa banyo eh. >:(   
  
Marami akong nakasalubong pa sa loob. Lahat sila siempre hinahanap si Iris. Kakaiba din ang charm niya eh. Pakiramdam ko lahat ng tao dito ngayon eh gustong gusto sya. Actually, hindi pala gusto, naiintriga silang lahat kay Iris. Alam ko naman na yung ibang tao dito mga plastic lang eh. dahil nung pinakilala ko si Iris sa mga taong to, yung iba dun nagbulungan at nagtinginan. >:( ???   
  
Habang naglalakad ako, hindi ko maalis sa isip ko yung babaeng nakita ko kanina.. yung kamuka ni Tricia. Amanda ba yun? ??? :-\ basta. Kanina ko pa siya hinahanap dito eh, hindi ko naman makita. Sino kaya siya at bakit ngayon ko lang siya nakita? Ang sabi nya matagal ng business partners ang mga magulang namin.. yea, I remember the Borromeos pero hindi ko pa siya nakita kahit kailan. Ngayon pa lang. kamuka nya kaya si Tricia? Siguro namamalik mata lang ako. wala namang kamuka si Tricia eh :-\ ???..   
  
“dude! May sasabihin ako sayo!” tumingin ako sa likod. Si Anthony, tumatakbo papunta sakin. Loko to, dumating pa siya, eh matatapos na yung party. Tumigil na siya sa pagtakbo nung malapit na siya sakin, hingal na hingal pa siya nun at nagbend ng konti tapos pinatong nya yung kamay nya sa binti nya. “hindi ka maniniwala sa nakita ko, bro! :o” halos hindi na siya makahinga nung sinabi nya yun.   
  
“ano? ???”   
  
“si Tricia man! Nakita ko! :o :o” Tricia!? “swear bro! gulat nga ko eh!”   
  
Ahh! Si Amanda. “sira. si Amanda yun. Amanda Borromeo. Anak ng isa sa mga kaibigan ni Dad.” So hindi nga ako namamalik mata lang. talagang kamuka nya si Tricia… :-\ :-\   
  
“really? ??? Whew! ::)” pinunasan nya yung noo nya dahil pinagpapawisan siya, “Akala ko nakakita na ko ng multo eh. ang takot ko naman! :o ;D” sabay lagay ng kamay nya sa dibdib.   
  
“kamuka nga nya eh, pati ako, nagulat din kanina.” Nagsimula na kong maglakad at siya naman, sumunod sakin. “have you ever heard of her name before? ??? ??? Ngayon ko lang kasi narinig pati nakita siya eh. Samantalang matagal na palang magkaibigan at business partners sila ni Dad.”   
  
“talaga? Oo kilala ko yung Daddy nya, Manuel Borromeo, may ari ng isang mortgage company na finafinance ng bangko nyo. And I heard he has a daughter pero hindi taga rito.. so baka siya nga yun.” that makes sense. Hindi siya taga dito. “pero pare. Unang tingin, kamukang kamuka nya si Tricia no? ???”   
  
Hindi lang pala ako ang nakapansin.. ano ba to. Bakit nya kamuka si Tricia? ??? :-\   
  
“teka nga.” Nagisip ako ng pwede kong itanong sa kanya kasi ayokong pagusapan si Tricia ngayon.. “bakit ngayon ka lang ha? ??? Buti sumipot ka pa, patapos na yung party eh ::).”   
  
“loko! Kanina pa ko nandito no! 8)” kanina pa… eh bakit hindi ko siya nakita kahit san? ??? ??? “Siguro mga isang oras na.”   
  
“ulol! Ako pa niloko mo. Hindi naman kita nakita dito kanina ::).”   
  
“eh kasi sinamahan ko si Tisay dun sa may hallway kanina :) :D…” Tisay? ??? ??? Si Iris? Kasama nya? :o ??? Kaya pala ang tagal nya kasi kung ano ano pang ginagawa! eh alam naman nyang kailangan siya sa labas! >:( ??? “mukang malungkot at wala sa mood, tol. Namumutla, pati parang hirap huminga :-\..” hirap huminga? Bakit? Hinawakan nya yung balikat ko, “inaway mo ba bro? ??? ::)”   
  
“hindi. Bakit ko naman aawayin yun :-\ :-\..” Malungkot siya? Bakit siya malungkot? ??? ??? Eh kanina masaya siya eh.. so hindi pala siya masaya nung sinabi nyang masaya sya.. ganun ba yun? :-\ :-\ “bakit hindi mo siya kasama ngayon? ???” tanong ko kagad kay Anthony. “san sya? ??? kailangan ko siyang makita ngayon :-\.”   
  
“ah. Eh iniwan ko muna siya kasi nga hinahanap kita. Puntahan mo na nga, mukang masama ang loob eh ??? :-\.” Saan? Anong ginawa ko? “eh hindi naman masyadong nagsasalita. Terror pala yang si Tisay pag wala sa mood! :o ;D”   
  
“san ba? ???”   
  
Tinuro nya yung sliding door sa may kanan, “nandun sa may pool. Dun siya naglakad nung umalis ako eh.” Nung papalayo na ko, bigla siyang nagsalita ulit. “bro, alam ba nya yung tungkol kay Tricia? ???” napatigil ako sa paglalakad ng wala sa oras :-\. “kanina kasi pare, naririnig ko yung mga bisita na kinocompare si Tisay kay Tricia eh.. hindi kaya narinig nya? ??? :-\” tama. He could be right. Kasi naman yung walang kwenta at isip na mga taong yun eh! >:(   
  
“hindi.. hindi nya alam :-\.” iniwan ko si Anthony sa kinatatayuan nya at nagpatuloy na ko sa paglalakad papuntang pool.   
  
And there she was, nakaupo sa pool at nakalublob ang mga paa sa tubig. Tulala. Short of breath. Namumutla. Parang nakakita ng multo at malalim ang iniisip. Exactly what Anthony said. ??? :-\   
  
“Ano ginagawa mo dito? ??? :-\” tanong ko sa kanya. Tumingin siya sakin pero seryoso yung muka nya at parang hindi nya ko naririnig oh naiintindihan man lang. Inalog ko siya para mawala siya sa pagkatulala nya. “Iris! Huy!” saka lang sya nagblink ng mata. Bakit siya ganyan?   
  
Matagal muna siyang nakatingin sakin na parang nawawala siya bago nya sinabing, “wala... it's hot inside kasi eh.. :-[”   
  
Nagsquat ako. “bakit hindi ka nagsasabi para nasamahan kita? ??? Kanina pa kita hinihintay eh :-\…” tapos inayos ko yung buhok nya, nasa mga mata nya kasi eh.. “okay ka lang ba? ??? :-\…” parang iba siya ngayon.. hindi siya yung Iris na kasama ko kanina na masaya.. :-\ :-\   
  
“sorry :-[.” she didn't answer my question. so meaning, something is wrong nga.   
  
“kanina ka pa ba nandito? Sabi ni Anthony malungkot ka daw.. what’s wrong? ??? :-\ ???”   
  
huminga siya ng malalim at tinaas nya yung mga paa nya galing sa tubig, “nothing.” Tapos tumayo siya at nagsuot ng sapatos. “let’s go? ??? :)” okay, hindi ako tanga, that was a fake smile.   
  
Hindi na ko nagsalita o nagtanong pa. hinawakan ko lang yung kamay nya at bumalik na kami sa mga bisita.   
  
“Princess where have you been? ???” tanong kagad ng lola nya pagkakita sa kanya.   
  
“around..”   
  
“alam mo naman importante itong gabi na to eh, you're the bell of the ball, Princess. tapos kung saan saan ka pa nagpupunta.”   
  
Hindi siya sumagot. Napansin nilang lahat yung kakaibang kinikilos ni Iris. Wala siyang kibo mula kanina pa. hindi naman sya tahimik nung nasa gazebo kami eh :-\ :-\.. bakit kaya siya ganyan? ??? nagsasmile lang siya kapag may kumakausap sa kanya. sumasagot din naman kapag tinatanong siya.. yun lang. but other than that, wala talaga. ni hindi nga nya ko masyadong pinapansin eh.. parang ang lalim ng iniisip nya at dahil dun, hindi ako mapalagay. Pakiramdam ko may alam sya na hindi na sinasabi sakin. :-\ :-\   
  
“Prince, you okay? ???” si Ella. Buti naman at tinanong nya itong pinsan nya. kanina pa kasi yan ganyan. Nasa table kami ngayon, kasama namin parents ko pati si lola at Ella. Alam nyo kung anong ginagawa nya? pinaglalaruan nya yung pagkain nya. Ni hindi nga nya ginalaw eh. :-\ :-\ Halatang wala siyang gana at ayaw nya dito.   
  
“yea, I’m fine.” Kinuha nya yung baso sabay inom.   
  
“are you sure Princess? Kanina ka pa walang kibo ah? ???” sabi ni Lola.   
  
“oo nga hija.. Is something wrong? Hindi mo ba nagustohan yung surprise sayo ni Jeremy? ???”   
  
Tumingin lang siya sa kanilang lahat na parang may gumugulo sa isipan nya na gusto nyang maayos. “okay lang po ako.. the gazebo was splendid po tita.. I’m just… I’m just probably tired :-\ :-\..”   
  
“masama ba pakiramdam mo? Masakit ba ulo mo? You want some medicine? ??? ???” tumayo si Mommy para pumasok sa loob at kumuha ng gamot para kay Iris.   
  
Pero pinigilan nya siya. “no Tita, I’m fine po.” Nagsmile siya kaya umupo si Mommy ulit. After ilang minutes, bigla na lang siya tumayo. “excuse me, I need some air.”   
  
Napatingin na lang ako sa kanya nun habang tumatayo siya pero siya, hindi tumingin sakin. Nung nakaalis na siya, sinenyasan ako ni Daddy na tumayo rin at sundan siya.. at ginawa ko naman.   
  
Pumasok ako ulit sa loob at nakita ko syang nakaupo dun sa couch sa living room. Lumapit ako at tinabihan ko siya. “may problema ba Iris? ??? :-\”   
  
“wala.”   
  
okay, hindi siya magaling magsinungaling. Alam kong may gumugulo sa isip nya ngayon. “wala? eh bakit wala ka sa mood? ??? :-\”   
  
“nagugulohan kasi ako.” see? eh di may mali nga.. teka? ??? nagugulohan sya? Saan? ??? ???   
  
“anong ibig mong sabihin? ???” nilayo nya yung tingin nya sakin.   
  
“ha.. nothing.. :-\ :-\ eh kasi may nakausap ako dun, Amanda yung name. do you know her? ???”   
  
“hindi, ngayon ko lang sya nakilala eh.. bakit? ???” I don’t know why, pero parang hindi ko magugustohan ang kakalabasan ng usapan namin na ito.   
  
“nothing.. she just seems very…” nagsquint siya ng mga mata nya na parang hinahanap nya yung tamang salita, “interesting..” interesting!? ??? Nung nakita nya yung expression ng muka ko, tumayo siya tapos hinawakan nya yung kamay ko. “tara, kain tayo ng ice cream! :D :D :D” hala? Nagiba bigla ang mood? ??? ::)   
  
Hanep talaga tong babaeng to. minsan, este, lagi pala.. hindi ko siya maintindihan. Hindi ko nga masakyan ang mga trip nya eh. ang wiweirdo kasi. One minute she could be smiling and laughing, tapos wala pang isang kisapmata, biglang magbabago yung disposition nya. ewan ko, dala siguro ng sakit nya.. na from time to time nakakaala sya ng mga bagay bagay kaya natutulala na lang siya basta basta na parang loka loka. ;D ::)   
  
So yun nga, as usual, pinagbigyan ko sya. Nagpaalam kami tapos sumakay na kami sa kotse at nagpunta sa pinakamalapit na ice cream parlor. Gusto nya ng ice cream, eh di sige, bigyan ng ice cream. ::) ::)   
  
“vanilla please! :D” hindi naman ata nasobrahan ang pagiging cheerful nya nyan? “ikaw babe?” lumingon sya sakin at nagtanong.   
  
“vanilla din.”   
  
Umupo na kami pagkatapos naming makuha yung ice cream. She eats ice cream like a child. May pa sayaw sayaw pa siyang nalalaman, yung parang bata na sobrang excited dahil kinakain nya yung paborito nya. Natutuwa ako sa kanya. ;D ;D   
  
Teka nga, baka mabilaukan naman to eh! ;D ::) “favorite mo talaga yan no? ::)” tinanong ko sya para matigil siya sa kakalamon ng ice cream nya. Grabe. Ngayon lang ako nakakita ng isang babaeng maarte na nawawalan ng manners kapag kumakain ng ice cream! :o ;D :D   
  
“this?” pinunasan nya yung labi nya, “oh yea.. this is my comfort food.. I love ice cream. Vanilla ice cream :) :)..” she smiled. She looks so innocent right now. “what about you? What’s your favorite flavor? ???”   
  
“vanilla.” Sabay naming sinabi. Bigla syang napatigil, na parang may biglang dumaan sa gitna naming dalawa. Parang alam ko ata kung anong ibig sabihin nun ah…   
  
“I remember this :o.. I mean.. I remember you saying vanilla is your favorite ice cream flavor.” Tumayo siya at naglakad papunta sa may pintuan. Kaya ako naman, tumayo na rin. San siya pupunta? “and then we went to the beach after to see the sunset.. I played and ran on the sand while you watched me act like a lunatic and everything :D :D…” natawa siya ng konti, “and then I stopped when the sun is setting. Yeah, I remember that. It was so beautiful and very tranquil.. then we talked about each of our lives.” Oo, naalala ko yun. hindi ako nagsalita at hinayaan ko lang siya makaalala. “I felt bad so you took me to this place, it’s like cliff or something that has this amazing overview of the whole beach :D :)..” nag pause siya, tapos nilagay nya yung kamay nya sa bibig nya na parang hinahawakan nya yung mga labi nya, “and then… you made me feel better because you :-X….” nakatingin lang ako sa kanya nun. alam ko kung anong sunod na nangyare dun. “You… you kissed me :-X :)..” sabay harap sakin. “and I…” she wrinkled her forehead, “I kissed you back :) :-[..”   
  
Wala akong masabi. I was dumbfounded for some reason. Naalala nya. kinakabahan ako sa susunod nyang sasabihin. Oo masaya ako dahil may naalala nya at may naalala siya tungkol sakin, pero hindi ko maiwasan ang magisip ng todo. Malapit na nyang matandaan ang lahat. Alam at nararamdaman ko yun. :-\ :-\   
  
“buti naman naalala mo yun 8) ::).” sinubukan kong hindi gawing big deal ito, pero parang may kung anong tumutusok sa dibdib ko ngayon. “akala ko talagang nakalimutan mo na yun eh ::) :-\.”   
  
Ngumiti siya. she flashed a very relieved smile infront of me. “I’m glad I do too :).” Tapos niyakap nya ko ng mahigpit. “don’t worry babe, konti na lang, I’ll remember everything na :) :)..”   
  
Unti unti ng bumabalik ang memory nya..   
  
Pano kung sa susunod na magsasabi sya sakin ng mga naalala nya hindi na nya ko yakapin ng ganito kahigpit dahil kamumuhian na nya ko? ??? :-\   
  
I gulped :-X. Ngayon lang ako ninerbyos ng ganito.   
  
Hindi nya dapat maalala yung mga susunod na nangyare.. lalo na nung nakabalik na kami ng Manila.. Sumama bigla ang pakiramdam ko. Ayokong magalit siya sakin. Ayoko syang malayo sakin. Ayokong bawiin nya kung ano man kami ngayon... :-\ :-\   
  
Niyakap ko sya ng mahigpit. Buo na ang desisyon ko.   
  
Call me a bad person, selfish, mean, idiot, ass hole, jackass at kung ano pang pwede nyong maitawag sakin...   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
pero gagawin ko ang lahat para hanggang dun na lang ang maalala nya… :-\ :-\   
  
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“sunduin kita bukas ahh.. morning. :)” He kissed my forehead. “wag masyadong mag-isip okay? :)”   
  
“okay. thanks for the night..” I kissed him on his cheek and went inside the house without looking back.   
  
Today was something. It’s weird, because I don’t understand why I act differently at certain occasions when I know I’m not supposed to :-\. Like kanina, when I met that Amanda girl, there was something talaga about her that I have doubts about. Ewan ko, probably because of the medications I take that’s why, pero iba talaga. Swear. I feel like she’s after me for some reason. ??? :-\   
  
I went to bed early. Like probably around 10 pm, I was already lying down but not sleeping. Totally staring at the ceiling. Trying to count sheep. I hate this :-[. I hate thinking. Kase naman eh! >:( Tumawag si Jeremy sakin. He called about 3 times but I didn’t take any of them. I’m too confused right now to even talk to someone. Because if I do, I might drive myself crazy even before I actually get to that point. >:( :-[   
  
Ahh! Screw this! Makababa na nga lang. I was about to get up and go downstairs to fix myself a cup of hot chocolate to maybe help me sleep, when my phone suddenly vibrated. Kaya tinignan ko kagad. It’s weird because I never liked looking at my phone.. and now I do. ??? ???   
  
Hmm.. 1 message received.   
  
Gdnyt, Princess Piggy.. c u 2mrw..   
  
Sender: Jeremy Bamboo   
  
I threw my phone back on my bed. Hmf. Nakakainis naman! >:( >:( Hindi naman kaya ako Piggy. Ang sexy ko nga eh :D :D. Actually, I was told that I am one. wait, scratch that, I know that I am one sexy chick! 8) 8) On the contrary though, he always wants to feed me.. hmm.. bakit kaya!? ??? >:( ang sabi nya sakin, he likes me with a little fat. Ayaw naman daw nya kasi yung super skinny. Kaya nga lagi nya kong dinadala sa bahay nila eh. His Mom, Tita Amy, is an excellent cook. And I mean like whatever she cooks is really delicious, even if sometimes I have no idea what in the world I’m eating ::) ::). Siguro kaya gusto nya ko tumaba kasi para maging ugly na ko noh!? >:( And if that happens, talagang may right na sya to call me Princess Piggy! >:( :(   
  
I didn’t reply. Bahala siya.   
  
This is Jeremy, one day he cares, and the other he doesn’t :-\ :-\... which leads me into always thinking he’s just forced to be with me. parang hindi siya sigurado sakin.. about me and about us… ewan. That’s how I feel towards this whole thing. Yung bang.. he’s yours but he’s REALLY NOT yours kinda thing. I don’t know, I feel that there’s something wrong here :-\ :-\. You girls know how it is, right? It’s called intuition. Kahit na ilang beses nyang sabihin that nothing is up, I know something is up. I feel it. I could sooooo feel it! And no, this is not insanity and paranoia. :-[ :-X   
  
That’s why I don’t know where to put myself. I don’t know how to act around him :-[ :-[.. I’m afraid to act a certain way because it might backfire on me. papagalitan nya ko, PDA daw. Sus. kung girlfriend nya ko, as everyone knows naman, why does he restrict me of kissing him or even holding his hand ??? ??? ? Diba lagi nga siyang nagagalit sakin. Di bale sana kung secret lovers kami eh, yun maiintindihan ko pa kung bakit ayaw nyang maging sweet kami sa isa’t isa. Buti nga ngayon, pumapayag na siyang tawagin ko na Babe eh. before, nako, I call him that, next thing I know I’m being reprimanded. Last time I checked, it’s not a crime to call your boyfriend Babe or any other terms of endearment. ??? ???   
  
Actually, I’ve been wondering about these things a long time ago, I just didn’t pay attention or even bothered asking him kasi alam ko magagalit lang sya sakin. And I don’t want that. Takot ako sa kanya eh :-[ :-[.. he has this look on his face that makes my knees shake. I don’t get him most of the time. I don’t know if this is because of the fact that I have amnesia and that I’m often confused about things, or he’s… he’s just resenting me :-\ :-[. na parang hindi nya ko matanggap or that he’s forced to be with me… it makes me think that he’s hiding, or is not telling me something. :-\ :-\   
  
Kaya nga I’m struggling and trying my best to remember everything na eh.. kasi maybe when I get my memory back, I’ll understand why things are the way they are, or even have a deeper knowledge about the ever-so-mysterious-Jeremy-Valdez. I feel awful because he’s my boyfriend and yet I know absolutely nothing about him :-X :-X. Gosh. I wish I knew him from head to toe. :-\ :-\   
  
Bumaba ako sa kitchen para gumawa nga ng hot chocolate. Pero before that, I decided to open the fridge to find something sweet to eat or just something to satisfy my craving for food. I so want to sleep right now, but I can’t. nako. Tomorrow I’m sure malaki na naman ang eyebags ko. err.. stupid boyfriend’s making me crazy and ugly!! >:( ::)   
  
“why are you still up, Princess?” nagulat ako so I turned around. it’s David. “can’t sleep? ???”   
  
I closed the fridge door and sat in the high chair by the counter. “yea.. just finding something to eat.”   
  
“ohh.. what do you feel like eating?” he asked. He’s leaving na pala in days. I just remembered. Friday na ngayon and his flight to LA is on Tuesday.   
  
I stood up and went to the cupboard to get a cup and then to the pantry to get the hot chocolate mix. “actually, I was just thinking of making myself a cup of hot chocolate, but then when I saw the fridge, I got hungry :).” I smiled at him while I prepared my drink.   
  
“you want something sweet?” pumunta sya sa fridge and took out a box of cake. “I bought this earlier because I remembered you like chocolate cake a lot. and plus, the flowers are really cute, and I thought you might like it.” He was talking about the flower design on the cake. Chocolate cake daw!? :o How come I didn’t see it when I looked? ??? “you want a slice?”   
  
“hmm.. wouldn’t that be too much sweets for me? I’m trying to sleep..” kahit na gusto ko naman talaga. eh I have to sleep eh, baka hindi ako makatulog if eat too much chocolate.   
  
“one slice won’t hurt, will it? ;)”   
  
“well.. it is a little tempting ::)..” it is!! hmff. “alright. but just one tiny slice okay? ::)”   
  
So there, he cut me a small slice of cake, took milk, and heated it up for me. “just drink some hot milk, it will make you sleep much better :).” I’ve never seen nor felt him care about me so much like this. Dati kasi, wala naman pakialam sakin yan eh. well, meron naman, sobra pa nga eh. Wrong way and very much unappreciative naman yun. Actually, ngayon ko lang na feel na hindi fake yung ginagawa nya... ??? :) Ano kaya nangyare bakit siya naging ganyan ngayon?   
  
“why are you doing this for me? ??? ???” I suddenly asked him. I don’t know why I did, but it was just like an automatic response that came out from my mouth.   
  
“what do you mean? I’ve always been like this.. well.. ever since I realized how much you mean to me and how much I did you wrong :) :-\..” sabi nga nila, sa huli ang pagsisisi. I gave him plenty of chances before but he blew every single one of it. It’s okay though, dahil kung hindi naman dahil dun, wala ako dito ngayon.. and I’m not gonna be the person I am right now... which I kinda love-slash-hate.   
  
I didn’t speak after that, wala lang. I just felt like it was a very awkward moment to be in. I don’t like talking about the past kasi.. lalo na pagdating kay David. Makes me remember how stupid I was >:( :-[. Although I’ve forgiven him na for whatever he did to me, hindi ko pa rin yun makakalimutan. Yeah, I know, forgive and forget. Pero hindi eh. I forgave him, but I have never forgotten.   
  
“so, are you all packed up for Tuesday? ???” I changed the subject na lang as I opened the sliding door that leads to the garden. Baka saan pa kasi mapunta ito eh.   
  
He pulled out the chair for me so that I could sit. “yea.. almost done. A little more to box and that’s it.. I’m out. :) :-\” he smiled. but I could tell it wasn’t the happy smile. More like.. uncertain smile. Yeah, I know his smiles.   
  
“that’s good.. so you’re gonna say hi to my Mom for me? :) ;)”   
  
“of course. I’d be glad to kiss her for you if you want. You just have to pass it on.. ;) 8)” he winked. sira ulo talaga to!   
  
Pero natawa ako dun ah. i-pass daw! Ano to, pass the message? LOL! ;D ;D “shut up! ;D” I lightly hit his shoulder.   
  
“I’m just kidding. I know Jeremy will be mad if you kiss me.”   
  
“psshh.. I’d bet big bucks on that! He’s totally not gonna get mad at me. ;D :-\”   
  
“huh? Why? ??? ???” judging by the look on his face, I know he’s shocked and very intrigued.   
  
“ohh… nothing. Just.. :-\ :-\” I didn’t know what to say, ayoko naman kasing sabihin sa kanya yung problema ko. he doesn’t need to know. Ako nga, hindi ko alam kung anong problema ko eh. “forget it, I didn’t mean that :-\.” Then I looked away.   
  
“hey :-\..” he said while his hand was on my shoulder. “what’s the matter? Something wrong? ??? :-\” I hate it when somebody asks me what’s wrong because most probably, even if I wanted to keep it to myself, I would tell anyways. It’s the stupid concern thing. It gives me the initiative to just spill everything out. :-\ :-X   
  
And so I did. okay lang naman siguro. “it’s… my stupid condition. It’s driving me nuts. :-\”   
  
“is it medication? ???”   
  
“no.” although I know it could also be because of that.   
  
“then what? is it about…” he paused na parang ayaw nya pang sabihin, “is it.. Jeremy? ???”   
  
“well… he’s.. he’s… part of it :-\..” BIG part. :-\ :-\   
  
“what? I thought you guys are happy? You look happy.. what’s the matter? Why the change? ??? ???” sunod sunod nyang tinanong.   
  
“yeah.. I am happy.. I’m TOO happy. It’s not good :-\.” I know it’s odd, but that’s the best way I could explain it.   
  
“well… isn’t that a good thing, Princess? ???” he looks so lost right now. Oo nga naman, being happy has always been a good thing, but how come it’s making me feel differently? ??? :-\ It’s not good because as I have known, too much happiness usually results to tragic endings.. and I don’t want us to end the way David and I did… “everybody wants to be happy.. you’re lucky that you are.. and so much more :) :-\.”   
  
Lucky? I don’t feel lucky. I feel terrible. :-[ :-[ “it’s just that.. I think he’s not telling me something.. and it bothers me a lot.. :-\”   
  
“really? Like what? ???”   
  
Like what nga ba? yung tungkol saming dalawa. Sino si Amanda. lalo na, sino si Tricia. And why were those people at the party comparing me to her? ??? Successor ba nya ko? ??? Some of them were even surprised when Jeremy introduced me to them. It was as if it’s almost impossible for them to take me in their stupid circle. Oh please, as if I want to be in their circle! >:( :-[   
  
“about us :-\..” humarap ako sa kanya. “you see.. I don’t remember anything about Jeremy and anything about how we started at all..” wala talaga akong maalala. Hindi naman ganun ka severe yung amnesia ko to forget things like that. Actually, sabi nga ni Dr. Robles mabilis nga daw ang recovery ko eh.. “while I remember you. every single detail about us :-\.”   
  
“I’m glad you do :).” He smiled. “don’t worry too much, Princess. Time will come, you’ll remember everything.. just let it all come to you.. don’t force yourself okay.. ;)” then he placed his hand on my shoulder, “then you’ll be happy. Not TOO happy, but VERY happy :)..”   
  
He made sense. “really? You think I’ll ever get to that point with Jeremy? ??? :-\”   
  
“of course! I know you’ll get to that point... you deserve to have everything in the world.. now cheer up Princess :) ;)..” he picked my chin up because I was looking downwards, “you’re too pretty and precious to frown and stress about this :)…” I smiled.. for some reason I feel lighter than I was an hour ago. It was as if a big stone was taken away from my chest. I never would have thought I’d have this kind of talk with David and that he’d be able to make me feel better knowing that this is David, my forever-sworn nuisance. :)   
  
“thanks David :)..” I smiled again then gave him a light kiss on the cheek. Wala lang. I feel relieved in a way.. siguro nga dahil lang to sa medications ko kaya minsan kung ano ano ang iniisip ko. :-\ :-\   
  
yeah, he’s right. Cheer up because I am priviledged. At least ako, I know I’m being cared about diba? ??? :-\ lucky pa nga ako eh.. some people have to beg and get down on their knees to be appreciated by the ones they love. Eh ako.. he’s right there.. kulang na lang, tanggalin ko yung worries and curiousity ko. Tama. From now on, I’m not gonna try to remember stuff from the past anymore.. magcoconcentrate na lang ako sa present.. the present where I’m happy and worry-free.. :) :-\ :-\   
  
“so, I was hoping you could help me set up something for the 16th…” June 16, first monthsary namin yun ni Jeremy..   
  
“on the 16th? ???”   
  
“yeah.. I know you’re not gonna be around that time anymore.. but I need ideas.. I want to make it special for him :)..” he looked at me like I was saying something out of this world. “it’s our first month together! :D” I said excitedly.   
  
“oh :-\..” he paused, “it’s that fast, huh?” I nodded. “wow.. time flies… well..” he sat up because he was slouching already, “what do you have in mind? ???”   
  
“hmm..” I looked afar.. you know to help me organize my thoughts. hehe. ;D “I was thinking of a romantic dinner..” yea! That would be nice.. “at the beach..” tapos tumingin ako sa kanya, “what do you think? Too cheesy? ??? :)” sana magustohan naman nya yun..   
  
“no, I actually think that’s a good idea..” nagsmile siya ulit, “it’ll be more special if you surprise him ;)..” he winked. “and if you cook too ;)..”   
  
Me? cook? hindi nga ako marunong magluto eh! ::) ::) oh.. wait.. Tita Amy knows how! tama. papaturo na lang ako sa kanya.. :) :) “I think so too! I'll call his mom so she can teach me how to cook his favorite dish..” na-excite naman ako! “So are you gonna help me get the place set up? ??? :D”   
  
“of course.. we’ll do it on your spare time okay? before Tuesday, that is.. because you know, I’m leaving that day..”   
  
“alright.. thanks! You’re the best!! :D :D” I hugged him.   
  
“anything for you…” he whispered to me while he hugged me tightly..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
and suddenly, out of the blue....   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
I wasn't so worried anymore ??? :)...   
  
  
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I didn’t realize it was past 1 am when I went to bed. Napasarap ang kwentuhan namin ni David. kung ano ano pa kasi yung mga pinagusapan namin. He also gave me an advice on how to deal with my curiosity. Ang sabi nya, just let things happen and not to worry too much. Yeah. That’s what they all say, but they don’t know what the real deal here is. I can’t control my emotions right now.. And I usually don’t know when my curiosity will strike. It just happens.. even without me being prepared. Kasi naman!! why don’t I just be back to my old self already?! ??? :-\   
  
Although I feel better than I was, hindi parin ako talaga mapalagay. Basta. I still think there’s something I don’t know. I have a strong feeling.   
  
  
Saturday.   
  
“Prince. Gising!!” I felt a tap on my butt. Sounds like Ella. Hay!! Pumunta siya sa windows and pulled the curtains to the side. “rise and shine! It’s Saturday!! :D ::)”   
  
Ano ngayon kung Saturday? ??? I rolled on my back “what’s with the Saturday thing? ???” I looked over to the side to see the time, “Isabel naman! it’s 7:30 in the morning! >:( ::)”   
  
“wala! it’s the weekend.. bihis ka, alis tayo! :D” she sat beside me. “how about the beach ha? what do you think? ??? :D”   
  
Before I knew it, I was wide awake. Siempre. Beach yun eh. “would I ever say no to the beach!? ::)”   
  
She jumped up. I guess from excitement? “alright! Sige na get ready na!” tapos tumalikod na siya and walked to the door. “oo nga pala, the Prince Charming’s downstairs, waiting for you ;).”   
  
Si Jeremy? ??? “what? this early?”   
  
She turned around. “oo. May dalang muffins for you.” she walked towards me and tickled me on the side. “yihhiii!! :D ;D”   
  
“ahh shut up! ::)”   
  
“hoo!! Kilig naman si Princess! :D”   
  
“ang kulit mo, umalis ka na nga! ::)” I said in a kidding way. but yeah, I am kilig. Super kilig right now… ::) :D   
  
She left so I could take a shower and get ready. I wore a white tank and khaki shorts with my bathing suit under. I gathered all my beach stuff – sunscreen, shades, beach towels, extra clothes in case we play and I get really, really wet, etc.. - Magsasun-bathing ako! 8) ::) I seriously need a tan already, my skin is screaming for the sun!! After an hour or so, bumaba na ko and yes, I found my Prince Charming right there in the garden, with my lola.   
  
“bakit ngayon ka lang Princess? Kanina ka pa hinihintay ni Jeremy dito.” Sabi kagad ni lola when I walked towards them.   
  
“good morning Lola ::).” I kissed her na lang sa cheek. Eh kasi naman, morning na morning ang ganda ng greeting eh! then I walked to Jeremy, tiptoed and gave him a kiss on the cheek as well, “good morning Babe.” San kaya si David? ???   
  
“good morning.” He smiled at me. buti hindi sya nagalit when I kissed him. “dinalan kita ng chocolate muffins.. sabi kasi ni Ella favorite mo daw yan :)..” tapos inabot nya sakin yung bag of muffins. See. This is what I’m talking about. He’s being sweet and yet I always think there’s a catch to this. Like something horrible is about to happen later. :-\ ???   
  
“wow. Freshly baked. Thanks!” sweet. I love chocolate muffins!   
  
“san ang lakad nyo ngayon?” tanong naman ni lola.   
  
“sa beach po..”   
  
“ah tama yan, ng maarawan naman itong si Princess ::).” She walked to my side and held both my arms. “Puti puti kasi, parang labanos!” labanos? What the heck is that? ???   
  
“uhmm… okay? ???” minsan talaga hindi ko maintindihan yung sinasabi nya. So instead of asking her what labanos is, which may trigger my curiousity once more, I grabbed Jeremy’s hand so we could leave already. “we’re gonna go now Lola, okay?” nag nod siya tapos nagsmile. Ewan ko ba sa kanya. She’s another weirdo too. ::) ::)   
  
“have fun kids!” okay, seriously, what’s with the perkiness? ???   
  
“wait, where’s Ella? ???” I stopped walking and faced Lola again. “she’s coming too, isn’t she? ???”   
  
“I’m coming!” sigaw nya from upstairs. I could tell she’s in a hurry, kasi naririnig ko siya running around.   
  
After a while, bumaba na siya, kasunod si David.   
  
Bumulong sakin si Jeremy pagkakita nya sa kanya, “bakit kasama siya? ???”   
  
“what’s wrong with that?”   
  
“wala.” He took my hand and we started walking to the car. Sumunod na rin si David and Ella.   
  
“sinama ko si David kasi wala akong kasama.. third wheel ;D.” She grinned. “okay lang naman yun diba, Jeremy?”   
  
“oo.” He said without even looking back.   
  
“alright then let’s get going!” I said cheerfully. I’m happy for some reason. Maybe it’s because we’re going to the beach or the fact that I’m spending the day with Jeremy, or that I feel happy because David is coming with… well you know, because we’re cool now and everything…   
  
or… blah. I got nothing. :-X ::)   
  
It was an hour drive from the house, and we weren’t really talking to each other on our way there. Wait, he was talking and I respond from time to time, but we didn’t have a real conversation. I didn’t feel like talking - daldal style to him. Ella and David rode together using Ella’s car. Ayaw kasi ni Jeremy na magsama sama kaming apat sa kotse nya. He’s weird. He tells me to be practical and look what he’s doing - wasting gas.   
  
“--nakikinig ka ba sakin?” he suddenly asked out of nowhere. I didn’t realize he was talking pa pala and my mind here is drifting to planet Venus or something.   
  
“oh sorry, can you say that again? I didn’t catch that…” innocent effect. Hindi naman talaga ako nakikinig ehh.. ::) ::)   
  
“ang sabi ko may party tayong pupuntahan bukas ng gabi..”   
  
“party? Whose party? ???” party na naman? ??? Marami na namang tao na magbubulungan nyan. Just watch. ::) :-\   
  
“oo. Sabi kasi ni Daddy kailangan natin magpunta dun.. business perk.”   
  
“kaninong party nga?”   
  
“party ng mga Borromeo. Launching din ng company nila.” He said while driving. “nameet mo na si Amanda diba? ???” then he glanced at me quickly, “Amanda Borromeo? :) ???”   
  
Eww. That girl from the ladies’ room! >:( ::) “uhhh.. yeah.” Yea I remember her. The weirdo with another weirdo friend! ;D   
  
“yea.. daddy nya yung may party.. pupunta tayo ha :).”   
  
I don’t feel like going. I have this strange feeling about that girl. I think I hate her already! The way she looked at me and talked to me that one time, parang I did something horrible or something like that. Eh wala naman akong ginagawa. Ang nice nice ko nga eh! ::)   
  
“uhmm.. Babe?” tumingin siya sakin, “can we not go na lang? ??? :-\”   
  
“bakit? ???”   
  
“nothing.. I don’t feel like going..gusto ko sana magrest bukas eh :-\…” I just said that, but I really don’t wanna go. Ewan ko ba. Bad vibes on that girl! >:( “if you want or if it’s really that important, you can go.” He had this disappointed look on his face, the kind that makes my knees shake. Naman eh. “ok sige na nga ::)..” hay, okay so he won this time. Not pala this time, he won, like always.   
  
He smiled. “sandali lang tayo dun, promise ;).”   
  
I just nodded. Whatever. Why should I care anyways? If she hates me then let it be. Or maybe it’s just me who thinks that.. baka hindi naman ganun.. maybe she’s just naturally like that..   
  
After 10 more minutes, dumating na rin kami sa aming destination. Beach! Yey! Siempre ayun, we set up the place we’re staying at.. beach towels, pati yung food na dinala ni Ella and David.   
  
Kumain muna kami then we played Frisbee. It was fun running around chasing that tiny thing. We did this all the time back in LA eh. with Lauren and my other friends.. aww.. I miss them. I miss Lauren :) :-\. Jeremy did not play. actually, he did pala, pero sandali lang. okay lang, at least he played diba? si David noon hindi mo talaga mafoforce na magplay eh. buti ngayon naglalaro sya. Ang galing pala nya. he was teaching me pa nga eh. I never knew he was good at Frisbee. Well, I wouldn’t have known, he never played this with me when we were still together.   
  
Napansin ko nga while we were playing and Jeremy was already sitting down, seryoso na naman yung muka nya.. like he was in a deep thought or something. Nako, I’m sure work-related na naman yun ::). seriously, can he step out of that world for a while? 24/7 kasi tumatakbo ang utak nya sa work lang eh. kahit magkasama kami, hindi naman full attention ang binibigay nya sakin. Puro work, work, work, work! >:( ::)   
  
…or maybe not? could it be that he’s thinking of something else? something like… SOMEONE, perhaps? ??? :-\   
  
“couz ano? Swimming na tayo!”   
  
“wait lang, I have to put on my sun block..” sabay kuha ng lotion from my purse. “babe, swim lang kami ha?” I took off my tank and when I was about to take off my shorts, I heard him clear his throat so I faced him. He wrinkled his forehead and stared at me like I was a criminal. Anong problema nito? ??? ::)   
  
“ano yang suot mo? ??? >:(”   
  
ano bang suot ko?! “uhmm.. swimwear?” duh?! ???   
  
“alam ko, hindi ako bulag. hindi ka pupunta dun ng ganyan ang suot mo.”   
  
oohhhkay? what's up with the attitude? ??? “and why not? what's wrong with what I'm wearing?” wait.. parang nangyari na to ah??... parang I remember him talking like this to me before.. but I really couldn't recall it clearly.. ??? :-\   
  
“dito ka na lang, baka kung mapano ka pa dun eh.” bigla nyang sinabi. he's weird.   
  
“but? ???”   
  
“I said stay here.” he coldly said. Si Ella and David, nakatingin samin. grabe, I feel so embarrassed right now. Ipahiya ba naman ako sa harap nilang dalawa? ??? :-\   
  
“Jeremy, hindi naman kami pupunta sa malalim eh ::)..” biglang sabi ni Ella. David was just looking at me.   
  
“yeah, she can swim.” David said.   
  
Tumingin naman si Jeremy kagad kay David right after he said that. “it doesn’t matter. I don’t want her to go.” He firmly said. What’s the matter with him? ??? ???   
  
“ang KJ mo naman! pupunta punta tayo dito tapos hindi mo naman siya papupuntahin sa dagat!” she rolled her eyes. “ano kaya yun? ???”   
  
Hinawakan ko kagad yung arm ni Ella because she was going towards Jeremy, “it’s okay, couz.. I changed my mind :-\...” sinabi ko lang yun, pero sa totoo, I really want to dip myself in the water. “I’ll just stay here. maybe you and David can go instead :-\.” Tapos humarap ako kay David, “right David? ??? :-\”   
  
Matagal pa syang nakatingin sakin with this uncertain look on his face before he said, “sure..” then he stood up, “let’s go Ella.”   
  
I did not speak as soon as they left. Naiinis ako. ang corny nya talaga. what a party pooper. >:(   
  
“oh? bakit ang tahimik mo? ???” and he suddenly has the nerve to ask me that? Hello?! hindi ba obvious? ??? ??? “nagtatampo ka kasi hindi kita pinayagan magswimming?” OO! NAGTATAMPO AKO KASI YOU’RE NO FUN!! PATI YUNG SWIMWEAR KO PINAKIALAMAN MO PA!! >:( “so hindi ka magsasalita talaga?” I looked away. “okay. that’s good 8).” ANONG THAT’S GOOD KA DYAN!? ??? >:( “para tahimik 8) ::)..” he laid back on the sand and stretched his hands, “ang sarap pala ng peace and quiet 8)…” BASTARD! >:(   
  
“whatever.” then I rolled my eyes.   
  
“halika nga dito. Patampo tampo pa eh ::).” Sinabi nya, pulling me to lie down right next to him. Siemrpe ako walang nagawa. Ang strong pala nya. he pulled me that quickly. “ayaw mo ba ng ganito? Quality time :).”   
  
“eh kasi gusto ko magswim eh..” I pouted my lips, as I always do. “I know how to swim naman ::).”   
  
“yea, but not with that kind of swimwear.”   
  
“bakit ba? ???” hello? almost everyone here is wearing the same thing!   
  
“ayoko lang.”   
  
“ewan ko sayo ??? >:(.”   
  
“gusto mo lang makasama si David eh.” I heard him say, though it was supposed to be a whisper only. Oohhh.. do I smell the green monster of jealousy in the air!? ??? 8)   
  
“excuse me?” I pretended that I didn’t hear, pero talaga naman narinig ko.   
  
“wala.”   
  
“oh wala naman pala eh.. bakit ayaw mo kong payagan?” so hindi nya talaga uulitin ah.. ::) ::) at hindi rin nya talaga sasabihin yung reason why he doesn't want me to be in the water.   
  
“hindi kasi safe.” Bigla nyang sinabi. Hindi safe? Panong hindi safe? Hello!? eh ang dami dami ngang tao!? ??? ???   
  
“how is this not safe? ???” I stretched both my arms wide open. “ang daming tao oh! Panong hindi safe?”   
  
“hindi mo ba alam na maraming jellyfish dyan sa dagat!? ???” okay, that’s just ridiculous, but he looked annoyed already. “hindi kita aalagaan kapag na-sting ka. Takot ako sa jellyfish.” Then he crossed his arms. Okay? What was that for? ??? ???   
  
I placed my hands on my waist and rolled my eyes. “you’re crazy. There’s no jellyfish out there!? ??? ::)”   
  
“kung ayaw mong maniwala eh di wag.”   
  
“whatever. ang sabihin mo, you’re such a party pooper lang talaga ::).” then I whispered, “boring >:(.”   
  
“ewan ko sayo. Makulit ka. Ikaw na nga inaalala dyan eh.”   
  
“okay?! weirdo! ::)” I just looked at him as if I were looking at a fool. Maya maya lang, nakarinig ako ng sigaw.   
  
“ahhhhhhhhhhhh!!! Aray aray aray!!! :'( :'(” when I looked, I saw Ella screaming and David was supporting her while she was trying to stand and get away from the water.   
  
I stood up that instant, as they got closer to us. “what happened?! :o ???”   
  
“she got stung by a jellyfish..”   
  
“no way :o…” tumingin ako kagad kay Jeremy.   
  
“sabi ko sayo eh.” he stood up and helped Ella get settled, while David went to find some help.   
  
“okay ka lang, couz? ???” I asked right away.   
  
“oka---”   
  
And then he cut her off saying, “malamang hindi. Nakita mo yung sugat nya? ???” okay. sarcastic. bakit ba ang init init ng ulo nya?! What a Stiffie! >:( >:( Wait.. STIFFIE. MR. STIFF :o :o … Parang alam ko yata yun ah…   
  
\*\* flashback \*\*   
  
“ohhh.. so you’re gonna work with Mr. Stiff! ;D” ang lakas ng tawa nya.   
  
“Mr. who? ???” I didn’t get what he said, is this some kind of an inside joke or his name is really Mr. Stiff? “Mr. Stiff? I thought I’m working with Mr. Valdez’ son or something.. ???”   
  
“diba magme-merge kayo ng company?” I nodded, “oh di yun, makakatrabaho mo nga siya..”   
  
Why am I getting a feeling that something isn’t right about this guy? “why? what’s wrong with him? ???”   
  
“hindi ko alam, basta si ate hindi nakatagal sa kanya.. mahigpit kase.”   
  
“Ella worked for him?” I really don’t understand what’s going on.   
  
He continued driving. Ngayon ko lang narealize.. the streets here in Manila are so cramped and tiny compared to the ones in L. A. how can he even manage driving here? well, sanay na talaga siya siguro, since he’s driving pretty smoothly, less the traffic. “oo, she was trying to merge the company with their company, pero hindi nya nakayanan yung ugali..mahiyain kase si ate. kaya naisip nila lola pati ni Tita na ikaw ang ipadala, since you know.. strong ang personality mo.”   
  
“okay? if there’s a problem with his personality, we can merge to other companies, right? Why do we have to deal with his attitude if we could find other companies to merge into? ???”   
  
“oo nga, pero mas maganda kung sa company nila. malaking company yun., more of an empire kung tutuusin.. they can save any collapsing business..”   
  
“so you mean to say…” no way, my Mom’s hard work is going to waste?   
  
“yup.. lola tried all sorts of strategy para tumaas yung sales, wala pa rin eh… a merging deal is the only way to save the company..”   
  
\*\* end of flashback \*\*   
  
I suddenly remembered something.. yeah.. a conversation with my cousin Chris.. it was my first day here in Manila. That’s when he picked me up in airport and he was talking about merging the company to save it from falling apart.. and we were going to merge with the Valdez’ company.. tama. That’s the whole purpose of me being here in the first place, to work on the merging deal! and that’s when I first heard of the term Mr. Stiff. Mr. Stiff and Jeremy are the same.. that’s what Ella, Chris, and-who-knows-whoelse called him because he’s mean and too uptight.. and Stiffie is what I called him afterwards… :o ???   
  
But why would I call him Stiffie? Was he mean to me also? I bet he was. Kasi I wouldn’t call him that if he wasn’t.   
  
Biglang nagbago yung mood ko. I don’t know, I feel like I hate him right now for some reason. “bakit ba ang sungit mo? ??? >:(”   
  
“anong problema mo? ???” Napatingin lang samin si Ella. I don’t get it. Why am I suddenly so pissed off at him? eh wala naman siyang ginagawa sakin, besides the fact that he didn’t let me swim, which he has a perfect excuse naman.. “dyan ka na nga. Ang labo mo.” He walked off. “maghahanap lang ako ng first aid, ha Ella. Ang tagal kasi ni David eh, kung saan saan pa ata nagpunta yun.” Sinabi nya while his back was turned away from us.   
  
“hey don’t just walk off like that! I’m still talking to you >:( :-\ ..” hindi nya ko pinansin. How mean!? ??? >:(   
  
But I couldn’t help it, I have this rage in me that I want to release.   
  
So I stood up, took a few steps forward and yelled…   
  
“ugghhh!!!! STIFFIE!!! >:( >:(” then he suddenly looked, like he was hearing a bad word from me.   
  
“couz! :o” sumigaw din si Ella. So I turned my head towards her. She had this look on her face na parang hindi siya makapaniwala sa sinabi ko.   
  
But at the same time, Jeremy was walking towards me, hindi ko napansin.   
  
And then when he was right infront of me, he looked at me the same way Ella did. but his was more on the nervous-scared way.   
  
“a…an..ano ??? :-\..” he stuttered. si Ella nakatingin pa rin sakin.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“anong sinabi mo? :o :-\” they both said at the same time.   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“anong sinabi mo? :o :-\” sabay naming sinabi ni Ella. Nautal ako. hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin o sasabihin ko sa kanya. kinakabahan akong magsalita dahil baka may maalala pa siya pag may sinabi pa ko :-\ :-\. Lintek. Sa dinami dami ng pwede nyang itawag sakin, yun pa. :-\   
  
Halatang nagulat din siya sa sinabi nya, parang na-disorient siya eh.   
  
Yumuko siya, “I…I.. :-[” huminga siya ng malalim sabay tingin sakin ulit. “I…I hate you! >:( :-[” bigla nyang pinalo yung dibdib ko ng ilang beses nung lumapit ako sa kanya lalo. “masama ka! you're so mean!! >:( >:( ”   
  
“couz! :o” sigaw ni Ella. “you don’t say that to him, and you don’t call him that! :o :-\”   
  
Humarap si Iris kay Ella. Bakas sa mukha nya yung pagkairita at pagka… clueless. Hindi nya kasi alam kung saan nanggagaling yung mga sinasabi nya. parang yung bang.. bigla na lang lumalabas sa bibig nya ng hindi nya pinaplano.. bakit ko alam? Kasi yun ang sinabi ni Dr. Robles. Na may mga pagkakataon na bigla na lang syang makakaala tungkol sa nakaraan ng hindi nya inaasahan. Pati.. nakikita ko sa expression ng muka nya. :-\ :-\   
  
“and why not? everyone calls him that! >:(” tinuro nya si Ella, “even you! >:(” si Ella, tawag din sakin Stiffie? ??? ???   
  
“babe.. tama na :-\.” sinubukan kong pakalmahin sya, pero pumalag sya.   
  
“anong tama na?! >:(” nakita ko sa mga mata nya yung galit pero parang pinipigilan nya. alam ko yung tingin nyang yan eh. galit siya pero ayaw nyang ilabas. But we all know that she is a bad liar. Hindi nya kayang itago yung nararamdaman nya, dahil kahit anong gawin nya at kahit anong klaseng pagtatago o pagpipigil nya, her eyes will always tell the truth.   
  
“Iris, calm down.. :-\ yung.. yung gamot mo ba nainom mo this morning? ??? :-\” tanong ni Ella sa kanya.   
  
“and what do you think I am? crazy!? ??? >:(” galit nyang sinabi sa pinsan nya. Nainsulto ata sya. Hindi ako makapagsalita, nakikinig lang ako sa kanilang dalawa.   
  
“couz, hindi naman sa ganun... :-\”   
  
Dumating si David, may dala dalang first aid kit. Napansin nya siguro na kakaiba yung nadatnan nya, dahil si Iris, iba ang timpla. “what’s going on? ??? :-\” tumingin siya sakin, pati kay Ella na parang nagtatanong kung anong nangyare kay Iris, pero wala sa aming dalawa ang nagsalita. “are you okay, Princess? ??? :-\” hinimas nya yung braso ni Iris.   
  
Tahimik lang sya, halatang nagugulohan siya sa mga nangyayari. Kaya kaming tatlo, hindi makagalaw. Ako mismo, pakiramdam ko nakaglue yung mga paa ko sa buhangin. :-\ :-\   
  
“I’m okay.. I’m fine. :-[” Sinabi nya after two minutes. Pero wala siyang tinignan ni isa saming tatlo. Nakatingin lang sya sa dagat. “excuse me :-[.” naglakad sya papuntang dagat, at nung dinaanan nya ko, tumingin siya sakin. “sorry. I didn’t mean what I said :-\.” Huminto siya para huminga saglit, “or maybe I did.. I don’t know.. but I didn’t intend to be rude.. :-\ :-\” Yumuko siya ulit tapos naglakad na sya papalayo ng hindi man lang ako tinitignan.   
  
Pinabayaan ko siyang maglakad. Wala naman kasi akong sasabihin sa kanya. natatakot ako na kinakabahan, pero wala akong magawa. Nakita ko sa mga mata nya yung galit, kahit saglit lang. nakita ko yung dating Iris, bago mangyare yung aksidente. :-\ :-\   
  
“what happened? ???” narinig kong tinanong ni David kay Ella habang ginagamot nya yung sugat nito.   
  
“nothing.. she just remembered something..terrible.. :-\” ang sagot ni Ella. “Jeremy? Sundan mo kaya siya?” tumingin ako sa kanya, she was worried. Hindi ko napansin na ako pala yung kinakausap nya. “baka kung saan saan kasi mapunta yun eh.. hindi naman nya alam itong lugar na to :-\.”   
  
Hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko. tumungo na lang ako sa kanya at naglakad para sundan si Iris.   
  
Habang naglalakad ako at hinahanap ko siya, hindi ko mapigilang magisip.   
  
STIFFIE. Badtrip. Badtrip. BADTRIP!!! >:( :-[ bakit nya ko tinawag ng ganun?! Ginawa ko naman ang lahat para hindi nya yun maalala eh. anong nangyare!? ??? Siguro kasi nainis sya sakin dahil ang sungit ko kaya may nakapagpaalala sa kanya. Pero kahit na. hindi ko naman mapigilan ang sarili ko paminsan eh. kung sya may mood swings, ako rin may ganun. Eh kasi naman, okay na sana ang lahat eh, magbebeach kame, manunood ng sunset, kakain sa labas pagkatapos… eh kaso may asungot na biglang sumama. Bakit pa kasi kailangang isama pa si David eh? akala ko ba tagos hanggang buto ang galit ni Iris sa kanya? ??? ??? anong nangyare? Muka ngang mas napapalapit pa siya kay David ngayon na may sakit siya eh… :-\ :-\   
  
Ewan ko ba kung anong nangyayare sakin. Basta lang mainit ng dugo ko kay David. pakiramdam ko may pagka-bantay salakay yung lalaking yun eh! >:( Pagnakatalikod siguro ako, kung ano anong sinasabi o pinapakita nya kay Iris kaya lalong gumagaan ang loob nya sa kanya. Kailan ba kasi yan aalis dito eh!? ??? >:(   
  
Teka, bakit ganun? Bakit hindi naalala ni Iris na galit sya kay David? ??? bakit sakin lang? ??? :-\ eh mas matindi ang galit nya dun eh! >:(   
  
Naglakad lakad ako sa may dagat pero hindi ko sya nakita. Saan naman kaya nagsusuot yung babaeng yun? pinagpatuloy ko lang yung paglalakad ko nun. palubog na pala yung araw, at ngayon ko lang talaga narealize kung gano kaganda ang sunset. Dati kasi hindi ko makita yung sinasabi nilang maganda tungkol dito. Yun pala yung tinutukoy nila, lalo na si Iris eh yung ganda ng pakiramdam mo pag nakikita mong unti unting nawawala yung araw sa paningin mo.. nakakarelax.. bakit hindi ko to ginawa noon? ??? ???   
  
Tumigil ako ng makita ko sya na nakaupo sa buhangin. She had a stick and was scribbling something on the sand. Almost 5 minutes ko na siyang pinagmamasdan pero hindi nya ko napansin na nakatayo sa harap nya kaya umupo na ako sa tabi nya.   
  
“nandito ka lang pala :) :-\..” sinabi ko pagkaupo ko, at sya naman napatingin sakin, sabay bura ng kung ano man yung sinusulat nya sa buhangin. “kanina pa kita hinahanap eh :-\..”   
  
“…..” nakatingin lang siya sakin na parang wala siyang naririnig.   
  
“Iris, ano bang problema? ??? :-\ Alam kong may naalala ka.. pero---”   
  
Bigla syang nagsalita, bago ko pa man ituloy yung dapat na sasabihin ko sana. “you don’t understand, Jeremy. It’s all coming back, piece by piece :-\ :-\.” She looked at me pero nilayo ko yung tingin ko sa kanya kagad. I couldn’t look at her right now. Nahihiya ako dahil guilty ako :-\ :-[. “ikaw si Stiffie. I called you that because you’re very mean to me. you gave me a hard time.. lagi mo kong pinapahiya :-[ :-[.. ang sama sama mo >:( :-[.”   
  
“Iris :-[..” hinawakan ko yung kamay nya. ano bang dapat kong sabihin sa kanya ngayon? guilty ako, dahil alam ko kung gano ako kasama sa kanya noon. Alam ko rin kung pano ko sya ipahiya at trinato :-\. “kung… kung may nagawa man ako sayo noon, sana patawarin mo ko :-[… pati kung sino man ako noon, wala na yun ngayon… kasi iba na ko eh :-\..” nakatingin lang siya sakin, walang expression yung muka nya. nakikinig ba sya? ??? :-\ “believe me.. :-[ sa tingin mo ba, aalagaan kita ng ganito kung masama akong tao?”   
  
“kahit na. basta bad ka pa rin. >:(” she crossed her arms and pouted her lips.   
  
“sa tingin mo ba aalagaan kita ng ganito kung masama akong tao, Iris? ??? :-\” nasaktan ako sa sinabi nya. Alam kong hindi maganda ang simula naming dalawa, pero dati yun. Iba na kami ngayon. Bakit parang ayaw nyang maniwala sakin? “maniwala ka sakin, at intindihin mo yung mga sinasabi ko..” hinarap ko sya sakin dahil sa ibang direksyon siya nakatingin, “sige, kung sa tingin mo masama ako, sabihin mo sakin ngayon na hindi ako nagbago :-\.. na katulad pa rin ako ng dati na masungit at lagi kang pinapahiya.. :-\” Ni-roll nya yung mata nya na parang hindi siya naniniwala sa mga sinasabi ko, pero nahalata ko na medyo natatawa na sya pero pinipigilan nya. “totoo :)..”   
  
Ngumiti sya nung sinabi ko yun. “talaga? ???”   
  
“oo :)..”   
  
“Iba ka na talaga? hindi na ikaw si Stiffie? ???..”Tinaas nya yung kamay nya, “peksman? ??? :D”   
  
At tinaas ko rin kamay ko at idinikit ito sa kamay nya.“peksman :).”   
  
“hindi ka na masungit? ??? Hindi mo na ko aawayin? ??? Hindi mo na ko tatawaging Prinsesa Arte or kahit anong name? ::)” walang preno nyang sinabi. Prinsesa Arte… Pati pala yun, naalala na nya :-\ ::). hindi ko alam kung anong mararamdaman ko. matutuwa ba ko dahil gumagaling na sya, o malulungkot at matatakot ako dahil sa pusible pa nyang malaman pagkatapos nito? ??? :-\   
  
“hindi na :)..” ngumiti na lang ako. “simula ngayon, Iris o Princess lang ang itatawag ko sayo ;)..”   
  
“wala na ring Princess Piggy? ??? :D” para syang bata nung sinabi nya yun.   
  
“ahhh!! Hindi! Except yun! ;D ;D” tumawa ako.   
  
At sya, ayun, kumunot ulit ang noo, sabay pout ng lips nya. ugali nya yan eh ::). “hmf. Hindi naman ako baboy eh >:( ::).”   
  
Nakakatawa sya. Kahit seryoso yung usapan namin, napapatawa parin nya ako. “halika nga dito.” Hinila ko siya palapit sakin. “sabi ko naman sayo eh, kahit Piggy ka, pinakamaganda ka naman ;)..” I kissed her forehead at niyakap ko sya.   
  
“babe..” tumingala siya sakin, “can you promise me one thing, though? ??? :-\” hindi ako nagsalita. Promise :-\. parang kinabahan ata ako dun ah.. “don’t leave me? ??? :-\” hay. Si Iris. Hindi ko inaakalang ang isang Iris Martin ay magsasabi sakin na wag ko syang iiwan.. never in my wildest dreams did I think she’d ever say that. Yan pa? eh tigasin yan eh. ::)   
  
“sus. Baka pag magaling ka na, ikaw ang mangiwan sakin eh ::) :-\…” kunyaring pabiro, pero sana ang isagot nya yung hindi magpapabigat sa dibdib ko…   
  
“bakit naman kita iiwan? ???” it was an innocent question.   
  
Niyakap ko sya ulit. Wala lang :-\. “Iris, pano kung…” tama ba tong gagawin ko? bahala na. “pano kung malaman mong nagsinungaling ako sayo… pero wala akong intensyong masama.. anong gagawin mo? ??? :-\”   
  
“nagsinungaling? ???” halatang hindi nya naintindihan yung sinabi ko. o kung naintindihan man nya, hindi nya alam kung anong isasagot nya.. “why would you lie to me? ???”   
  
“kasi.. hindi ko alam.. ayokong mawala ka :-\..” oo. Takot akong mawala sya. Yung galit ko sa kanya noon, napalitan na yun ngayon ng takot. Ayokong mawala siya sakin kaya pinagpatuloy ko tong kasinungalingang ito. :-\ :-\   
  
“isn’t that the same thing as playing me like a fool? ???” tinanong nya ng parang nakakahalata siya. patay. Mali ata na tinanong ko siya eh. :-X   
  
“hindi. Kung para naman sa ikabubuti mo yun eh :-\..” alam ko selfish yung ginawa ko, pero yun ang sa tingin ko ay tama.. totoo naman yun eh..   
  
“how is lying to me beneficial?” she asked with an inquisitive tone. Alam kong hindi nya maiintindihan kahit anong paliwanag ko, pero totoong para sa ikabubuti nya yung ginawa ko. tignan nyo nga siya ngayon… ibang iba na siya dun sa dating Iris na una nating nakilala.. sabihin nyo nga sakin, kung hindi ko sinakyan yung pekeng relasyon na sinabi nya noon, magbabago ba sya ng ganyan ngayon? Mahal sya ng mga tao noon, pero mga plastic lang yun. mahal lang nila siya kasi tagapagmana sya ng kumpanyang pinagtatrabahuhan nila. Oo, may mga taong nagbubulung-bulungan tungkol sa kanya, pero ibang kwento naman yun.   
  
“siguro pag magaling ka na, tsaka mo maiintindihan kung bakit..” humangin at napunta yung buhok nya sa mata nya kaya inayos ko ito. “hindi ka ba masaya ng ganito? ???”   
  
“I am…” Tumigil siya para magisip saglit, tapos biglang kumunot na naman yung noo nya. “but I know deep down, I could be happier :-\..”   
  
Tama sya. “dadating ka naman dun eh.. tayong dalawa.. :-\” yun lang ang sinabi ko, dahil hindi ko alam kung anong sasabihin ko sa kanya.   
  
“I know…” Humarap siya sakin, magkatabi kasi kami. “so you never responded to what I said..” inayos nya ulit yung buhok nya, “don’t leave me? ??? :-\” inulit nya yung sinabi nya kanina.   
  
Napangiti ako ng di-oras. Ewan ko ba kung bakit. “ano ka ba.. hindi kita iiwan.. dito lang ako palagi.. okay? :) ;)”   
  
“okay..” lumapit siya sakin at naglean siya sa balikat ko. “and one more thing..”   
  
“hmm? ???”   
  
“please don’t hurt me :-[ :-\…”   
  
Bigla akong napatingin sa kanya, kakaibang pakiramdam ang bigla kong naramdaman nung sinabi nya yun. parang mabigat na hindi.. basta :-\ :-\. “I.. ano kasi… Iris :-\..” ang hirap pala nito. Yung nagiisip ka ng sasabihin mo sa kanya, pero dapat maingat ka dahil ayaw mo syang masaktan.. “I don’t want to say I will not hurt you because I know I will :-\..”   
  
Her eyes began to swell up with tears. Hindi ko sinasadyang paiyakin siya, ayoko lang dagdagan ang kasalanan ko sa kanya kung magsisinungaling ako at sasabihin kong hinding hindi ko siya sasaktan.. dahil alam ko ngayon pa lang, unti-unti ko na syang nasasaktan… :-\ :-[   
  
Pero bakit ganun? Nasasaktan din ako.. :-[ ??? :-[   
  
Hindi ko matiis na nakikitang siyang ganyan.. pinunasan ko yung luha nya sa pisngi nya. “tama na, wag ka ng umiyak.. mas gusto mo bang magsinungaling ako sayo at magsabi na hinding hindi kita sasaktan? ??? :-\” she sniffed. nakatingin lang siya sakin. “tignan mo, nasaktan na nga kita eh.. kasi umiiyak ka :-\ :-\..” hindi pa rin siya tumitigil sa kakaiyak.. ni hindi nga siya nagsasalita eh.. “tama na, please? :-\ Hindi ko maipapangako sayo yun, pero ito lang pwede kong ipangako sayo..” I picked her chin up dahil yumuko siya, “gagawin ko ang lahat.. I'll try my very best para hindi kita masaktan :-\ :)..” then I smiled at her.   
  
Niyakap nya ko ng mahigpit. Katulad nung unang beses nya kong niyakap ng ganito. “now you’re giving me a reason to be happier :'( :)…” napangiti ako sa sinabi nya. Masaya ako, alam ko yun... pero kasabay nito, nakaramdam ako ng takot.. yung bang, pakiramdam ko bilang na ang mga araw bago siya mawala sakin... ??? :-\   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Bakit ko ba nararamdaman to? :-\ ???   
  
  
Sabay naming pinanuod yung sunset.. bale, pangalawang beses na namin ito nagawa..   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Pagkatapos nun, meron syang binulong.....   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“anong sinabi mo? ???” he asked right away. Shoot. He heard what I said. :-X ::)   
  
“nothing ::).” I smiled at him as I patted his shoulder, “you’re hearing things, babe ::) ::)..” I rolled my eyes.   
  
“meron kang sinabi eh.. ano yun? ??? ???”   
  
“wala nga ::) ;D…”   
  
“ano nga yun? ???”   
  
“secret! ;D” I stood up and started running away from him. I love you.. that’s what I said, you dummy! ::) ::)   
  
“halika nga dito!” Before I knew it, hinahabol na pala nya ako. “ikaw babae ka! Anong sinabi mo ha ??? ;D!?” aww. He’s so cute when he’s running… I continued running but he caught me. nahulog pa nga kami sa sand eh. ::) ::)   
  
“ouch!!” I said, kasi naman, he was squeezing me tightly; I thought my guts were about to pop out in weird places! ;D ;D   
  
“ano nga yung sinabi mo?” omg. Hindi rin siya makulit noh? “ano na? ???”   
  
I don’t wanna tell him yet, though.. yung kanina, it just slipped right out of my mouth because we were caught in the moment.. I wouldn’t really have said it otherwise.. I don’t think he’s ready for it. Kaya good thing na medyo bingi itong si Jeremy.. dahil kung hindi.. he would have heard it.. and I would be like…. Uh-oh. :-X ;D ;D   
  
“I said ::)..” I placed my hands on both his cheeks, “I said…”   
  
“you said..??” he looks so clueless and very intrigued right now! Hehehe. He’s so adorable.. I love him talaga…. ::) ;D :D   
  
“I said..” I took a deep breath. You girls think I should tell him na? Nah. I can’t do it right now. “ang panget mo! ;D” then I poked his nose. “you’re so ugly! Yuccckkk!!! ;D 8)”   
  
“anong ugly ka dyan? ??? >:(” he pointed himself, “itong mukang to, ugly? Ba! baka gusto mong makatikim! 8)”   
  
Wait… what? ??? ??? “makatikim ng ano? ???”   
  
“ito!” I didn’t see that coming. HE KISSED ME… ON MY LIPS! Nagulat ako, How dare he?!?!? that’s why I slapped him and pushed him away.   
  
  
  
JOKE! ;D ;D ;D Kayo naman! naniwala kagad.. heheh. Of course, I kissed him back. Aww. He’s such a sweet kisser… he knows how to kiss.. he makes my knees shake so terribly whenever he touches me ::) ::).. and as soon as his lips touched mine, I felt this warm and very good feeling inside.. basta! I felt like I was floating in the air and just letting the gentle breeze take me wherever it’s blowing… I never felt this with David. hmm.   
  
OH MY GOD. I’m so in love with this guy!!! :D :D   
  
I give him an A+ in KISS 101. lol. 8) ;D   
  
After about a minute of making out, he pulled away. Err. I wanted to kiss more! “oh tama na, nakakarami ka na 8) ::)…”   
  
Ang sama talaga nito! Bitinin daw ba ko!? “one more time, babe..”   
  
“wag na baka mamihasa ka eh 8) 8)…”   
  
“sige na!!! :D :D” I tried to kiss him but he docked his head away. Hmff. Pa-hard to get pa eh! “ang gwapo gwapo talaga ng boyfriend ko!” I tiptoed and did everything I could to kiss him, but he’s tall and I can’t just jump to do it. “pakiss pa!!!”   
  
“Iris wag na! ikaw ha!” tinuro nya ko, “tignan mo ang daming tao oh! PDA ka eh! ;D ::)” then he laughed.   
  
“eh so? I don’t care about them ::)..” lumapit ako ulit sa kanya to try once more. Grabe, I just couldn’t get enough of those juicy lips! :D :D Hehehehee. Yung ibang tao nga sa beach nakatingin na samin eh… I know, I know. My boyfriend’s one big hottie, kaya mamatay silang lahat sa inggit! 8) 8) “sige na isa na lang!!”   
  
“ang kulit mo! ::)” he hugged me na lang because I wouldn’t stop grabbing him. he hugged me tightly to the point where I could hardly breathe na. pero parang kakaibang hug yun eh.. hindi lang ako sure what it could mean.. basta parang he’s trying to avoid me for some reason.. or.. I don’t know, maybe it’s just me thinking this. “nako, babae ka!!” sinabi nya habang nakahug sya sakin. “nabubuang ako sayo eh! ;D ::)” say what? ???   
  
“what? ???” what the heck is bu…buang? Boang? Boeing? ??? ??? ???   
  
“wala! Sabi ko ang ganda mo ::)…” he let go of me then faced me towards him. “wag mo na kong tatawaging Stiffie o Mr. Stiff ha? ??? :-\” he looked straight in my eyes, “please? :) :-\”   
  
  
+++++   
  
Tuesday.   
  
It’s Tuesday. Oo nga pala, we went to the Borromeo’s party last Sunday. Hindi naman kami nagtagal, kasi maraming tao and it was getting stuffy in there. Stuffy in a sense na sobrang daming tao ang nakikialam samin. I mean, Tita Amy and my Lola were looking at them weird already but they still won’t stop. Alam nyo yun, feeling nila they know me na. well, they know me, but superficial lang. Kung ano ano pang sinasabi, kesyo si Jeremy daw ganito, ganun.. yadda yadda. ::) ??? ::)   
  
But other than that… well, ayun, it went well naman, ang bait nga sakin ni Amanda eh, I don’t know why. She was totally different from the first time we met. Feeling close pa nga. Oh please!? ??? >:( Like I don’t know how that b!tch act works 8) 8). Parang feeling ko she’s up to something. Basta. Hindi ko talaga maisip kung anong problema ko dun sa babaeng yun. kung makadikit pa kay Jeremy, parang akala mo they’re super close. Oo na! nagseselos ako! ::) >:( kasi naman eh! >:( :-[   
  
Mabait naman yung parents nya, kaso yung mom nya parang ang sungit. A lot of people were there, most of them are familiar faces from the launching party. Siempre, hindi rin naman naiwasan yung mga endless-out-in-corner whispering and gossiping nung mga ibang tao dun. Ewan ko sa ba sa kanila kung bakit ganun sila. If I hadn’t known better, I’d think they’re just jealous of me, kasi I’m drop-dead-gorgeous!! ::) 8)   
  
“so Princess, did you finally decide which one of those you like best? :) ???”   
  
Kasama ko si David ngayon. He’s helping me pick out a place and put up the details for my surprise for Jeremy on the 16th, while he was packing his things for tonight. Aww. He’s leaving tonight. Sa Thursday na yung 1st monthsary namin ni Stiffie, ooops. Jeremy pala ::).. I promised never to call him Stiffie anymore.. that’ll be the day after tomorrow.. Meaning, I only have little time to get everything organized.   
  
“yea, I think I’ll just rent a place and do catering or something..” may nakita kasi akong ad na nagpapa-rent sila ng isang romantic venue for any kind of celebration. It’s kinda like a restaurant-slash-private-venue near the beach. I grabbed my phone and started dialing the number on the ad. “----yea, I’d like to make a reservation on the 16th….”   
  
After making the reservation, tinulungan ko naman si David dun sa mga iba pa nyang gamit. Truth be told, I’m really gonna miss him. I don’t know why, but maybe because him and I have never been this close.. and I mean, never ever talaga. kahit nung kami pa. now lang. :) :)   
  
Don’t ask, I’m surprised myself, why all of a sudden, out of the blue, nawala yung galit ko sa kanya… ??? ::)   
  
“alright, looks like we’re done. that’s it.” He said after he sealed the last box with a duct tape.   
  
“wow, can’t believe it took us two hours to put everything in those! :D” I said as I pointed both the balikbayan boxes. Actually, hindi naman kanya yan eh, puro yan for my mom and her other friends na gustong magpadala galing dito. Poor David couldn’t even say anything to my mom. ::) ::)   
  
After nun, he got ready for his flight. And by 5 pm, he left the house. Hindi na ko sumama. I can’t stand seeing someone leave me.   
  
Later that night, I kept on tossing and turning.. I just couldn’t sleep and for some reason, parang feeling ko may mali… like something bad is about to happen.. or something bad is happening. Hindi ko maexplain, pero yun talaga yung nafefeel ko.   
  
Natatakot kasi ako. I’m scared about me getting better and recovering from my amnesia.. hindi ko maintindihan.. I know I should be happy and excited that I’m finally remembering things at a time, but subconsciously, it worries me.. a lot. kasi everytime na may maalala ako about kay Jeremy, puro na lang hindi maganda eh :-\ :-\.. it always triggers me of my anger and I don’t even understand why..   
  
Hindi naman ako galit sa kanya eh, pero bakit parang ganun? Pag nakakaalala ako, ibang klaseng galit yung nafefeel ko.. like it’s overpowering me and my whole being ??? :-[.. I’m so confused because looking back to what I remember, things do not really patch up with the past and the present. galit ako kay Stiffie, I know that for a fact. Pero mahal ko si Jeremy na si Stiffie din.. how did that happen over a short period of time? ??? ??? I know nothing is impossible when it comes to love, but it bothers me. I hated him and he hated me before the accident happened and now we suddenly don’t? ??? :-\ tsaka pano naging kami eh we hated each other nga? Ano yun, nagkaron ng magic, like all of a sudden we love/care for each other? ??? ??? :-\   
  
I was thinking of calling Jeremy but then I decided not to. Di ba nga ang sabi ko sa kanya I’m fine na.. ayoko na syang mag-worry pa sakin.. I’m giving him too much things to think about as it is. Baka magsawa naman siya sakin at iiwan nya ko pag puro problema na lang binibigay ko sa kanya…   
  
Nevermind this dilemma na nga! Wala din naman akong magagawa eh… By 3:00 am, gising pa ko.. ano ba yan… Since I’m powerless over this, I just forced myself to fall asleep..   
  
The next day was nothing extraordinary. Sinundo nya lang ako in the morning and by noon, nagpahatid na ko ulit sa bahay. Nung una nga ayaw pa nya kong ihatid eh, kaya lang ang sinabi ko masama pakiramdam ko and I wanted to rest. He was going to bring me to the doctor but I resisted.   
  
He walked me inside the house. “sure ka ba na okay ka lang? ???” tinanong nya ko ulit. God. That was like what? the 10th time he asked? ::) ::)   
  
“oo nga I’m okay babe.. promise :).” okay, that was a forced smile.   
  
“sigurado ka ha? ??? :-\” tumingin siya ulit sakin. “patingin nga..” hinawakan nya yung face ko and examined it very intently. “hindi ka naman maputla :-\..” he turned my head sideways, then he placed his hand over my forehead. “wala ka namang lagnat :-\..”   
  
“inaantok lang siguro ako kasi 3 am na ko nakatulog..”   
  
“bakit? ???”   
  
Shoot :-X. “uhmm.. eh kasi, I had too much sweets last night kaya yun.. it kept me up.” Yun na lang ang sinabi ko.   
  
“ganun ba..” he looked at me with a worried face. See. this is what I’m talking about. kasi naman sinabi ko pang 3 ako natulog eh. yan tuloy. “baka naman may iniisip ka lang kaya hindi ka makatulog :-\..” damn it. he knows me too well. :-X :-X   
  
“hii..hindi noh.” I docked my head away so he couldn’t see my lying face. “gusto mong kumain?” I changed the topic. “papahanda ako..”   
  
“oh sige, nagugutom na ko eh.” good. He bought it. Whew. Nagpahanda na ko sa maid ng lunch for us. And while we were eating, may sinabi na naman sya. “Iris, wag masyadong magiisip okay. ayokong nasestress ka. Tignan mo nga hindi ka nakakatulog :-\ :-\..” seryoso nyang sinabi sakin. “kaya ka ba nalulungkot kasi wala na si David? ??? :-\..” huh? where did that come from??   
  
“what are you talking about?... no.. it's not like that... :-\ :-\..”   
  
“wala, kasi parang iba ka simula nung umalis si David eh..”   
  
“i'm not thinking about David at all, babe...” totoo naman eh.. Alam nyo naman lahat kung anong iniisip ko diba?   
  
“alam mo naman makakasama sayo yung sobrang pagiisip eh.. kung ano man yung iniisip mo, wag mong masyadong intindihin yun.. okay? ??? :-\”   
  
I nodded and continued eating. Hindi naman kasi nya naiintindihan eh.. I have to think in order to remember. Hmm. bahala na nga. After namin kumain, umalis na siya para bumalik sa office. Kakahiya nga eh, 2 hours syang nawala. Baka may mga pending things na naman dun sa opisina na kailangan ng attention nya. di bale, ngayon lang naman to eh. next time I won’t hold him for too long anymore.   
  
In the afternoon, around 2 pm, finollow up ko na yung reservation for tomorrow. I’m so excited but at the same time, very nervous din. It’s our first month together.. well.. technically. Since I don’t remember yet.   
  
“ano couz? Okay na ba?” I turned around to face her. Nasa mall kami ngayon and I just tried on a dress for tomorrow.   
  
“hmm..” she placed a finger over her chin and started scratching it. “turn around..” and so I did. “pwede na..” then she stood up and went to the rack to scan through some more dresses. hindi naman kasi sya mukang convinced eh. “try mo nga tong pink..” tapos inabot nya sakin yung dress.   
  
It was a pale pink dress. Okay naman, but it looks more like a day dress rather than a night one. “are you sure pink is the right color for tomorrow? It’s going to be at night Ella.”   
  
“ah sabi ko nga.” Tapos kinuha nya ulit yung dress sakin. “eto na lang. purple..”   
  
Actually, it’s not that bad. Maganda pa nga eh. it’s a glamorous v-neck cocktail purple dress. Not immodest, just right for tomorrow’s event. kaya sinukat ko na kagad. “perfect!” I said as I turned around.   
  
“ang ganda mo couz! I’m sure maiinlove na sayo nyan si papa Jeremy! ;D ;D” sinabi nya habang sobrang kinikilig siya.   
  
continuation.   
  
  
  
  
  
After namin magshopping, we stopped by the food court muna kasi we were starving! Biruin nyo, kanina pa kami dito mga 2 pm, ikot ng ikot just to find the perfect outfit for tomorrow. Right now, it’s almost 7 pm. grabe! 5 hours yun! ::) ::)   
  
While we were eating may biglang lumapit samin.   
  
“hi tisay! :D” sus. Si Anthony lang pala. Kala ko naman kung sino. Umupo sya sa tabi ko so I scooted over to allow him some space.   
  
“ay Anthony, si Ella.. my cousin.” Tapos tumingin ako kay Ella. “si Anthony, best friend ni Jeremy.”   
  
And they shook hands. “hey.. you look familiar.. parang nakita na kita before.”   
  
“hello :).” nagsmile si Ella sa kanya, “ah oo, dun sa launching..”   
  
“oh yea.. tama. Ikaw yung naka blue! :D”   
  
“yup, that’s me ;).” aba! May napapansin ako ha!! ::) heheh.   
  
“sinong kasama mo?” I asked.   
  
“ako lang mag-isa. May binili lang ako sa isang store dito. Si Jeremy, bakit hindi nyo kasama? ???”   
  
I knew he was going to ask that. “eh kasi, baka busy sya eh.. and besides.. I’m surprising him tomorrow.”   
  
“anong klaseng surprise naman? ???”   
  
“wag kang maingay ha..” lumapit ako sa kanya, “it’s our first month together tomorrow.. and I prepared a surprise for him ;)..” I winked at him.   
  
“ha!? :o talaga? ???” he looked at me as if I were joking. So he glanced at Ella but she just shrugged her shoulders. I don’t know why she did that. “bukas ba yun?”   
  
“oo! Silly.. tomorrow’s the 16th..” I rolled my eyes. Ano ba yan, akala ko ako lang may amnesia dito eh.. ::) ::)   
  
“hindi mo ba alam? Ano bayan, best friend mo kaya yun ::)…” Ella said as she crossed her arms.   
  
“eh hindi naman nya nabanggit sakin..” he scratched the back of his head.   
  
“well, yea.. I will be surprising him kaya wag kang madudulas okay! baka masira yung plan..” nako, if Jeremy finds out talaga, lagot sakin tong si Anthony.   
  
“oo na sige promise!” tumawa sya. “oh ano, dali details! ;D :D” Tapos yun, sinabi ko sa kanya yung plan. What place, what time, kung anong klaseng food ang iseserve and everything else. “ayos pala yun eh! jackpot talaga si mokong sayo! ;D” mokong? Ano na naman yun? ??? ???   
  
Anyway, I didn’t bother asking him dahil I’m sure hindi ko rin naman maiintindihan yung sasabihin nya. it’s just probably one of the things guys use to call each other or something.. ::) ::)   
  
Nung nakauwi na kami, natulog na ko kagad. It’s going to be a long day tomorrow and I sure don’t want to look ugly when I surprise Jeremy. Ohhh.. I really hope he’ll love it.. and me.   
  
  
June 16. – the “day”   
  
Umaga pa lang, super hectic na yung schedule ko. Good thing pumayag si lola na isama ko si Ella sa pagpeprepare for tonight. Siempre, in favor naman kasi sya sa gagawin ko eh.   
  
“bilisan mo couz! We have a lot of things to do pa..” I shouted outside her bathroom. Eh kasi naman, ang tagal nya kayang maligo.   
  
“5 mins!” sinigaw naman nya. 5 minutes daw…   
  
Pupunta pa kami dun sa caterer para tignan kung tama ba yung food na inorder ko. I know I can just call and follow up, but I want to actually see it with my own two eyes. I can’t afford imperfections tonight. Dapat perfect lahat.. down to the last and smallest detail. :) :)   
  
Tinawagan ako ni Jeremy telling me that he’s picking me up for lunch but I said I had errands to do and just meet me later at night at the place I told him to go. Dun yun sa restaurant. He asked me kung anong meron and I said nothing, I just want to have dinner with him. pumayag naman sya. Eh kasi busy rin naman daw siya sa work ngayon dahil fully booked sya today for meetings and stuff. Good. Everything is going well as planned.   
  
“eh yung music, okay na ba? ???” bigla ko naman kasi naalala, I hired a musician to play music tonight but I don’t think I told him what song I want him to play.   
  
“ayy.. oo nga noh? Di mo ba nasabi dun sa musician kung anong song ang gusto mo? ???”   
  
So lumapit ako sa musician. “uhmm.. sir.. can you play the song When I Met You? ??? :)”   
  
“no problem ma’am.” I smiled at him as he wrote the title of the song on a piece of paper. “good choice po.”   
  
“couz? Bakit When I Met You? ??? ::)” she raised her eyebrow as a sign that she doesn’t see the connection why I picked that song. “alam mo pala yung song na yun.. old na yun eh..”   
  
“I know.. but the lyrics pertains to my feelings for him.. that’s why ;) :)..” actually first time kong narining yung song na yun sa mom ko when I was young. Ever since then, lagi ko sya pinakikinggan and I never got tired of it. Ang sabi ko nga sa sarili ko, one day I’ll dedicate that song to someone.. to that special one meant to complete my life.   
  
And I have a strong feeling that that person is Jeremy… :) :)   
  
“cheesy!!! ;D ;D” she said while she tickled me.   
  
“shut up! Inggit ka lang! hehe! ;D ;D”   
  
Nakauwi na kami almost 4 pm na. sobrang dami pa kasi namin dinaanan bago kami bumalik sa bahay. Ang hirap pala magorganize ng event.. and to think that this is just a simple thing, ganito na kagad yung pagod ko. pano pa kaya kung major or big event yung ioorganize ko diba? hay. ::) :-\   
  
Anyway, i said hi lang to lola, chatted a little bit, then nagbihis na ko kagad and by 6:00 pm, nakaready na ko.   
  
“ba, ang ganda ng apo ko ha :)..” sabi ni lola. Pumasok kasi sya sa room ko to remind me of the time pati yung driver daw nakaready na. “I’m sure masusurprise talaga si Jeremy :).” She put her hands together at halatang sobrang natutuwa sya. Ano bayan. Ang weird talaga ng lola ko kahit kailan. ::) ::)   
  
I just smiled at her while I was putting make up on. Ako rin naman kasi, sobrang excited and happy. Ewan ko ba, pero kakaibang excitement naman kasi to eh.   
  
I dialed Jeremy’s number pagkaalis ni lola sa room ko. “babe where are you?”   
  
“nasa office pa ko eh.. daming meeting.” He sounded so tired. Kawawa naman si baby ko. huhuhu.   
  
“ahh.. well, okay then, I’ll let you go..”   
  
“oh sige, pasensya na ha.. busy lang talaga eh.. kasama ko nga pala si Anthony, inaayos kasi yung binibili nyang stock.” narinig ko sa background si Anthony. At halata ngang busy sila, at mukang nagmamadali pa. “last na meeting na to. mabilis lang.. tapos uuwi na ko para magbihis.. okay?”   
  
“okay. I’ll just see you later.. don’t be late ha..” siguro naman hindi ganun katagal yung meeting nila diba? anyway maaga pa naman eh.. 3 hours pa bago yung sinabi kong time sa kanya so I guess everything's cool.   
  
“okay babe.” Tapos binaba nya na yung phone.   
  
It was around 7:30 to almost 8 pm when I was completely ready to leave. Nung bumaba ako ng stairs, nakita ko si Ella standing at the last step. Tapos yung mga maids naman, naka-line up sila. Ano ba yan, parang wedding ko naman to eh. okay, that’s kinda exaggerated already. ::) ;D   
  
“goodluck couz!” she hugged and kissed me then I stepped inside the car. Since malapit lang naman yung place, less than 30 mins. I was already there. Tinawagan ko si Jeremy just to make sure, but he didn’t answer. Siguro nasa office pa yun.   
  
Pumasok ako sa loob and everybody greeted me there. The place was well set up and it was just breath-taking. Hindi ko nga ineexpect na magagawa nila ng ganito kaganda ito eh! talagang nakareserve yung buong place para samin lang. gosh. Ang swerte talaga ni Jeremy sakin! Hehehe.   
  
“right this way, ma’am..” sabi nung waiter sakin. I just smiled and walked outside. Ang ganda ng view! :D :D Nakakakilig. Yan, lalo tuloy ako naexcite.   
  
Habang papalapit na yung time, lalo akong kinakabahan. Ewan ko ba kung bakit, eh simpleng monthsary dinner lang naman to. maybe because I really have strong feelings for him and I want this night to be perfect. Balak ko na kasi sabihin sa kanya na love ko sya eh.. wala lang, I just feel like it’s the right time na.   
  
Ang tagal nya bago dumating, I must've waited for about an hour and a half.. tinawagan ko naman sya pero hindi naman nya sinasagot yung phone nya... baka naman natraffic yun? o kaya baka may surprise din sya sakin? naku.. mukang magbabackfire pa ata yung surprise ko sa kanya eh! instead na sya yung masurprise, ako pa ang masusurprise! Jeremy talaga! ::) ::)   
  
Nagulat na lang ako nung biglang tumugtog yung violin – When I Met You – yun kasi yung instruction ko dun sa violinist, na pag dumating siya, ipeplay na yung song. OH MY GOD. HE’S HERE!!!! ::) :o hindi ako tumingin sa likod. Kasi naman, kinakabahan talaga ako.   
  
I could feel that he was approaching me, like every step of him getting closer makes my heart beat faster and faster and faster…. Hanggang sa nasa likod ko na sya.   
  
Naramdaman ko na lang ni nilagay nya yung hand nya sa shoulder ko. anong gagawin ko!? para naman akong na-immobilize dito bigla eh! I took a deep breath before turning around.   
  
But even before I was able to do so, nagsalita sya…   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“tisay….” I suddenly wrinkled my forehead. Tisay? Si Anthony lang tumatawag sakin non ah? :o ??? What’s he doing here? ??? ??? I turned around that instant to see for sure. Sya nga.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“sorry, hindi makakapunta si Jeremy :-\ :-\…”   
  
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“Anthony? What are you doing here? ??? ???” sinabi ko pagkatapos nyang umupo sa tabi ko. “where’s Jeremy? ??? :-\”   
  
“sorry tisay, something came up eh :-\.” he said without this unexplainable expression on his face. Okay.. what’s going on? ??? :-\   
  
How’s that possible, eh kausap ko lang sya kanina…. Okay, now this is starting to bother me.. “is…everything… is everything okay? :-\ :-\” I said slowly.   
  
“oo naman. tinawagan kasi siya bigla nung mga investors..” he grabbed the glass of wine on the table and drank it. “emergency meeting.. kaya ako na lang pinapunta nya dito.. pasensya na dun sa kaibigan ko ha. Alam mo namang in demand yun ngayon eh ;D ;D.” he joked.   
  
I don’t know.. but I feel that something is wrong. Bigla na lang ako nakaramdam ng kaba, out of nowhere. Like something’s up that I don’t know about. Well, I don’t always have to know everything about him, but there’s this weird feeling within that’s telling me something is not right. I just have this gut feeling na hindi ko maexplain.. do you guys know what I’m talking about? ??? :-\ :-[   
  
“why couldn’t he call me and tell me that?” I sat back on the chair and crossed my arms. “instead na pinapunta ka pa nya dito just to let me know he’s not coming.. yan tuloy nakaistorbo pa kami sayo :-\.” Naiinis ako sa kanya. seriously >:( >:(. Alam naman nyang pinaghandaan ko to eh. And it’s not like I told him about this in such short notice.. feeling ko tuloy I’m…. neglected. I have never been stood up before. Ganito pala yung feeling every time I cancel on David before… :-\ :'(   
  
“okay lang yun. tisay.” He smiled. “I’m sure babawi naman yun :).” babawi daw ha.. yea right. hmff. >:(   
  
“yea, I guess.. I hope…” no. it’s not okay. Pano kung sa sobrang busy nya, makalimutan na nya talaga ako? :-\ ??? Kasi ganun naman yun diba, when a person becomes too busy they care less of other things.. and in this case, I could be part of the “other” things.. :-\ :-\   
  
I stood up and looked around the place. It’s nice, actually. Naisip ko tuloy… all this hard work and weeks of planning just went down the drain. Wala din naman yung taong gusto kong isurprise eh. Sayang lang yung pinaghirapan ko. hindi lang pala ako, involved din dito sila Ella and David. Ano bayan. I can’t help but feel so depressed and frustrated right now.. Man… this sucks. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
So instead na maging sad ako dito the whole night, I had a brilliant idea. “Anthony, you wanna have dinner with me? :) :-\” humarap ako sa kanya. Aba, sayang din naman lahat to if we’re not gonna use it diba? And besides, wala naman sigurong masama kung kumain kami ni Anthony. Well, he did send him here anyway. So bahala sya. Bahala ka Jeremy! Hmf. >:( >:(   
  
“sure ka? ???” medyo in doubt pa nyang tinanong sakin.   
  
“yea, I’m sure. Why? Do you have any other plans for tonight? Sabihin mo lang, hindi naman kita pinipilit to have dinner with me eh :-\.. it’s just a suggestion :)..” I looked at him, please say no, you don’t have any plans tonight… ayokong magisa eh.. nalulungkot ako :-[ :-[.. “I just don’t feel like being alone tonight.. that’s about it..” I looked down. God. I’m so pathetic asking my boyfriend’s friend to eat dinner with me because he can’t make it. Ano bayan Iris. >:( :-\   
  
There was a brief moment before he smiled and said, “ah ganun ba.. oh sige, samahan na lang kita ngayong gabi..” tapos tinignan nya yung table, “mukang pinaghandaan mo talaga to ha.. sayang hindi nakita ni Jeremy.”   
  
“okay lang… wherever he is, I’m sure he wishes to be here right now :) :-\..” I faked a smile at alam kong napansin nya yun. Gosh, I’m such a bad liar.   
  
Anyway, kumain na kaming dalawa. And while eating, siempre nagkukwentuhan din naman kami. I didn’t know he has an appetite of ten hungry people combined! :o ;D Okay, I’m exaggerating. But he sure does have a very big appetite for a guy who doesn’t look like he eats. Skinny kasi sya eh. Or maybe it’s just his wardrobe that’s making him look like that. Ano bayan, I guess I’m this bored kaya pati si Anthony eh chinecheckout---- :-X I mean, iniinspect ko pala. Ahh. What the heck. He’s cute. But not the kind I should go gaga about. ::) ::)   
  
Marami din kaming napagkwentuhan ni Anthony. Hindi ko alam, madaldal din pala siya.. like me ;D ;D. I found out we have many things in common. Grabe, para syang male version ko. Maarte din pala siya eh, meticulous pa. I’m actually wondering how he and Jeremy became friends since they seem to be the opposite of each other. Pano kaya sila nagkakasundo? ??? ::) Eh si Jeremy super tahimik and serious most of the time. Kulang sa sense of humor yung lalaking yun eh. Samantalang itong si Anthony, makulit, makwento, at nakakatuwa pa. Puro sya jokes. Yung iba corny but still made me laugh. ;D ;D ;D   
  
Well, right now we’re here at the patio, talking while drinking. Hindi naman yung hardcore, light drinking lang. “so Tisay, mahal mo ba si Jeremy?” bigla nyang tinanong. Okay, that was an out-of-nowhere question.   
  
“huh? ??? :o” I was shocked for some reason. Siguro kasi all of a sudden nyang tinanong while in the middle of telling me jokes.. or.. I don’t know. “well, yea.. of course.. I mean, after all, he’s my boyfriend.. right… I mean.. that’s how boyfriends and girlfriends should be.. loving each other no matter what :) :-\..” I stuttered all through that sentence. I don’t know why.   
  
“hindi ka ba sure? ???” was his follow up question. Well, I know for a fact that I do, but then again :-\… Oh my God :o. Why am I having doubts about this all of a sudden? ??? ???   
  
“sure naman ako eh..” I just said then shook my head. “I’m sorry, I think I’m buzzed already.” Binalik ko na yung glass of wine na hawak ko sa table, and I could so tell I’m already drunk dahil muntik ko ng mabasag yung baso. I almost missed the table. “I love Jeremy and it should always stay that way. No matter what happens.”   
  
“oh.. sige.. sabi mo eh.” He gave me that weird stare as if he does not believe the words I just said. Maybe he really doesn’t, but it would save me this time. Ayan, dahil sa tanong nyang yun, feeling ko ngayon nagugulohan ako. ewan ko ba. I know I shouldn’t feel this. :-\ :-\   
  
“uhmm.. Anthony? Pwede bang magtanong? ???”   
  
“oo naman, ano yun? ???”   
  
“about kay Jeremy…”   
  
Medyo nanlaki yung mga mata nya non, na parang he’s not expecting me to ask questions about his friend. ”kay Jeremy? :o ??? Ahh… sige. Ano ba yun? ???”   
  
“ano kasi :-\…” I took a deep breath. I feel so embarrassed asking him about my boyfriend. Para namang akong sira dito eh. Boyfriend ko, hindi ko kilala. “has he always been like this.. I mean.. yung laging serious and uptight? :-\ :-\”   
  
Medyo matagal bago nya sinabing, “hindi :-\..” then he looked away.   
  
“hindi? ???” so meaning, ngayon lang sya naging ganyan? “so what made him change then? ???” I asked right away.   
  
“wala lang.. mga bagay bagay.” Sagot naman nya. Okay, that was a very informative answer. ::)   
  
Mga bagay bagay… things? “Like what? ???”   
  
“hirap i-explain eh :-\..” he took a deep breath. “siguro mas maganda kung sa kanya na lang mismo manggagaling.. kasi wala naman ako sa posisyon para ikwento yung buhay ni Jeremy. Pwede mo naman syang tanungin.” Why does it seem like he’s trying to avoid answering my question? ??? :-\ Hmf. Bahala na nga. I guess that’s how guys are. They never tell on each other. Pero kahit na, hindi naman ako iba kay Anthony eh.. gf naman ako ni Jeremy, and he’s bestfriends with him. diba dapat ganun na rin ang treatment nya sakin? ??? ??? ::)   
  
“gusto ko lang kasi malaman.. ang gulo nya kasi sometimes eh.. I don’t get him :-\.” ano ba naman to, pati kay Anthony wala akong makuhang information tungkol kay Jeremy. Ano ba kasi siya eh.. bakit parang tagong tago ang buhay nya? “but anyway, yea.. I think you’re right. Maybe I should just ask him.”   
  
He shrugged his shoulders, “good idea.” and then he nodded. “oo nga pala, kamusta ka na? Okay na ba yung condition mo? ???”   
  
“I guess.. I have less headaches and confusion now.. so I guess everything is okay or something :-\.” Sabi kasi ng doctor, normal lang daw yun para sa condition ko., yung laging confused, masakit ang ulo, nauseous and whatnot. Yea, like I didn’t have the headache already before hand. ::) :-\   
  
“eh anong sabi ng doctor? ???”   
  
“well, I never miss any of my therapy sessions, pero hindi pa daw ako magaling eh. It’s gonna take a while for me to be back to normal :-\.. I basically have to learn things I forgot how to do again.. like in preschool ::) :-\.” Natawa ako ng konti but I know it sucks to be me right now :-\. Lagi na lang ako nasa hospital for constant check ups. After naman nun, diretso ako sa psychiatrist para sa therapy. Kakainis na nga eh, same questions lang naman ang mga tinatanong nya >:( ::). Feeling ko tuloy I’m living my life on a routine. And I don’t seem to be liking it, by the way. “gusto ko na nga gumaling.. like I want to remember everything na, ang dami ko kasing questions na hindi ko naman masagot lalong lalo na yung mga tungkol sakin.. or si Jeremy :-\ :-[.. siguro nakukulitan sya sakin kaya minsan he ignores me na lang.” I sat back to make myself more comfortable, “but you know what, the truth is.. part of me doesn’t even want to remember anything from the past anymore.. weird huh? ??? :-\” although I seriously feel like I’m a different person already. Parang hindi ako to eh. Yung mga ginagawa at mga kinikilos ko ngayon.. I don’t recall ever being this person before the accident happened. ??? ???   
  
Ang tanong, gusto ko nga bang maging ganito na lang ako forever? Yung hindi nako gagaling, and things will just remain as is? Pero kung gumaling naman ako, I’m scared. I’m scared to remember things kasi what if hindi pala maganda yung mga yun? pano kung hindi ko magustohan yung maaalala ko from the past? What if totoo pala yung nararamdaman kong kakaiba about kay Jeremy? Natatakot ako… kasi ayoko syang mawala sakin.. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
Everytime I look at Jeremy and I feel this extraordinary feeling, parang gusto ko na lang na hindi na makaalala. Kahit na may nararamdaman talaga akong kakaiba sa kanya, parang mas gusto ko na lang na ganito kami. Hay. Ewan ko ba :-\. Ang weirdo nya kasi eh. Minsan ang bait bait nya, sometimes naman, ayun. Masungit. Akala mo kaaway buong mundo eh. Or maybe talagang nagagalit sya sakin kasi ang kulit ko minsan. On top of that, I feel this bizarre hunch that he’s really not what he’s saying he is. :-\ :-\   
  
Hay… ano ba Iris?! You’re confusing yourself again, stop it.   
  
“Huy tisay!! ::)” nagulat ako because he shook me. Crap, I zoned out, hindi ko napansin. “ayos ka lang ba? Gusto mo bang umuwi na? ???”   
  
“ha? Ahh.. hindi..” I sat up. “okay lang ako.” tapos tumingin ako sa may entrance,   
  
  
  
  
“baka magshow-up pa sya eh :-\ :-\..”   
  
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“uhmm.. Tisay. I don’t think he’s gonna show up. Anong oras na oh :-\..” tinaas nya yung kamay nya to show me the time. It’s almost midnight and it’s impossible for him to come at this time. “ayos lang yan, may bukas pa naman eh..”   
  
“he could’ve at least called me :-[…” I whispered to myself. Pero narinig pala nya.   
  
“don’t worry. I’m sure babawi naman yun sayo :).” Inakbayan nya ko. “halika na, gumagabi na kasi eh, baka magalit pa sakin yun pag late pa kita inuwi. Alam mo naman yun diba? Ayaw kang napapagod ::) :)..”   
  
Oo nga naman baka awayin na naman ako nun bukas eh. So I stood up when he said that. Medyo na out of balance pa nga ko kasi medyo naparami yung nainom ko :-X ;D. Good thing he was there to put me back to balance. “thank you Anthony ha :)..” He smiled at me in a foolish way. Talaga tong si Anthony oh ::). “oh, and thanks for accompanying me tonight. I really appreciate it :).”   
  
“wala yun. alam mo namang tropa na kita eh. Basta, kung kailangan mo ko, tawag ka lang sakin, sasamahan kita kahit magdamagan pa ;) ;D.” ano daw? Anyway, I didn’t ask him to explain to me what he just said. hindi ko rin naman kasi maiintindihan eh. Malalim yata or slang na tagalog yun eh. ::) ::)   
  
Hindi na ko nagpasundo sa driver kasi ang sabi nya sya na lang ang maghahatid sakin sa bahay. Almost 2 am na ng makauwi ako. Tipsy pa ko, kasi nga I drank alcohol tonight. It’s funny because back then I remember drinking a lot but I never get buzzed like this. Siguro kasi matagal na kong hindi nakakainom kaya ngayon, kahit konti lang nalalasing na ko kagad. ::) ::)   
  
I fell asleep the moment I jumped to bed.   
  
I woke up in the middle of the night and could not go back to sleep anymore. I kept on moving around my bed to find my sweet spot but I didn’t find it so I decided to sit up and watch TV instead. Tinignan ko yung phone ko – yea I know it’s not like me to check my phone that often – but I was just wondering if he had called me by any chance. You know, to say sorry that he couldn’t make it to dinner or something.   
  
But no. no messages, nor a missed call from him. Wala, as in zero, nothing, nada, rien.. and however you say nothing in different languages pa.   
  
Ano ka ba naman Jeremy. Why are you like this? Sa totoo lang, these past few days I’ve noticed something odd about him. Sometimes I find him buried on deep thoughts.. yung bang nakastare lang sa blank space. I don’t even know what’s on his mind and what’s bothering him kaya sya ganyan. Kung alam ko lang sana eh di pareho kaming may peace of mind. Kaya lang, hindi naman nya sinasabi sakin :-\… actually, ayaw naman nya atang sabihin sakin eh. :-[ :-[   
  
Nagising na lang ako next day when lola tapped me on my shoulder. “Princess, gising na.”   
  
I turned around to face her, but my eyes were still closed. I have a terrible headache, and no, this is not the usual headache I get because of my condition. I have a hangover from last night. Oh, and top of that, hindi rin pala ako nakatulog ng maayos sa kakaisip sa magaling kong boyfriend ::) >:(. Crap. What a bad combination. Therefore, overall, my head feels like a battle ground right now. Arrgghhh!!! >:( >:( :-[   
  
“5 more minutes..” I said while I turned around to the other side.   
  
“may pupuntahan pa tayo Princess. Gumising ka na.”   
  
“san tayo pupunta? ???” ang aga aga eh. may pupuntahan na kagad. Geez!   
  
“dadalawin natin ang lolo mo sa sementeryo ngayon. Kaya bumangon ka na dyan.”   
  
“but lola? ??? :-\” sorry lolo. I really don’t feel well. Can I just visit you tomorrow when this stupid headache is gone? ??? ???   
  
“no butts Princess. Tumayo ka na dyan. Ikaw lang ang pwedeng sumama sakin dahil ang pinsan mo maaga umalis.” wow. thanks for leaving early, dear cousin Ella. now I'm stuck with lola ::) >:(. Hindi pa nga sya nakakatapos magsalita, she pulled the covers already. Errr. Now I’m wide awake. “I’ll wait for you downstairs.” She turned around and headed to the door.   
  
Okay, so I guess she’s leaving me with no choice at all. Bago ako tumayo, I checked my phone once again, pero.. wala paring missed calls or kahit text man lang. Damn it. Jeremy ano ka ba….? ??? :-[ :-[   
  
Sa totoo lang, I’m really starting to worry now. Pano naman kasi, kagabi pa ko walang balita sa kanya. ni hindi man lang sya tumawag para sabihin sakin na okay lang sya.. kahit na wala ng sorry eh.. basta tumawag lang sya at malaman kong okay sya. :-[ :-\   
  
I couldn’t help it anymore so I called him.. but his phone was off. Kaya tumawag na lang ako sa landline nila. Mommy nya nakasagot at sinabi sakin na maaga pa raw umalis si Jeremy dahil may pupuntahan daw syang importante. Ano naman kayang importante ang pupuntahan nya ng ganito kaaga? ??? ??? 7 am pa lang eh.. may meeting ba na ganito kaaga? I don’t think so. I’m really really worried now. :-\ :-[   
  
Bumaba na ko kasi kanina pa ko tinatawag ni lola. Ano naman kasi nakain nitong lola ko at ako ang naisipang isama sa cemetery eh ayoko nga nagpupunta sa mga ganung lugar.. wala lang, parang nakakadepress lang magpunta dun.   
  
Dumating kami sa cemetery after 30-45 minutes. Medyo malayo sya from the house kaya on the way there nakatulog pa ko. Tinulugan ko nga si lola habang may sinasabi sya eh. ;D ;D   
  
“matagal na kasi akong hindi nakakadalaw sa lolo mo kaya binisita ko sya ngayon.” She said while we were walking to my lolo’s mausoleum. “do you remember your lolo? ???” tanong nya sakin. Nag nod ako. Of course, I remember him, even though he’s been gone for 13 years… He was the one who gave me my nickname because I’m his Princess. Close ako sa lolo ko, actually closer pa ko sa kanya kesa kay lola, spoiled kasi talaga ako sa kanya eh. Alam nyo naman kasi, wala akong daddy kaya si lolo ang parang naging daddy ko when I was growing up. :) :)   
  
Nakakatawa naman itong si lola. Tanungin daw ba kung naalala ko pa si lolo. Natural. I don’t have the worst case of amnesia by the way. ::) ::)   
  
Although this place looks kinda different from the last time I’ve been here. “uhmm lola? What happened to this place, how come it looks different? ???” well, I maybe have figured out that it has been years since my last visit here, and also considered the fact that changes have occurred over time too.   
  
“pinalipat ko kasi ang lolo mo 2 years ago sa mas malaking museleo. He used to be over there.” She pointed the southside of the cemetery where my grandpa’s mausoleum was. Ahh kaya naman pala eh. No wonder I don’t recognize this part of the cemetery. “anyway, mas gusto ko sya dito kasi maraming puno.” She continued talking as we entered the mausoleum.   
  
We stayed there for about an hour. After nun, I decided to walk around for a while since ayaw pang umalis ni lola. Buti naman at pumayag sya.   
  
I started walking from the northside, then to west then to the east. I realized na medyo malayo-layo din yung nilakad ko dahil standing from the east, yung mausoleum ng lolo ko looks like a tiny dot.   
Anyway, walang tao dito sa sementeryo ngayon. Dahil bukod sa it’s a weekday, malayo pa ang November. On average, today is just an ordinary day. Maganda nga yung araw ngayon eh, sunny, mild winds, clear blue skies… what a perfect day to spend with your beloved one. But who am I kidding, eh wala naman si Jeremy dito. :-[ :-\ For all I know he’s out there somewhere… hay.. nasan na kaya siya and why hasn’t he called me since last night? masama ang loob ko sa kanya, but then.. I miss him. I really do. :-[ :-[ :-[   
  
I was about to cross the little street when I suddenly saw something familiar. A black car passed by. Wait a minute, is that… is that his car? :o ??? Lumapit ako ng konti pero hindi dun sa point na makikita nya ko if ever. Nagpark yung car sa kabilang side kung nasan ako. and then a few moments later, may lumabas dun sa kotse. A guy who looks exactly like Jeremy. Wait, it is Jeremy. So I was right. That’s his car and he’s the one in it.   
  
He went around the other side and took a basket of flowers from the trunk. Bakit sya nandito? Maya maya lang, naglakad sya papunta sa isa sa mga graves dun sa area na yun. He placed the basket down and sat as well. Sino kaya yung dinadalaw nya dito? ??? ??? Relative nya kaya yun? pinagmamasdan ko lang sya from afar. It seems to me like he was talking to the grave at mukang seryoso yung face nya habang nililinis nya ng konti yung gravestone. I don’t know for sure kasi medyo malayo naman ako sa kanya. but nonetheless, hindi ko pa rin mafigure out kung bakit ganun na lang yung expression sa face nya.. parang… sobrang lungkot at umiiyak pa ata. ??? ???   
  
For some reason, kahit na gusto kong lumapit sa kanya ngayon, hindi ko magawa. Something is telling me not to go over there and just watch him from here. para na ngang nakaglue yung mga paa ko sa ground eh.. I couldn’t move, I couldn’t even speak. :-X :-X   
  
For the next 15 to 30 minutes, I just sat here, under the tree… watching him watch and speak to the person 6 feet under him. grabe, ang weird. And you know what else is weird? Nandito lang ako pinagmamasdan sya. Hindi man lang ako makalapit. I don’t even know why. hindi rin ako nabore dito sa kakatingin sa kanya at sa mga ginagawa nya. It wasn’t for long when he took out a piece of paper or something and showed it to the grave. Ano kaya yun? looks like a photo paper. Sino kaya yung nasa picture at bakit nya pinapakita dun sa nakalibing dun? ??? :-\   
  
I decided to give him a call at the moment, hoping he would pick it up. Pero hindi. Tinignan lang nya yung phone nya tapos binalik nya kagad sa pocket nya. ang sama naman nya. bakit ayaw nyang sagutin yung tawag ko? ??? >:(   
  
After a few minutes, tumayo na sya at naglakad pabalik sa kotse nya. I stood up as well, but I waited for him to leave first.   
  
Nung nakaalis na sya, naglakad ako papunta dun sa grave ni pinuntahan nya. on my way there, I felt this nervous feeling.. like my heart is about to fall from its place or something. I could not explain why I’m feeling such, but all I know is that one step closer makes my knees shake and my heart beat faster. :-\ :-\   
  
And the long awaited moment has finally come. I’m standing a few steps away from the grave at this point. At bago ako lumapit talaga, pumikit muna ako at huminga ng malalim. Ewan ko ba kung bakit ako kinakabahan ng ganito eh kung tutuusin, I’m standing on top of a stranger..   
  
Sino kaya sya at bakit sya dinadalaw ni Jeremy? … ??? :-\   
  
I looked down the grave and read what’s engraved on the gravestone….   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Patricia Margaret Romana   
Born: January 15, 1985   
Died: June 16, 2004   
  
And on the very bottom, it said…   
  
“You will always be in our hearts and in our memory..”   
“I will love you forever…” -- Jeremy.   
  
  
I froze the moment I saw the last part.. :o :o :o   
  
  
  
Patricia Margaret Romana… “I will love you forever…”   
  
  
  
Paulit-ulit kong nakikita….   
  
even when my eyes are closed.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Hindi ko alam at maintindihan. Pero...   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
nasasaktan ako.... :-[ :-[ :'( :'(   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
  
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Patricia Margaret Romana… her name registered that instant in my mind. I could’ve sworn her name sounds familiar to me. I don’t know how, but I think I’ve heard of that name before. Maybe I’m starting to remember stuff from the past, and I’m pretty much positive I know that name. But then… I feel weak and I could not explain why. Hindi ko sya kilala and yet I’m feeling this intense thing towards her :-[ :-[. For crying out loud, she’s six feet under my feet and here I am feeling so insecure of her. Buti pa sya naisip ni Jeremy, samantalang ako, kagabi pa ko tumatawag sa kanya, and even until just a few moments ago, pero hindi man lang nya ko naisip. :'( :'(   
  
I dialed my cousin’s number right away to ask if she knows who this Patricia Margaret Romana is, and when I did, her voice started to tremble, as if she heard an uh-oh-don’t-mention-that-name kinda thing. :-X   
  
“sino!?” she asked again.   
  
“Patricia Margaret Romana, couz! Are you deaf? Kanina ko pa sinasabi yung name eh!”   
  
“bakit mo tinatanong? Tsaka pano mo nalaman?” why is she asking me when I’m the one asking her? ??? ???   
  
“wala lang :-\..” I just said. “so, do you know her?” I asked again. “I think you do.” Yea, she probably does.. since Jeremy knows her and both of them went to the same high school before.. so chances are, kilala nga nya si Patricia.   
  
“oo kilala ko..” then she paused, “si Tricia.” Tricia? :o That name surely rings a bell to me.. Now, where did I hear that name again?…. Wait a minute…..   
  
\*\* Flashback \*\*   
  
Habang naglalakad ako, I heard something.. “sssmmfmfmfm” hindi naman galing kay Ella, or sa background nya. More like.. like someone’s talking? Wait? Who’s talking? Well, I checked him one more time, only to find out that he was the one I’m hearing.   
  
He’s sleep-talking!! :o ???   
  
Eh kaso hindi ko naman marinig yung sinasabi nya, so I moved closer to him. yung phone ko nasa may ear ko pa rin, si Ella kase, may kinukwento. When I was close enough that I could hear what he’s saying..   
  
“sorry..” he moved his head, but his eyes remained closed. He must be dreaming? “sorry..” who’s he saying sorry to!? And why is he saying sorry!? ??? “sorry I didn’t mean to….   
  
---Sorry.. Tricia….” :o :o :o And I suddenly lost grip to the phone. :-[ :-[   
  
\*\* End of flashback \*\*   
  
  
“couz I have to go.” Bigla ko na lang sinabi sa kanya, sabay click ng phone. I didn’t even wait for her response.   
  
Naalala ko na. si Tricia.. the girl that Jeremy called out for when he was sleeping. Si Tricia… she could also be the reason why he seems so distant at times. I squatted down and looked at the picture beside the grave. I closed my eyes and tried to remember where I saw the picture and after a brief moment, I realized it was the same picture I saw in Jeremy’s planner before. :o :-\   
  
Flashback.   
  
After ko maligo, siempre nagbihis na ko diba, but then by the sink, I found his planner. Okay, I don’t want to be nosy or intruding, because it’s so unlikely of me to be like that, but seeing his planner made me feel so curious. I don’t know why, I just found myself opening it.   
  
It’s not an extraordinary planner, as it was just the usual one I see that most people have. Nakalagay don lahat ng schedule nya for the this week, for next week, next month.. in fact he has the next two years already planned out! oh my. I continued flipping through the pages and when I got to the last one, I saw a picture.. a very pretty and amiable picture..   
  
It’s a picture of a girl…   
  
Nung nakita ko yun, I could not explain how I felt.. basta ang alam ko, hindi masaya yung feeling. Who’s this girl? wait…   
  
He has a girlfriend? ???   
  
How come I’ve never seen or heard of her? ??? Sino siya? ??? What’s her name? ??? how old is she? ??? Where’s she from? ??? how long have they been going out? ??? does he love her? ??? Does she love him? ??? where did they meet? ???   
  
Why am I asking these questions!? It’s probably due to the fact that I’m just hungry. And this is how it is when a person’s hungry diba, kung ano-ano na lang ang iniisip. Right, that’s what’s up.   
  
I closed the planner and kinda tossed it away from me. Why am I feeling so bad about this? So what if he has a girlfriend? I don’t care, why would I care? Tss.. my deepest sympathy to the girl, kase yung boyfriend nya, no life!!   
  
\*\* End of flashback \*\*   
  
  
Ano ba to.. I never expected to remember this much in one day. Sumasakit yung ulo ko.. nagugulohan ako. sino ba si Patricia? ??? :-\ Hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit ganito na lang ang nararamdaman ko sa kanya. I don’t even know her for Pete’s sake. …and yet I’m jealous. EXTREMELY JEALOUS. :-[ :-[   
  
Napansin ko rin… she died on June 16… so bale, death anniversary nya kahapon. Kasabay ng first month namin ni Jeremy. Bigla tuloy akong napaisip.. could it be possible that he wasn’t at a meeting yesterday but was here instead… with her…? ??? :-\ And Anthony was just covering for him kaya siya yung nagpunta sa resto last night?? :-[ :-[   
  
Sa totoo lang, I want to see and talk to Jeremy right now and ask for an explanation, but I somehow I couldn’t. Seems like something’s stopping me from doing that and at the same time, I’m also scared to hear what he’s going to say. Baka hindi ko magustohan or baka masaktan lang ako sa malalaman ko… and I don’t wanna get hurt, not in my condition right now. :-\ :-\   
  
So… for the meantime. I just let it go…..   
  
I stood still and stayed by her grave for a few more minutes until my lola called and told me that we were leaving already.   
  
Nung sumakay ako sa kotse, tinanong nya ko kagad.   
  
“where have you been Princess? Kanina pa kita hinahanap.” Tapos tinanggal nya yung sunglasses nya, “nanggaling ka ba sa eastside?”   
  
“yea.” Ang sabi ko.   
  
“what were you doing there? ??? Ang layo ng nilakad mo ah..” she looked at me, “bawal sayo ang mapagod Princess, so next time, don’t walk that far anymore.” She said as the car started to move.   
  
“wala.. may tinignan lang ako.” I’m thinking if I should ask her or not.. should I? maybe I should.. she might know her. I hope.   
  
“at ano naman ang tinignan mo dun?” she gave me that questioning look. Oo nga naman, may point sya. I don’t know anyone buried here and this place is certainly not a good site to see.   
  
Hindi ko tuloy alam kung anong sasabihin ko sa kanya. should I tell her what I saw? “uhm. Lola? :-\” tumingin sya sakin. Okay, hindi ko nakayanan. I have to say something na talaga. hindi kasi talaga ako matahimik eh. I just feel like I need to know her for some reason I could not explain. Baka sakaling magkaron ako ng peace of mind kahit ngayon lang. Just for the meantime that I don’t have the courage to ask Jeremy about her. “I saw a grave..”   
  
“and? ???” nakatingin lang sya sakin.   
  
“and :-\..” I paused, not certain if I’m still going to ask. And I was about to, but then…. “nothing. I forgot what I was going to say :-\.” Damn it. I can’t. but I really want to, but why couldn’t I? ??? :-[   
  
“ah ganon ba.” I nodded. “well, ask me if you remember okay?” then she smiled at me while caressing my hair. “anyway, I’ll drop you off at home at ako naman didiretso sa opisina. May meeting pa ko eh. magpahinga ka ha. bukas may appointment ka sa doctor.” She looked at me one more time and smiled.   
  
Hay. It’s the never-ending doctor’s appointment na naman :-\. I wonder what they’re gonna do to me this time. Hindi pa ba sila napapagod sa kaka-run ng mga tests sakin pati yung mga tanong nilang pare-pareho lang naman? Ako kasi, napapagod na eh. Kasi naman kahit anong gawin nila sakin, kung hindi ko pa time para gumaling, wala din naman mangyayari. I’ve been on this for a while now and look, little to no progress pa rin. :-\ :-\   
  
I have amnesia, and it’s something that nobody can cure instantly. Feeling ko ginagawa lang nila akong experiment by giving me all sorts of medication that may even cause bigger problems and it’s just a waste of money. They’re not treating my amnesia.. they’re just treating the symptoms associated with it. And these symptoms do not even require immediate attention at all. Mga minor lang naman yun eh, not that big of deal actually.   
  
Sa totoo lang, lalo lang ako nagugulohan ngayon :-\… Now that I’m remembering more things. I feel like they were dreams that are now happening in real life. minsan hindi ko na alam kung ano yung totoo sa hindi eh. Pag may tinatanong naman ako, instead na nagiging malinaw, lalo lang lumalabo kasi parang meron hindi sinasabi sakin si Jeremy or even Ella…and now I think Anthony is part of it too. Sometimes I’m thinking they’re hiding something from me. :-[ ???   
  
Hay nako, ewan. Siguro effect lang to ng mga gamot na pinapainom sakin. Geez. They’re supposed to make me better, not make me worse.   
  
Well, like my lola said, she only dropped me off at home and then she went straight to where she was headed to. Pumasok ako sa bahay with this heavy and uncertain feeling na hindi ko naman maexplain.   
  
Pagbukas ko pa lang ng door sinalubong na ko kagad ng maid at sinabing, “Princess may naghihintay sayo sa garden..”   
  
“sino? ???” I immediately asked. Wala naman kasi akong ineexpect na guest ngayon eh.   
  
[size=20pt]PART 2[/size]   
  
  
  
  
  
“si sir Jeremy.” Wow. Look who decided to show up now. >:(   
  
“Jeremy?” nung una hindi pa ko sure sa sinabi nya but when she nodded at mukang serious naman sya, naniwala na ko. Therefore, I walked to the garden and there he was, sitting by the pool with his juice.   
  
He turned around when he heard a noise, which was the one I made, but I didn’t say anything; instead, I walked towards him and gave him a hug…   
  
And he just stood there like a statue. Totally not hugging me back. Okay??… ??? ???   
  
“kanina ka pa ba wala?” was his immediate question. Geez, honey. Not even a hi or hello? ??? >:(   
  
I let go of the hug and stepped about two steps back. “uhm yea, kinda.” Then I sat down the chair.   
  
Umupo din sya at pinatong yung hawak nyang glass sa table. “san ka nagpunta?”   
  
Is it just me, or is he really asking me in a cold manner right now? Gosh. What’s with him today? ??? ???   
  
Wait… Do I tell him where I went and that I saw him?   
  
“sinamahan si lola.” Okay, I decided not to. wala lang. “what about you?” I looked at him.   
  
“anong tungkol sakin?” he had this curious face when he asked me.   
  
“I mean.. how was the meeting last night? :-\” good one, Iris. Pretend that you did not just see what you just saw this morning..   
  
“ahh..yun ba.” he adjusted his sitting position to make him more comfortable. “ayun. Late na kami natapos. Pagod na pagod nga ko eh.. ang daming diniscuss tungkol sa business.” sunod sunod nyang sinabi. “sorry nga pala hindi na ko nakarating kagabi.. gusto ko sanang humabol kahit late kaya lang naipit na ko sa meeting eh :-\..” right. Sorry. You could’ve called me you dohdoh! Hmph. >:( :-[   
  
“that’s okay.” what the heck? ??? :o Where did that come from? I was supposed to say, ‘I hate you cuz you made me wait and look stupid at the same time.’ But no. those were the words that came out of my mouth. Eerr. Bad mouth. “Anthony was there anyway to give me company..” then I forced a smile, which I know he noticed.   
  
“si Anthony? ???” oh? Bakit parang nagulat pa ata sya sa sinabi ko? ???   
  
“yeah. Well, thanks for sending him there on your behalf anyway. We had a great time :).” There goes another fake smile.   
  
“talaga… that’s… good.”   
  
“so…” I looked at him from head to toe. Hindi sya ngpalit ng damit. He was still wearing the same clothes from this morning when I saw him at the cemetery. “where have you been this morning? Bakit parang hindi ka yata naka business attire? ???” Is he gonna tell me the truth? ….   
  
I gulped because I have exactly no idea of what he’s about to tell me. siguro right now I would prefer he’d tell me the truth. Or maybe not. wahh! I don’t know. I’m scared. -\_-   
  
“uhm.. sa…” saan? Come on tell me!!! “sa school.” school!?   
  
My eyebrows met each other. Did he say school or did I just hear that? “anong school?” ano bang gagawin nya sa school eh diba graduate na sya? and why is he lying to me?? … ??? :-\   
  
“oo, school.” he said with a straight face. Talagang hindi nya sinabi yung totoo ah…. ouch :-[. Tapos may nilabas syang paper from an envelope. “by the way, here are your enrollment papers. Naayos na ang lahat, and you may start kung kelan mo gusto. Pumili ka na lang ng sem na papasukan mo.” Bigla naman nyang binago yung subject ngayon. Ano ba tong lalaking to. hindi ko man lang nafeel yung sincerity ng sorry nya. I guess he really stood me up in purpose last night then. :-\ :-\   
  
“talaga lang ha.” liar. >:(   
  
“oo. Eto.” Tapos pinakita nya sakin yung enrollment papers ko. “tignan mo kung tama lahat ng information.”   
  
“but I don’t wanna go to school in my condition.” Is he crazy? ??? Sino ba naman matinong boyfriend ang ipapasok ang girlfriend nyang may amnesia sa school diba? “and besides, didn’t the doctor say it’s best if I recover first before doing anything drastic?” in this case, going to school will be a drastic thing.   
  
“okay ka na naman eh diba?” bakit ba nya ko gustong pumasok sa school eh isang sem na lang naman ang kulang ko? and I’m really not in hurry to finish yet dahil ang ibig sabihin nun, I have to take responsibility to the company, which is something I don’t want to do right now. “hindi naman makakasama kung mag-aral ka. Tutal naman, minor subject lang naman ang kulang mo.”   
  
I can’t belive this guy. First he tells me to take my time to rest and get well, and now he wants me to go to school and be stressed out. “no. I refuse to go to school >:(.” I crossed my arms and pouted my lips. Ayoko ngang magschool. I don’t want to go to school here. “if you want me to continue going to school, I might as well go back to LA.” I said.   
  
“eh pano na yung kumpanya kung hindi ka gagraduate? Pano na yung turn over? Pano na yun—” sunod sunod nyang sinabi, but I cut him off because I he’s starting to get on my nerves.   
  
“and what about me? ??? ???” nakakainis. Puro na lang for the company. Pano naman ako diba? “hello? if nobody hadn’t noticed, I have amnesia. Get it?” sabay tingin at lapit sa kanya, “I have A-M-N-E-S-I-A!!! >:( >:(” I said repeatedly while poking his chest.   
  
“iniisip lang naman kita eh.. para may magawa ka naman habang nagpapagaling ka.. at the same time you’re being productive..” what the heck is this guy thinking telling me that I need to go to school just so I could have something to do while I’m recovering? Ano ba sya? Sira ulo?! ??? >:( Ano yun, he’s trying to hit-two-birds-with-one-stone kind of thing? Grabe ha. >:(   
  
“you know what? this is nonsense. I don’t even know why we’re having this kind of conversation right now, Jeremy >:(.” Nagulat sya nung tinawag ko sya by his name.   
  
“baka lang naman kasi nabobored ka na dito sa bahay. Yun lang naman ang iniisip ko. pati sabi ng lola mo ienroll kita eh.”   
  
“whatever. basta I’m not going to school >:(.” Then I turned my back on him. he’s pissing me off right now and I don’t think this conversation is going somewhere at all. “end of conversation.”   
  
Nung naglalakad na ko papasok sa loob, bigla naman nyang hinawakan yung braso ko. “pero Iris..” kaya tumigil ako sa paglalakad. “you have to go to school. we have to continue with the original plan, bago ka naaksidente. We’re running out of time, mapagiiwanan na tayo ng mga competitors natin.. Alam mo naman yun diba? naalala mo na nga eh..”   
  
Oo, alam ko yun. that’s why I’m dreading my recovery. Ayokong pang gumaling dahil ayokong maging part ng business na to. but at the same time, alam kong kailangan din nila ko… or so I think. Yun naman talaga yung pinunta ko dito eh. kaso, naaksidente nga ako at eto ang nangyare sakin. Pero kahit na. That was then, this is now.   
  
“do you even realize how much money we’re losing already? ???” bigla nyang sinabi. Okay? Since when did money become an issue to them?   
  
“oh really? Since when was money a big concern to you guys? ??? >:(” nakakainis naman to. ano bang akala nya sakin? “aren’t you guys the...” I made the quotation sign in the air, “hot shot people?! >:(”   
  
Nakatingin lang sya sakin as if he did not hear anything I just said. Grabe, what’s the matter with him and why does it seem like I’m talking to completely different person right now? Dahil ba sa nagpunta sya sa cemetery kanina kaya parang ibang tao sya ngayon? Naalala ko ulit tuloy. Arrgh!! Naiinis ako sa kanya I swear! >:( >:( sa inis ko, I turned my back on him and started walking away.   
  
“bakit ka ba nagkakaganyan? Bakit ang init ng ulo mo?” sumunod sya sakin. “Iris, makinig ka nga sakin >:(.” Hinarap nya ko sa kanya, but I resisted.   
  
“no, you listen to me >:(.” sinabi ko after I turned around to face him. “you wanna know why I’m like this?” nakatingin lang sya sakin, waiting for further explanation. “kasi… kasi hindi ka nagpunta kagabi! You stood me up and you made a fool out of me! tapos tumatawag ako sayo the whole night pero nakapatay naman yung phone mo >:( >:(! Tapos ngayon magpapakita ka sakin at pagpipilitan mong gawin ko ang isang bagay na ayoko naman! >:(”   
  
“yun lang ba ang problema mo?” he responded. “diba sinabi ko na naman sayo yung dahilan kung bakit hindi ako nakapunta? Sorry na nga eh diba? ??? >:(” lalo akong napipikon sa kanya with they way he’s expressing himself. He wasn’t the one who got stood up okay. “nakapatay yung phone ko dahil naubusan ako ng battery, at paguwi ko, pagod na ko kaya hindi ko na nacharge. Ilang beses ko ba yan uulitin sayo ha? ??? ???”   
  
“oh so I suppose what you did last night was perfectly acceptable huh? >:(”   
  
“akala ko ba okay lang sayo? ???” yea, that’s what I thought to---until you pissed me off by lying to me about your whereabouts this morning. Oh, and add the school thing to that as well! >:( “at yung pagpasok mo sa school, sumusunod lang ako sa utos sakin okay? hindi ako nagdesisyon nun.”   
  
You know, at moments like this, I could not help but remember and feel at the same time how much I hate him. Hindi ko maintindihan pero parang may nagtitrigger ng anger ko towards him. nagugulohan ako! ano ba talaga yung totoo? ??? ???   
  
Hindi ko na nakayanan, I have to say what I’m feeling. “Jeremy tell me the truth.” I looked at him straight in the eye. “what are you hiding from me? >:( >:(” nagulat sya sa tinanong ko, nakatingin lang sya sakin, no expression whatsoever na makikita sa face nya. kaya naman lalo akong naasar. “ano? magsalita ka! >:(”   
  
He didn’t say a word pero nagulat na lang ako dahil niyakap nya ko bigla…. Ng MAHIGPIT. Yung higpit ng yakap ko sa kanya kanina? Mas mahigpit yung kanya ngayon. As in twice as tight.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Iris, please… wag ngayon…” he whispered…   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
“---gusto ko punong puno ng tulips okay? yellow please –--sige salamat.” sinabi ko dun sa kausap kong trabahador ni Mommy. Inaayos na nila ngayon yung lugar na sinabi ko. Oo, sinabi sakin ni Anthony yung plano ni Iris. Pero hindi detalyado talaga. Kaya ang balak ko sana, after nun, dadalin ko sya sa isang lugar na puro bulaklak lang ang makikita nya.. para naman masurprise ko din sya. Actually, hindi lang naman yun ang gagawin ko eh.. may sasabihin din ako sa kanya. sasabihin ko na… na… masaya ako at gusto ko ng gawing totoohanan ito…   
  
Masaya ako na kasama ko siya at ayokong sanang mabago yun. Pero pano ko ipapaintindi sa kanya ito ng hindi nya malalaman kung saan kami nagsimula? Hindi ko naman kasi kayang sabihin sa kanya yung totoo talaga kasi mali talaga yun.. kasalanan ko yun. at baka iwanan nya ko pag nalaman nya… ayokong mangyari yun.   
  
“ano bro? ayos na ba lahat?” tumungo ako sa kanya habang binabalik ko sa bulsa ko yung phone ko. “tama yan tol, gawin mong espesyal.. kasi mukang pinaghirapan ni Tisay yung surpresa nya sayo eh..”   
  
“ano ba kasi yung gagawin nya?” tanong ko ulit sa kanya. eh kung sabihin na lang nya kasi kaya para alam ko kung anong eksaktong gagawin para malamangan ko yung gagawin ni Iris..   
  
“sorry tol!” tinaas nya yung dalawang kamay nya sa ere. “nagpromise ako eh..” :D :D   
  
“nagpromise ka pa sa lagay na yan? You spilled already, tsong!” ang weirdo talaga nitong kaibigan kong ito. Hindi pa pa kasi sinabi lahat eh.   
  
“ba, pasalamat ka nga at binigyan pa kita ng hint eh!” sabay tawa nya ng malakas. ;D ;D   
  
Natutuwa at nalulungkot ako sa ginagawa ni Iris. Ilang beses ko na atang sinabi to eh. Hindi ko kasi mapigilang pagisipan kung ano man ang nangyayari dahil hindi naman talaga si Iris to. may sakit siya at pinaniniwalaan lang nya kung anong sinabi ko at ng mga tao sa kanya... na pinaniwala ko rin sa kanila. I know it’s selfish of me, pero kung kailangan kong magpakaselfish para kay Iris, gagawin ko na.   
  
Pero, pano kung dumating na yung araw na kinakatakutan ko? Kaya nga hangga’t hindi pa yun dumadating, nilulubos ko na yung mga panahon ako lang ang nakikita nyang nagpapasaya sa kanya..   
  
Teka nga sandali, tumatawag ang aking prinsesa…   
  
“babe where are you?” sinabi nya kagad pagsagot ko pa lang ng phone.   
  
“nasa office pa ko eh.. daming meeting.”   
  
“ahh.. well, okay then, I’ll let you go..”   
  
“oh sige, pasensya na ha.. busy lang talaga eh.. kasama ko nga pala si Anthony, inaayos kasi yung binibili nyang stock.” nagmamadali kasi kami at late na kami sa meeting. Pano yung pinanggalingan naming meeting ang dami pang kaartehan, hindi naman ganun ka importante. “last na meeting na to. mabilis lang.. tapos uuwi na ko para magbihis.. okay?” tamang tama, mga 30 minutes lang naman ito eh, marami pa kong time para makapaghanda ng supresa ko sa kanya…   
  
“okay. I’ll just see you later.. don’t be late ha..” niremind nya ko dun sa date namin mamaya. Dinner date nga pala yun, kaya kailangan formal attire. Hindi ko nga lang talaga maisip kung anong klaseng surpresa yung sinasabi ni Anthony sakin na ginawa ni Iris..   
  
“okay babe.”   
  
Pagkababa ko ng phone, pumasok na kami kagad sa conference room. Habang nandun ako, hindi ko talaga mapigilang magisip. Medyo magulo kasi eh, hindi ko maintindihan yung nararamdaman ko. masaya ako na hindi, takot na confident. Ah basta! Bahala na nga si batman!   
  
Pagkatapos ng meeting namin, lumabas na kami kagad ni Anthony. Nagmamadali na nga ako dahil medyo napahaba yung meeting, na instead na 30 minutes, naging isang oras tuloy.   
  
“Jeremy!!” May tumawag ng pangalan ko bago kami nakasakay sa elevator kaya napalingon kaming dalawa ni Anthony sa likod para tignan kung sino yun. “hi Anthony!” nagwave siya habang papalapit siya saming dalawa.   
  
“Bernice!” bineso nya ko. si Bernice nga pala, kapatid ni Tricia. “musta? Anong ginagawa mo dito?”   
  
Medyo hingal pa siya nun, pano kasi, tumakbo pa hindi naman kailangan. “hay nako kuya, nagpunta ko sa office mo ang sabi ng secretary mo, may meeting daw kayo kaya sinundan ko na lang kayo dito.” Tapos may nilabas siyang puting envelope galing sa bag nya. “pinabibigay nga pala ni Mommy. Punta ka ha!” inabutan din nya si Anthony ng isang envelope. “sorry ngayon ko lang nabigay ha, nag out of town kasi ako, ngayon lang ako nakabalik.”   
  
“para san to?” ??? tanong ni Anthony. Yun din yung tanong ko pero hindi ko binuksan pa yung envelope.   
  
“para sa 3rd death anniversary ni Ate.. may konting salo salo sa bahay after ng mass. Pero tapos na yung mass eh, kaya sa bahay na ang tuloy..” Pagtingin ko sa loob ng envelope, ito ang nakalagay:   
  
In remembrance of our beloved Tricia on her third year death anniversary, the Romana Family would like to invite you to an intimate gathering at the Romana residence on June 16, 2007 at 7:00 pm.   
  
Pucha. June 16 pala ngayon. Kanina lang masaya ako, pero pagkatapos kong mabasa to, bumigat na naman ang pakiramdam ko. :-\   
  
“okay ka lang kuya Jeremy?” tanong kagad ni Bernice. “You don’t have to come if you don’t want to..”   
  
“yeah, I’m okay.” sabi ko. okay. sure. I’m not okay. yun yung araw ni gusto kong burahin sa kalendaryo ko para hindi na dumating. It’s always like this every year.. akala ko this year magiging iba na ang pakiramdam pagsapit ng June 16, mali pala ako. :-[   
  
Nagbago ang timpla ko. bigla tuloy akong nalungkot… :(   
  
Sumenyas sakin si Anthony na parang nagtatanong kung pupunta ba kami o hindi, pero we both know I can’t say no to Tricia’s family. Para kay Tricia to eh. importante to. “sige pupunta kami.” Nagulat bigla si Anthony sa sinabi ko.   
  
“good. Oh sige ah, mauna na ko. may pupuntahan pa kasi ako eh.” inayos nya yung bag nya at nagready ng umalis. “so see you two there ha!” nag-nod kaming dalawa. Tapos nun, umalis na siya.   
  
Umoo ako kay Bernice. Hindi naman ako pwedeng mawala dun eh, dahil every year present ako dun. Kahit na hindi naman ako part talaga ng family nila, ganun na rin ang turing nila sakin.   
  
“June 16 pare ngayon yun!” biglang sabi ni Anthony. “bakit ka umoo? Eh diba may plano ka na? pano si Tisay?”   
  
Nanlaki bigla yung mga mata ko ng marinig ko yun. Teka… JUNE 16. ngayon yun ah!? :o :o   
  
Death anniversary ni Tricia at special day ito para kay Iris. Hindi ako pwedeng hindi pumunta kila Tricia. :-\ I have to be there. I want to be there.. pero pano si Iris? I don’t want to disappoint her, lalo na’t alam kong she’s looking forward to the ‘surprise’ I told her.. pati yung hinanda nya para sakin.. pinaghirapan nya yun eh… :-\ :-\   
  
Patay! Pano to? 2 events in one day. PAREHONG IMPORTANTE. Anong gagawin ko?   
  
“pare naman.. pano yan?”   
  
Tinignan ko kagad yung relo ko. May halos tatlong oras pa ko bago kay Iris.. kung pupunta ako kila Tricia, hindi naman siguro ako magtatagal dun.. tama. Pupunta muna ko sa bahay nila Tricia tapos aalis na lang ako mga alas-ocho para makapagbihis pa ko at didiretso na ko sa restaurant.   
  
“bilisan mo bro. pupunta tayo sa bahay nila Tricia.” Nagkamot na lang ng ulo si Anthony habang pasakay sya sa kotse ko. “aabot ako kay Iris.”   
  
“pano ka aabot tsong? Anong oras na oh..” sabay turo nya sa oras sa may dashboard.   
  
“abot yan.” Sinabi ko na lang habang papalabas ako sa parking lot. “hindi naman tayo magtatagal dun eh.”   
  
“sino ka, si superman?” ??? ;D tumingin siya sakin na parang napakaimpusibleng mangyari yung sinasabi kong mapapagsabay ko yung dalawang importanteng bagay ngayong gabi. Ahh basta! Kaya ko yan. Ang importante hindi ako mawawala dun sa anniversary ni Tricia. Pangako ko sa kanya yun eh.   
  
“pare naman, alam mo naman na hindi ako pwedeng mawala dun eh..”   
  
“ewan ko sayo. Ang labo mo.”   
  
Hindi na kami nagusap mula nung sinabi nya yun hanggang sa makarating kami sa bahay ng mga Romana. Ewan ko ba dito kay Anthony kung bakit nagkakaganyan. Kung makasalita naman kasi parang ang laki ng atraso ko. Sa bagay, medyo alanganin nga ang diskarte ko ngayon. :-\   
  
Maraming tao, as usual. Pero lahat naman mga kamag-anak pati mga close friends ng pamilya nila Tricia. Parang walang nagbago, tulad pa rin ng mga nakaraang taon na sinecelebrate namin itong araw na to. sa totoo lang, nakakapanibago dahil usually pag pumupunta ako dito parang pinapatay na rin ako eh. na parang ayokong ng pumasok sa loob dahil mararamdaman ko naman yung sakit na naramdaman ko nung namatay si Tricia. Pero ngayon, hindi ganun yung nararamdaman ko eh.. ewan ko ba. oo masakit pa rin, pero hindi na gaya nung dati.   
  
Sinalubong at binati ako ni Tita Rose, yung mommy ni Tricia, pagpasok pa lang namin sa may gate. “Jeremy hijo akala ko hindi ka makakapunta eh..” niyakap nya ko at kiniss sa cheek. “Anthony hijo salamat at nakarating ka..” sinabi nya nung nakita nya si Anthony na pumasok din ng gate. “kamusta na kayong dalawa? How’s the business? I heard malapit ng maging part ng MV Telecoms itong si Anthony ah.. I’m really proud of you, mga anak..” sunod sunod nyang sinabi. Habang naglalakad kami papunta sa loob.   
  
“mabuti naman ho, tita. Actually, lumalaki na nga ang sales range ng kumpanya.. target namin ngayon yung mga middle to lower class.. naglabas kasi ng bagong billboard. Eh mukhang maraming naattract kaya ayun..” yun billboard ni Iris yun.. simula nung tinayo yun, tumaas ang sales ng mga produkto namin.. walang biro. :P   
  
“ahh.. yung billboard ni…” nagisip pa sya. Hindi nya ata matandaan yung pangalan ni Iris. “yung anak ni Josephine Martin..”   
  
“si Iris po tita.” Pinaalala naman ni Anthony yung pangalan ni Iris. “mauna na po ako dun ah..” sinabi nya pagkatapos nyang kumuha ng pagkain. “bro, sunod ka na lang.” tumango na lang ako.   
  
“ahh.. oo. Alam mo gusto ko yung batang yun.. ang ganda ng mukha.. ang amo..” hindi ko napapansin, napapangiti ako sa naririnig kong sinasabi ni Tita Rose.   
  
“oo nga po eh mabait po talaga sya..” :)   
  
“pero hindi ba, may sakit yun? naaksidente sya diba at nagkaron ng amnesia?” ang dami palang may alam ng nangyare sa kanya. sa bagay, hindi naman yun maitatago. Maliit lang ang mundong ginagalawan ng mga tao dito sa business na to.   
  
“opo, pero gumagaling na po sya.. sabi ng doctor nya, all her memory will be back in a short while, according dun sa mga tests na ginawa sa kanya.”   
  
“that’s good..”   
  
Nag-nod ako. Hindi ko yata gusto yung sinabi ko eh. babalik na ang alaala ni Iris.. malapit na. who knows, maybe one of these days bigla nalang itong bumalik. Baka hindi ako makapaghanda.. siguro bago mangyari yun, sasabihin ko na sa kanya yung totoo.. kung kaya ko. :-\   
  
“Nasan sya, if you don’t mind me asking?” bigla nyang sinabi. “bakit hindi mo siya sinama dito?” dagdag pa nya.   
  
“Nasa bahay po tita, nagpapahinga. Bawal ho kasi sa kanya ang mapagod..”   
  
“Ah ganun ba.. well, I wish you both happiness. Sana matagal pa kayong magsama at wag kayong mag-aaway ha. hindi maganda sa isang relasyon ang puro away.” Halatang parang ang bigat sa dibdib nya yung mga sinabi nya. alam kong hindi madali sa kanya na makita na may iba na ko, lalo na’t alam nyang si Tricia na anak nya ang dating nyang pinagpapayuhan tungkol sa mga ganitong bagay.   
  
“tita okay lang ho ba kayo?” :-\ napansin ko kasi na parang nag-iba yung mukha nya.   
  
Ngumiti sya, pero alam kong pilit yun. “siempre naman hijo. Pasensya ka na ha.. nalulungkot lang kasi ako. dati kasi.. kayong dalawa ng anak ko ang pinagpapayuhan ko ng ganyan.. pero ngayon, ikaw na lang ang natira.. at hindi na ang anak ko ang binibilin ko sayo.. ibang babae na..”   
  
“tita.. :-\” bumigat ang pakiramdam ko. bigla kong nakita yung mukha ni Tricia. Lalo tuloy akong naguilty sa ginagawa ko.. “hanggang ngayon nalulungkot parin ako sa pagkawala ni Tricia. Hindi naman sya nawala dito eh..” tinuro ko yung dibdib ko. hanggang ngayon hindi pa rin naaalis yung sakit ng pagkawala nya. oo, nabawasan, pero masakit pa rin. kahit na nandyan na si Iris, hindi parin nya matumbasan si Tricia. Kasi hinahanap ko si Tricia sa kanya eh.. Oo, napapasaya nya ko.. at gusto kong maging totoohanan ang “relasyon” naming dalawa.. pero alam ko rin naman sa sarili ko na nangako ako kay Tricia.   
  
Alam kong masama ang ginagawa ko and I probably should tell Iris the truth, kaya lang natatakot ako eh.. natatakot akong mawalan.. dahil aaminin ko, mahina pa ko. Minsan nga, naisip ko hindi kaya ginagamit ko lang si Iris dahil namimiss ko si Tricia? Sana naman hindi. :-\ :-\   
  
“hijo.. thankful ako dahil nandito ka pa rin kahit na wala na ang anak ko.. kung tutuusin, pwede ka na namang hindi pumunta dito eh.. you have your own life Jeremy, and you should continue living it..” nagnod ako sabay tingin sa baba. Hindi ko kayang tignan si tita Rose ngayon, hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit. “… at aalagaan mong mabuti si Iris ha.. treat her like you treated my daughter before..” ewan ko kung matutuwa ba ko sa sinabi nya o malulungkot. Kung sana ganun kadali ang lahat ng ito, walang mahihirapan… lalo na si Iris na walang kaalam alam.   
  
Nung pagkatapos kong makakuha ng pagkain, sumunod na ko kay Anthony kung san sya nakaupo at kumakain. Nandun sa table si Bernice, yung kapatid ni Tricia at nagkwekwentuhan silang dalawa. Bernice is the younger sister of Tricia. She’s.. If I’m not mistaken, about 16 or 17 years old? Pero kahit ganyan sya kabata, she’s very active sa business nila. Lagi syang nagvovolunteer to organize events, since she’s too young to actually be in the business.   
  
“ano? Ininterview ka na naman ni Mommy? :D :D” natatawa nyang sinabi. Ganun kasi si Tita Rose kahit na noon pa, lagi akong kinakausap kaya ang akala nilang lahat eh iniinterview ako, pero hindi naman. Actually isang beses lang ako ininterview ni Tita Rose. Yun yung bago pa lang kami ni Tricia.   
  
Inakbayan ko sya “ikaw talaga. hanggang ngayon alaskadora ka pa rin.”   
  
One hour had passed at hindi pa rin kami nakakaalis dito. Pano naman kasi itong si Bernice, kanina pa nya sinasabi na may surprise daw sya sakin. Ewan ko ba sa kanya, pasurprise surprise pa syang nalalaman…   
  
“kuya, promise.. maghintay ka lang, kasi I really want you to meet someone.. :)”   
“at sino naman? ???” tinignan ko sya.   
  
“basta. ;)” She winked at me. Hay this girl surely has her way of making me stay. “gusto ko lang naman makilala mo yung pinsan ko… I’m sure you’ll be surprised when you meet her.”   
  
May pinsan pa ba sila na hindi ko nakikilala? I gave her a puzzled look. Parang lahat naman ng mga kamag anak nila napakilala na ni Tricia sakin before. Sa tagal ba naman naming nagkasama ni Tricia, lagi nya kong sinasama sa mga family events nila. Pati nga yung mga taga America nilang mga relatives, nakilala ko na. so sino kaya itong “pinsan” na sinasabi sakin ni Bernice? ??? ???   
  
“hi.. sorry I’m late.” Ang sabi nung boses na narinig ko sa likod ko.   
  
“Amanda!!!!” sabay takbo ni Bernice papunta dun sa babae. “akala ko hindi ka na makakapunta eh..” tumingin ako sa likod ko para tignan kung sino yung babaeng kinakausap ni Bernice. At nung nakita naman nya akong tumingin, she grabbed the girl and walked towards me. “kuya.. ito nga pala si Amanda… pinsan namin…”   
:o   
  
“Amanda?”   
  
That was all I managed to say dahil nagulat ako nung nakita ko sya.. Si Tricia… Tricia? teka.. parang… sya yung babaeng nakita ko noon.. yung kamuka ni Tricia.. yung babae sa party.. pinsan nila sya?   
  
“yea, Amanda Borromeo.. :)” she smiled at me, “we’ve met before at our company’s launching.. don’t you remember me?”   
  
Hindi ako makapagsalita. Kasi dati ang akala ko, namamalik-mata lang ako nung nakita ko sya. And that I never expected that someone would look like Tricia. Pano nangyari yun? Si Bernice nga, hindi nya kamuka… ???   
  
“huyyy!!” she fanned her hands in front of me. “see, I told you, magugulat ka..” pano naman kasi, nakatingin lang ako kay Amanda. “ano, kamuka nya si Ate no? :)”   
  
“pano…?”   
  
Natawa si Amanda sa sinabi ko. Parang napakaimposible na magkamuka sila ni Tricia. Eh pano nga nangyari yun? As in kamukang kamuka nya.. siguro may konting pagkakaiba lang, pero sa malayo, si Tricia ang nakikita ko.. :-\ :-\   
  
“of course, we’re cousins.. malamang magkamuka kami.. 8)” she giggled. “sorry I didn’t mean to be sarcastic..” pero nakatawa pa rin sya. “twins kasi yung mom namin nila Bernice. Maybe that explains why Trish and I look somewhat alike.” May kakambal pala si Tita Rose.. hindi ko yun alam ah.. Tricia must have forgotten to mention that to me before..   
  
“how come I never met you before?” I asked.   
  
“I grew up in Singapore. Dun kasi nakabase yung business ni Daddy. And recently lang ako bumalik dito..”   
  
“Bernice! Come here, I’d like you meet my friend..” medyo pasigaw na sinabi ni Tita Rose na nasa kabilang table.   
  
“okay ma, I'm coming.. kuya,” tumingin sya sakin, “Amanda.” Tumingin sya sa pinsan nya. “excuse me lang ha, maiwan ko muna kayo..” tapos naglakad sya papunta dun sa table ng mom nya.   
  
Hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko. Naiilang ako sa kanya kasi nga nakikita ko sa kanya si Tricia. I don’t know how to act around her nor do I even know how to speak to her. :-\   
  
“dun tayo sa garden.. :)” sabi nya. Sumunod naman ako.   
  
Ayun, nagkwentuhan kami dun, ni hindi ko na nga namalayan yung oras eh. Natuwa ako sa kanya kasi katulad sya ni Tricia, yung makwento, hindi boring kasama… basta. Feeling ko si Tricia yung kasama ko ngayon. I just excused myself for a while kasi I need to use the restroom. On my way there nakasalubong ko si Anthony.   
  
“uy ‘tol! Kanina pa kita hinahanap ah.. anong oras na oh! Ano pa bang ginagawa mo? Halika na, alis na tayo. Diba sabi mo sandali lang tayo dito? ???” sunod sunod nyang sinabi.   
  
Anong oras na ba at bakit nagmamadaling umalis itong si Anthony? ??? I looked at my watch to check the time :-X. “shoot. It’s almost 11 pm!!” napasigaw ako ng wala sa oras. I forgot about Iris… :-\ :-\   
  
“kaya nga kanina pa kita hinahanap eh, para sabihin sayo na may lakad pa kayo ni Tisay! Kaso hindi naman kita mahagilap! Saan ka ba nagpunta??”   
  
Kinamot ko na lang yung ulo ko. I lost track of time. How stupid of me. “eh kasama ko si Amanda. Hindi ko namalayan yung oras.. :-\” ano ka ba Jeremy, ang tanga tanga mo! >:( :-\   
  
“huh? Yung pinsan nila Bernice na kamuka ni Tricia? Ano ka ba naman bro! oh pano nato? Anong gagawin mo?”   
  
Ano nga bang gagawin ko? Ano ba ang dapat kong gawin? Anong oras na… I’m sure umuwi si Iris dahil sa kakahintay sakin. “wala na sya siguro dun.. :-\”   
  
“hindi mo man lang ba sya pupuntahan dun? Malay mo hinihintay ka pa nya?”   
  
“umuwi na yun.” Sa totoo lang, gusto ko syang puntahan ngayon, kahit sa bahay nya, pero parang may pumipigil sakin. :-[   
  
“hindi mo ba tatawagan? ???”   
  
Kinuha ko yung cellphone ko sa bulsa ko pero namatay na pala ito. “dead batt na pala ako..” ano ba tong nagawa ko. Siguro kanina pa sya tumatawag sakin.. baka nagaalala na sya :-\ :-\.. Naghanda sya para sa araw na to, and I promised that I would be with her tonight.. I even planned a surprise for her after dinner.. but what happened? Bakit nawala sa isip ko? I had too much fun with Amanda that I forgot about Iris. I am such a jerk. I shouldn’t be here right now. I should be with Iris. Ano na kaya ang ginagawa nya ngayon? Galit kaya sya? I bet she is. I stood her up. :-\   
  
Hindi ko sya kayang harapin ngayon. Nagugulohan ako. I don’t know kung tama ba tong nararamdaman ko. Bakit parang ayaw kong umalis dito kahit na alam kong may naghihintay sakin?   
  
“hindi mo ba sya pupuntahan?”   
  
Hindi ko alam kung anong gagawin ko. Hindi ko rin alam kung anong sasabihin ko sa kanya kapag nakita ko sya. Ano, magsisinungaling na naman ako para madagdagan ko pa ang mga kasalanan ko sa kanya? :-\ :-[   
  
“I can’t do it Anthony :-[..” I shook my head. “will you check on her for me?” I looked at him with desperation, “please. And make sure she’s okay..”   
  
He tapped my shoulder and said, “sige ako ng bahala.” he said with assurance. “ayusin mo to ‘tol! Kawawa si Tisay. :-\” I just looked down. I know..   
  
Umalis na sya at ako naman, nagpaalam na rin sa kanila.   
  
“wait! Where are you going? ???” sabi ni Amanda habang palabas ako sa gate.   
  
“sorry Amanda, but I have to be somewhere right now.. :-\”   
  
Ano ba tong nagawa ko? I stayed in my car for a while to think. But I didn’t stay inside for so long, at hindi ko rin nakayanan. Sinundan ko si Anthony, pero hindi ako nagpakita sa kanya, pati na rin kay Iris. Pinanood ko lang sila from the car. I waited until they left the place and followed Anthony’s car until Iris’ house to drop her off.   
  
I watched her as she walked towards their gate. I wanted to step out from my car and just be with her, but I couldn’t. I wanted to call her, but I don’t know what to say… :-\ :-\   
  
Pagpasok nya sa bahay nila, umalis na din ako. Napakasama kong tao. Sa sobrang pagkaguilty ko, wala akong mukang maiharap sa kanya.   
  
The next day, maaga akong umalis. Pupunta ako sa sementeryo ngayon para bisitahin si Tricia. I did some thinking last night. At ngayon, I think alam ko na kung anong kailangan kong gawin.. sana maintindihan ni Tricia…   
  
Wala pang masyadong tao ngayon, kasi maaga pa. lumabas ako ng kotse at kinuha yung flowers na binili ko para sa kanya. Habang naglalakad ako papalapit sa puntod nya, pabigat ng pabigat yung nararamdaman ko. Okay na ko eh. I just had to see Amanda last night and now I’m beginning to miss Tricia again.. :-[ :-[   
  
“hi hun.. :-\” sabi ko habang nakaupo sa grass at nililinis yung puntod nya. “hindi ako nakadalaw kahapon, kasi may ginawa ako sa office..” I paused.. naisip ko si Iris :-\. hindi ko na kaya to. siguro kay Iris, nakakayanan ko pang magsinungaling, pero kay Tricia.. hindi ko kaya. :-\   
  
“sorry, Tricia.. “ I grabbed my wallet and took out a picture of Iris. “this is Iris.. she makes me happy.. she makes me feel that I need to go on with my life.. and.. and..”   
  
parang hindi ko masabi, pakiramdam ko nasasaktan ko si Tricia sa mga sinasabi ko sa kanya ngayon :-\.. “this may be the hardest thing that I would tell you :-[... but Trish... she made me forget the pain of losing you… I hope it’s okay with you.. :-[” I could feel my tears running down on my cheeks.   
  
For some reason I find myself looking for Iris.. kahit na nandito ako ngayon kay Tricia. “I know I promised you that I will never look for somebody else kasi ikaw lang ang mahal ko.. pero Trish.. I tried to control myself.. I tried to keep distance from her.. pero... hindi ko kaya.. :-[”   
  
I took a deep breath. Masakit man sakin na sinasabi ko kay Tricia ito ngayon, pero naisip ko sa dinami dami ng mga kasalanan at kasinungalingang nasabi ko, kahit ngayon man lang maging totoo ako sa sarili ko..   
  
  
Masakit na nawala sakin si Tricia...   
  
  
  
  
Pero mas masasaktan ako pag nawala si Iris sakin…   
  
---+---   
  
  
  
“Iris, please… wag ngayon...” binulong ko habang nakayakap ako ng mahigpit sa kanya.   
  
I went to their house after kong dumalaw kay Tricia. Iris was really mad at me that she almost exploded. Naiintindihan ko naman kung bakit sya nagagalit.. she has all the right to be mad and I have nothing against it.. I deserve this. :-\ :-\   
  
But once again, nagsinungaling na naman ako sa kanya. Tinanong nya ko kung saan ako nanggaling kagabi pati kaninang umaga, pero ni isa sa mga tanong nya wala akong sinagot ng matino. I even pretended that I went to some school to enroll her. :-\ :-[   
  
She just stood there, completely dumbfounded. She didn’t know what to do, but she didn’t let go of my hug. I have never felt this kind of tension before, especially with her… ngayon lang ako natakot ng ganito kay Iris. Ibang iba sya ngayon.. iba yung itsura nya kanina.. she was really pissed. Pakiramdam ko, malapit na matapos ang mga maliligayang araw ko. :-\ :-\ I felt this intense guilt when she asked me kung may tinatago ako sa kanya… para akong criminal. What am I going to do? :-[   
  
Hindi kaya magaling na sya at hinuhuli lang nya ko? Pano nga kung nangyari yun? Sasabihin ko na ba yung totoo? :-[   
  
“Iris, don’t leave me… please don’t leave me.. :-[ :-[” I repeatedly said.   
  
She took a step back and looked at me.. her eyes were teary. “Jeremy? What are you talking about? ???” Jeremy? Since when did she call me by my name? ??? :-\ “I’m not going to leave you just because you stood me up last night..” ang sabi nya. She touched my face gently as if she was trying to take my fear away. “you have to do much more than that for me to leave you :-\ :'(…”   
  
Lalo akong natakot nung sinabi nya yun. Masyado na kong maraming atraso sa kanya na hindi ko na alam kung paano ako makakalusot dito. A mistake led to another one.. and another one.. and this would just keep on going until somebody puts a stop to it… until I put a stop to it. Alam kong kailangan ko ng sabihin sa kanya yung totoo, pero hindi ko alam kung paano. Saan ako magsisimula?   
  
Niyakap ko sya ulit. “may sasabihin ako sayo, pero hindi ko pa kaya ngayon :-\..” I had to start somewhere...   
  
“why don’t you just tell me right now? ???”   
  
“I need you to promise me…” tinignan ko sya sa mga mata nya. Yung mga mata nyang umiiyak na… “promise me that by the time I’m ready to tell you…” I paused. Para na kong pinapatay pag nakikita ko syang umiiyak :-[.. “that you would listen to me and you're not going to walk out on me…”   
  
“Jeremy you’re scaring me :'(..” sinabi nya ng dahan-dahan.   
  
Lalo na syang umiyak. I didn’t mean to scare her.. “Iris, that’s all I’m asking for.. kung gusto mo---” Bago pa ko nakapagsalita pa, she kissed me. I could feel her lips tremble as we were kissing.   
  
I was going to tell her na kung gusto nya kong iwanan pagkatapos kong sabihin sa kanya yung totoo, maiintindihan ko sya at pababayaan ko sya...   
  
But the way she kissed me, dun ko naisip… hindi ko talaga kakayanin kung mawawala sya sakin…   
  
  
  
  
“where are we going? ??? ???”   
  
The next day, maaga akong nagpunta sa bahay nila para sunduin sya. I planned the whole day for her. Dadalin ko sya sa flower farm ni Mommy sa Batangas for the weekend. Pinapunta nya ko dun to check the farm since hindi daw sya makakapunta at may pupuntahan daw sila ni Daddy. So instead na magisa lang ako pupunta, I decided to take Iris with me. I had the place set up for her.. dito ko kasi sya balak dalhin nung isang gabi eh, kung hindi lang ako nagpunta kila Tricia.. kaya this weekend na lang ako babawi sa kanya. I hope she’ll like it.. :)   
  
Pinaalam ko na sya sa lola nya kagabi pa lang kaya naman pagkagising nya, nakahanda na ang mga gamit nya.   
  
“why are my clothes packed? ??? >:(” tinignan nya ako ng masama. “where are you going to take me?”   
  
Natawa ako sa sinabi nya. Para ko naman syang kikidnappin. ;D “relax.. we’re going to Batangas for the weekend.” I said while I loaded her things in the trunk.   
  
“Batangas? ??? ??? Saan yun? Malayo ba yun?”   
  
“not that far.”   
  
“okay.” She put on her sunglasses and stretched. “wake me up when we get there. 8)” Tapos sumakay na sya sa kotse ko.   
  
Tignan mo tong babaeng to. “Iris ha, wag mo kong tutulugan.”   
  
Tinaas nya yung sunglasses nya at tumingin sakin, sabay pout ng lips. “naman eh.”   
  
“ayusin mo na sarili mo. Put on your seatbelt.” I said while I started the car. Geez. She’s like a kid. Kailangan mo pang pagsabihan.   
  
“sino kasama natin dun?”   
  
I backed up the car from the driveway. “wala, tayo lang 8).” I grinned, “just the two of us.”   
  
She smiled and made herself comfortable. I was thinking she’d go ballistic when I tell her na kaming dalawa lang, but no. Seems like she didn’t even mind at all ::). That’s weird. Samantalang nung nasa Davao kami at kailangan naming mag-share ng room, eh halos ikamatay na nya. She didn’t even ask what we’re going to do there.   
  
“babe..” I looked at her, it's so nice to hear her call me babe once again.. :) “wag kang magsesleep talk ha! ;D” bigla nyang sinabi sabay tawa ng malakas. Sleep talk? ??? How… :o “I heard you….” Tapos nagiba yung expression ng muka nya, “yea.. I remember…” then she sat up. “oh my God! I do remember something!! :o :D” she said excitedly.   
  
Bigla akong napahinto sa pagmamaneho. SHE REMEMBERS SOMETHING. :o :o   
  
“why did you stop? ???”   
  
“what.. do.. you.. remember…? ??? :-\” dahan dahan kong sinabi. Diyos ko, maalala na nya kahit ano, wag lang yung kasunduan namin na magpanggap na may relasyon kaming dalawa. :-\ :-\   
  
She looked straight ahead and wrinkled her forehead as if she were thinking very intently of what she just remembered. After about two minutes, nagsalita sya. “I heard you sleep talking before. I don’t know if it was just a dream or it really happened. hmm..” then she looked at me, “oh well… my silly brain is playing tricks on me again.” Tapos tumawa na naman sya.   
  
Whew. That was close. Akala ko eto na yung araw na kinakatakutan ko eh. nagisip na nga ako kagad ng sasabihin ko in case magwala sya bigla dahil bumalik na yung alaala nya. Muntik na kong maihi dun ah. :-X   
  
Anyway, I started driving again after I made sure she was okay at hindi na sya nagiisip pa. mahirap na, baka may maalala pa sya ulit. Well, mukang okay na naman sya eh, kasi pagkatapos nun, kwento na sya kwento sakin. Wala lang, kung ano ano lang. hindi naman ako na-bore sa mga kwento nya, kasi nakakatawa din naman. Well, mostly yung accent nya. Pano kasi, trying hard magtagalog. Hahaha. ;D ;D   
  
Napansin ko na nga lang ng biglang tumahimik. Yun pala, nakatulog sya. Hay. Iris. Iris. Iris. ::) ::) ::)   
  
After almost 5 hours, nakarating na rin kami sa wakas sa Batangas.   
  
“Iris..” inalog ko sya, “Iris.. wake up.” Inalog ko sya ulit. Langya. Mantika pala matulog itong babaeng ito. Hay. I tried waking her up a couple more times but it didn’t work. I even tried to check if she’s breathing to make sure she’s alive. LOL. Pero, wala. Tulog pa rin sya. ::)   
  
So for the meantime, I decided to put our things inside the cottage where we are staying for the rest of days that we’ll be spending here. Si manang, yung housekeeper, tinulungan akong magbitbit ng mga gamit. At pagkatapos nun, bumalik ako ulit sa kotse para tignan kung nagising na ang mahal na prinsesa. Aba. Mahimbing parin ang tulog at tumutulo pa ata ang laway. ;D ;D   
  
“sir, hindi nyo po ba gigisingin sa ma’am?” tanong ni manang sakin.   
  
“hay manang kanina ko pa sya ginigising.”   
  
“eh, sir, buhatin nyo na lang kaya sya para makapagpahinga sya ng maayos sa kwarto?”   
  
Actually, I was thinking of doing that kanina pa. kaya lang naisip ko, baka mabigat sya at mabali pa ang buto ko. All the weight she gained ever since she got sick. Man. This is my fault! I should never have made her eat!! :P Pero sa tingin ko, mukang mapapabuhat ako ng wala sa oras. Alangan naman pabayaan ko sya dito sa loob ng kotse. ::)   
  
“sige manang, ako na lang ang bahala.” Sinabi ko sa kanya habang binubuhat ko si Iris. She’s not as heavy as I thought she would be. Magaan pa nga sya kung tutuusin. Grabe naman to. Where did she put the weight that she gained? ???   
  
While I was carrying her, naisip ko.. kaming dalawa lang ni Iris ang nandito. Baka sa tatlong araw na magbabakasyon kami dito eh may magawa naman akong tama. Kasi, kahit hindi nya sabihin sakin, alam kong nasaktan ko sya sa hindi ko pagsipot sa usapan namin nung isang araw :-\. I know she’s just showing me that she’s okay with it, but I know deep inside, marami syang gustong malaman na ayaw nyang itanong. Gusto ko namang sabihin eh.. hindi ko nga lang alam kung kalian at paano.   
  
Hiniga ko sya sa kama pagpasok ko sa kwarto. Hindi pa rin sya nagigising. Ano ba naman itong babaeng ito. Kung lumindol kaya, magigising sya? Malamang hindi. I placed a blanket over her and made sure she was comfortable before I left the room. Siguro naman mamaya pa sya magigising. Aasikasuhin ko muna yung pinapagawa ni Mommy ng matapos na kagad para yung remaining days, para kay Iris na lang. :) :)   
  
  
---+---   
  
  
  
I woke up in a cottage-style room with white curtains surrounding the whole place... This is definitely not my room. But I have to say that it’s actually pretty nice and relaxing. Wait. Where am I :o? Last thing I remember, I was in Jeremy’s car. How did I get here? :o :o   
  
I sleep walked?   
  
Maybe he left me here because I’m such a pain in his ass and took off! :o   
  
Ohh noo!!!   
  
I stood up right away and started rummaging through my stuff to find my phone.. I have to call someone to come and get me.. wait.. how am I going to that? I don’t even know where I am!!   
  
I called Jeremy but he didn’t answer. Nasan na kaya sya? Bakit nya ko iniwan dito? Kaya naman lumabas ako ng room to check the place out. It’s not a big cottage.. it has two rooms, a small kitchen and a small living place. The furniture and the way the place is set up are all in modern style. But no one is here.. saan kaya ako? ??? ???   
  
“Jeremy?” I went back to the kitchen because I heard someone. I walked slowly and gently… hindi sya sumasagot… baka hindi si Jeremy to.. when I got there, I saw an old lady cooking something. Old lady.. hala.. baka mumu…. :'(   
  
I was about to turn around and start running when the old lady faced me and smiled.   
  
“ay.. ma’am.. gising na pala kayo.. :)”   
  
“uhhh…”   
  
“si sir po ba hinahanap nyo?” I nodded. “nandon po sya sa labas. Gutom ka na ba? Sandali na lang itong niluluto kong sinigang.”   
  
Wow sinigang! My favorite! “sinigang na pork?! :D :D” I said out of excitement. Wait.. I remember something… sinigang.. I know I’ve eaten that a lot but how come I’m thinking I should remember something? ??? “uhhh… miss.. saan po ba ako?” I finally asked.   
  
“ay, ma’am.. manang Flor na lang ang itawag nyo sakin.. :)” she smiled again. She smiles a lot.. I like her already :D.. “ay nasa Batangas ho kayo.. dito sa flower farm ni ma’am Amy.” Oohh.. so we’re here at tita Amy’s flower farm. Eh hindi naman sinabi sakin ni Jeremy na dito pala kami pupunta. Sabi lang naman nya kasi, Batangas. Aba eh malay ko ba kung saan to at anong meron dito. ::) ::)   
  
“sige po, manang Flor.. lalabas na lang muna ako.. :)” I left her with her cooking. Mukang masarap yung niluluto nyang sinigang… It really smells good!   
  
When I went outside the first thing I noticed was the farm’s amazing view. Flowers everywhere.. I mean.. it’s just really breath taking.. no wonder Jeremy’s mom enjoys going here.. kasi super ganda talaga.. :)   
  
I walked towards a small office by the entrance and found Jeremy standing, talking to the workers. Alam nyo, sa totoo lang… hindi ko maintindihan why every time I see Jeremy, I feel something that is not right. Kahit ilang beses ko i-ignore yung feeling na yun, lagi parin bumabalik. :-\ I mean, I love him… no doubt about that. But each time I stare at him, it kinda reminds me of something that I might be forgetting. Well, I just hope it’s nothing serious, because it will really break my heart if it is. :-\   
  
“oh, you’re awake. :)” He said as soon as he saw me walking towards him. He looks really nice with his white t-shirt and blue jeans ::). So far from his usual office attire look.. so boring! “guys.. this is Iris..” inakbayan nya ko as he introduced me to the workers who removed their sombreros to show some respect.   
  
“hello…”   
  
“kamusta po kayo ma’am..” sinabi nila sakin. I like this place.. everybody calls me Ma’am.. hehehe. ;D ;D   
  
“oh sige na ho.. tapos na ang meeting.” Bigla nyang sinabi sa kanila. At isa isa naman silang nagpaalam at umalis. After naman nun, tinignan nya ko. “so what do you think of the place?” he asked. “ang ganda no?”   
  
“yea.. really nice.. do you come here often?”   
  
“no.. it’s only my second time..”   
  
ano ba yan.. if my mom had a flower farm this beautiful, I would want to live there. “so what are we doing here? ???” I asked.   
  
He started walking so I followed him. “eh para marelax ka..” then he stopped and faced me, “masyado kang stressed lately eh.. ;D” he smiled and poked me on the side.. yung parang nangiinis.   
  
“anong stressed? Hindi naman eh. :-\” well, yea a little bit.   
  
“hindi daw… halika nga dito! ;D” he pulled me closer to him and gave me biiiig hug and I almost choked! “dito tayo for three days.. maybe here you’ll forget about what I did and forgive me.” he said in a serious tone.   
  
“but you don’t have to do this.. I’m okay now.. we’re okay now.. :-\” I looked at the view. Kung sana ganito lang ka simple and peaceful ang buhay ko…. :-\   
  
Truth be told, I don’t think I want to know what really happened. In the rate of how things are going, I think it’s best if I stop wondering about stuff and just enjoy whatever I have.. nakakastress naman talaga ang mag-isip. I mean, if he wants to tell me, then I’m up for it. Pero kung hindi.. eh di hindi.. masaya naman ako na kasama ko sya eh. that’s all I want and need.   
  
Isa lang naman talaga ang gusto kong malaman eh… kung sino si Tricia. Siguro yun yung gusto nyang sabihin sakin. Well, I have a feeling of who she is.. based on the message on her gravestone. :-\ :-\   
  
He held my chin and faced me to him, “no.. but I want to do this :)..” then he kissed my forehead.   
  
After nun, he gave me a tour of the whole farm.. it’s hard to believe that it’s only his second time to be here and he knows every single flower there is in this place. I have to say that I’m actually impressed. ::)   
  
Tumigil lang kami sa tour when it was dark and manang called us to eat. Yey. Sinigang na pork!!! :D :D   
  
He was just looking – not pala looking, staring at me the whole time we were eating. “why are you looking at me like that? ???” I finally asked after we’re done eating.   
  
“wala.. you just look like you haven’t eaten that thing for ages.. ;D ;D” he laughed… then I smacked his arm ;D. “aray naman! What was that for?”   
  
“that’s for making fun of me! ;D” I laughed. “thanks manang.. ang sarap po ng sinigang na pork! :D”   
  
“sinigang na BABOY. ::)” Bigla naman nyang sinabi. Aba at may emphasis pa sa baboy ha! >:(   
  
Hay nako, hindi ko nga pinansin! Tatawagin na naman nya kong Princess Piggy >:(. So instead, I turned my head towards the kitchen where manang Flor is to say thank you for such a lovely meal.   
  
“manang Flor, thank you po dun sa food ha.. super sarap! :D” omg. I couldn’t get over that food. Talagang masarap! :D :D   
  
“ay salamat naman at nagustohan nyo.. :)” she looked at me and smiled, then she went to the table to get the dirty dishes so she could wash them.   
  
He came close to me and whispered, “sipsip ka talaga.”   
  
“shut up! anong sipsip! Eh talaga namang masarap eh!” sipsip daw. ::)   
  
Nung natapos naman maghugas ng pinggan si manang Flor, nagpaalam na sya samin at uuwi na daw sya. Dun lang pala sila nakatira sa kabilang cottage. Ang sabi ni Jeremy, matagal na daw nagtatrabaho yung family nila Manang Flor dito sa farm, kaya pinagawan na sila ni tita Amy ng bahay dito mismo.   
  
So in other words.. kaming dalawa lang ni Jeremy dito sa cottage…   
  
Just the two of us…   
  
And I suddenly felt chills down my spine… :o :o   
  
  
  
Why am I nervous? :o :o   
  
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“you want to walk outside?” sinabi nya after Manang Flor left.   
  
Sa sobrang nerbyos ko, wala akong masabi. “uhh…” teka nga, why am I nervous anyway? ??? Wala naman siguro syang gagawin sakin dito diba? He told me we’re here to relax and so that should be the only purpose why we’re here… right? ::) ::)   
  
Ano ka ba, Iris!! as if naman may gagawin sya sayo no! Not that you wouldn’t like it… ::) ::)   
  
“ano? Is that a yes or a no? ???” I just looked at him, thinking if I should say yes para mawala yung nervousness ko, or no, para maging nervous pa ko lalo. But before I was able to say anything, he already grabbed my hand and started walking towards the door.   
  
At ako naman itong si gaga, sumunod naman. Haaayy… ::) ::)   
  
Medyo madilim na sa labas, gabi na kasi and all the workers have already gone home. We walked through the pathway tapos on the sides, puro flowers lang ang makikita. The flower beds were dimly lit, which gave it a romantic appearance. Napaka serene ng environment and to add to that, it’s also very relaxing. Tama nga si Jeremy. Marerelax nga ako dito. We just continued walking until we reached the gazebo across the cottage. Grabe, ang ganda talaga ng place na to. I think I’m in love with it. :D :D   
  
“for you.. ;)”   
  
Nagulat na lang ako when he gave me a flower, not sure what kind, which he picked right outside the gazebo. I smiled at him, because until now, hindi ko pa rin alam kung anong sasabihin ko sa kanya. Masyado nya kong pinapakilig.. and the more he does things like this, the more I tell myself that there’s no other place I’d rather be, but here.. with him. ::)   
  
Naalala ko tuloy yung ginawa nyang arrangement sa gazebo nila nung ni-launch nila ko sa public… yung maraming petals ng tulips all over the place.. Except this gazebo was not arranged nor designed, but it didn’t need all that work, because surrounding it, was the whole garden. I couldn’t ask for more. Everywhere I looked, I saw flowers of different kinds.   
  
I took the flower from his hand and smelled it. Ay, teka.. parang hindi ko yata gusto to ah.. “acchhooooo!!!!” ayy.. nawala ang poise ko. ::) “achhooo!!!” sabi ko na nga ba eh.. tsk!   
  
“are you okay? ???” hello? Does it look like I’m okay? “sorry, I didn’t know you’re allergic. ;D” Sabay tawa. He so knew. Tsk tsk tsk. Inabot naman nya sakin yung panyo nya, so I could wipe whatever that needs to be wiped. Hehehe.   
  
“akin na nga yan!” tapos kinuha ko yung panyo nya.   
  
“sungit mo! ::)” I could so see in the corner of my eye that he was chuckling. Ang sama talaga…   
  
“pshhh.. minus one pogi point. 8)” I whispered.   
  
“may sinabi ka ba? ???” ay narinig? :o Eh ano pa nga ba ang gagawin ko.. eh di siempre, over sa deny na wala akong sinabi. So I shrugged my shoulders. “come on, let’s go inside. Gumagabi na eh, and from the looks of it..” he looked up the night sky, “mukang uulan..” and right on cue, umulan nga. aba! may pagka weather man din pala itong si Jeremy!   
  
So we started running towards the cottage. Grabe pala ang ulan dito!!! Sobrang lakas! It barely started raining and look at us… soaking wet already! :o   
  
“make it fast! basa na tayo!” he yelled, habang hawak nya yung kamay ko. He was more like dragging me to the cottage kasi nga, ang hirap tumakbo.. because we were running on dirt.   
  
“ouch!!” I yelled back. Pano naman kasi.. his grip was so tight! >:( Eh medyo malayo pa kami sa cottage kasi nga on the other side pa yung gazebo. He stopped running, so I stopped too. Actually, I hit his back pa nga kasi he made a sudden stop. And then I asked, “what are you doing? ???” He didn’t speak; instead he looked at me and shook his head. What happened next was completely out of my expectation: HE CARRIED ME! :o :o :o :o   
  
Siempre ako naman nagulat. I didn’t think he would do that.   
  
“ang bigat mo, Iris! ;D” he said. May patawa tawa pa syang nalalaman dyan. Bwiset talaga to. I didn’t ask him to carry me >:(! Binaba na nya ko when we reached the cottage.   
  
“eh hindi ko naman sinabi sayo na i-carry mo ko noh! >:( ::)” sabi ko while he was opening the door.   
  
“kung hindi kita kinarga, eh di hanggang ngayon nandun pa tayo.” He pointed the path where we were. True. “ang bagal bagal mo. gusto mo siguro mabasa at magkasakit no? ??? ???”   
  
“no.” what’s he talking about?   
  
He put his hands on his waist, “how about a thank you? 8)” he grinned. “you got me all wet. 8)”   
  
“so? I’m all wet too..”   
  
“mas basa ako sayo.”   
  
Oo nga naman, mas basa nga sya sakin. I would say thank you from the bottom of my heart naman eh, kaya lang, he had to tease me na mabigat daw ako. Hmmff. Pero, sige fine ::). “thank you Jeremy for bravely carrying me.. it was so nice of you. ::)” I said sarcastically, at tumawa naman sya. Hay nako. This guy!!! ::)   
  
The cottage had only one bathroom. So nauna akong magshower sa kanya – actually, nakipagunahan ako. I don’t want to get sick so I took a warm shower. And besides, medyo malamig din dito sa Batangas. Almost the same weather in LA during the spring, well, minus the rain of course. ::)   
  
It actually could get pretty scary here at night because it’s so dark outside. The streets have no side lights or whatever you call those things. Even the farm doesn’t have that much lighting. Masama daw sa ibang mga flowers. And what’s really scaring me right now is that I see the trees’ shadows right outside the bathroom window, tapos umuulan pa ng malakas. Very creepy. :-X :-\ :o   
  
Anyway, he took a shower after I did. Ako naman, nagbihis na sa room ko. Habang nagbibihis ako, I could hear him screaming, “ang lamig!!” after 5 minutes, saktong paglabas ko sa room ko, lumabas din sya sa bathroom. He was shivering from cold and when he saw me, he looked at me like I did a crime or something. “ikaw!” he pointed, “inubos mo yung mainit na tubig!!! >:(”   
  
“me? ???” I pointed myself. I used all the hot water? “hello, I didn’t know na limited lang yung hot water dito.. ::)” ang sama ng tingin nya sakin. Grabe, if looks could kill, I’d probably be bleeding to death right now. He didn’t respond, instead he walked towards his room to put on some clothes. Naka-towel lang kasi sya. ::)   
  
Hindi na sya lumabas ng room nya, so I assumed he went to sleep already. I felt sorry for him kasi naubos ko yung hot water. I really didn’t know.. I was going to check on him but I was too afraid to do so because of the way he looked at me earlier :-\… I could tell he was mad at ayokong masigawan ngayon. Kaya pumasok na lang ako sa room ko para matulog.   
  
2 hours later, hindi pa rin ako nakakatulog.. all because of the heavy rain. It is scaring me big time! Ngayon lang ako naka experience ng ganitong kalakas na rain in the years that I’ve been alive :-[ :-[. Nakakatakot talaga kasi I could see shadows outside the window and they do not look good to me. parang yung sa scary movies. Man… How I hate this. I can’t take this anymore! :'( :'(   
  
It took all the courage I had to actually get up from bed and go outside the room. Maybe if I go to the living room it wouldn’t be as scary. Manonood na lang ako ng tv para mawala yung takot ko. On my way there, I decided to knock on Jeremy’s door to check if he’s sleeping already. So I knocked about two or three times pero walang response. Kaya I decided to just open it and I found him curled up in bed, shivering. :o   
  
I ran to him right away to check if something is wrong. “Jeremy?” I touched his forehead “oh my God! You’re burning up :o!” nilalagnat sya. At mukang high fever pa, kasi he was sweating and he would repeatedly say..   
  
“I’m cold..”   
  
I started panicking. What do I do? May gamot ba dito? “okay, hold on..” I told him. I went outside to check if they have a medicine cabinet or kahit anong pwede kong gamitin to lower down his temperature. Gigisingin ko sana sila Manang Flor, but the rain hasn’t stopped yet kaya hindi ako makalabas ng cottage.   
  
Luckily, I saw a medicine cabinet near the kitchen. I took the bottle of fever pills, a glass of water and ran to his room to give him the medication. After naman nun, bumalik ako ulit to get him a basin with cool water pati a small towel.   
  
“I’m cold..”   
  
“I know, I know.. I’m doing the best I can.. :-\” I said while putting the small towel on his forehead. Nagpapanic na nga ako dito eh!   
  
“Iris, it’s cold.”   
  
At this point, hindi ko na talaga alam ang gagawin ko.. “okay.. uhh… what do you want me to do? ??? :-\” I asked him, “do you have extra blankets here? ???” he shook his head. kinuha ko na nga yung blanket ko sa room ko para ipatong sa kanya, but I guess it didn’t help.   
  
“dito ka sa tabi ko..”   
  
“uhh… okay..” so there, tumabi ako sa kanya.   
  
“hug me…”   
  
“hug? Eh pano kung mahawa ako sayo? ???”   
  
“sige na, please… I’m really cold.. :-[” he said softly, while his body continued shaking.   
  
  
  
I hugged him without saying a word. And gradually, I felt the shivering subside.   
  
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Nagising ako nung umaga na katabi si Iris. She was still hugging me tightly as if I were still feeling cold. Ilang beses sya nagising kagabi to check my temperature at para painumin ako ng gamot. Ang sarap ng feeling na may nagaalaga sayo kapag may sakit ka… :) :)   
  
I just looked at her with a smile on my face as she was sleeping so peacefully beside me. I felt like I’m the luckiest man on earth for having Iris. Thanks to her at mabuti na ang pakiramdam ko. Hindi nya ko iniwan hanggang sa mawala yung lagnat ko. I kissed her forehead at hiniga ko sya ng maayos sa kama. Mabuti hindi sya nagising.. dahil alam ko na wala syang tulog kagabi… Tumayo na ko at lumabas ng kwarto para ipagluto sya ng almusal.   
  
The rain stopped and I could see the risen sun through the windows. I could tell that it was going to be a good day.   
  
Pagkalabas ko, nakita ko kagad kung gano kagulo yung living room pati yung kitchen. Grabe, the place looks so disastrous. :o :o Parang dito dumaan yung bagyo kagabi… she must’ve panicked last night at lahat ng cabinets nakabukas. Hay, si Iris talaga. Kaya sinara ko isa isa yung mga cabinets at nagsimula na kong magligpit. Saktong dumating si Manang Flor.   
  
Medyo nagulat pa sya sa nakita nya. Pano naman kasi, nung umalis sya kagabi, maayos ang lahat ng ito.   
  
“ay, sir, ako na ho dyan..” ang sabi nya.   
  
“hindi na manang.” Sagot ko naman. “actually manang, why don’t you take the whole weekend off.. dito lang naman kami ni Iris buong araw.”   
  
“sigurado ho kayo sir?” tanong nya kagad. I nodded. This is a perfect day for me and Iris :). “teka sir, pagluluto ko kayo ng almusal..”   
  
“hindi na ho, manang, ako ng bahala dito.”   
  
At ayun, umalis na sya na sobrang saya. Ako naman, pagkatapos kong ligpitin yung mga kalat nitong si Iris, I went straight to the kitchen and opened the fridge para tignan kung ano ang pwede kong maluto. Buti na lang at palaging may laman to, kaya hindi ako nahirapan. I decided to cook bacon and eggs for breakfast, plus fried rice. When everything was cooked, sinilip ko sya dun sa kwarto. Tulog parin sya. Should I wake her up? I decided not to.   
  
I sat down on the empty couch and just looked at her. Hanggang ngayon hindi parin ako makapaniwala na inalagaan nya ko kagabi :). I would never expect that from Iris. Well, at least not the Iris before the accident. I’d like to think that maybe she changed, but hopefully not because she’s sick. Ilang minuto din akong nakatingin lang sa kanya hanggang sa gumalaw sya at nagstretch. Gising na kaya siya? Tumayo ako para tignan sya.. only to find out, she’s still asleep. ::) ::)   
  
Nung napansin ko na lumalamig na yung pagkain na niluto ko para sa kanya, naisipan kong gisingin na sya. It’s almost 10 am at hindi pa sya kumakain.   
  
“Iris…” inalog ko sya, “wake up..” hindi ko nga ineexpect na magigising sya kagad, pero dumilat yung mga mata nya. “breakfast in bed :).” Sinabi ko habang nilalagay ko yung tray sa kama.   
  
“Good morning :).” She responded while pulling herself up. “how are you feeling? why didn’t you wake me up? I could’ve prepared breakfast for you..”   
  
“okay na ko.. thank you for taking care of me. :)” I flashed a smile. “and I didn’t want to wake you up, sarap ng tulog mo eh.. higpit pa nga ng yakap mo sakin.”   
  
Her face suddenly blushed. How cute ;D ;D.. “ohh.. sorry, akala ko you we’re feeling cold parin..”   
  
“hooo! If I know, gustong gusto mo naman eh..” ::) I joked.   
  
“no! baka ikaw!” actually, first time ko lang natulog na katabi sya and I really felt very comfortable when her arms were around me.   
  
“sige na, kain ka na!”   
  
She looked at the food on the tray and asked, “akin lahat to? :o :P”   
  
“anong sayo? Hati tayo dyan no! :D”   
  
Tumabi ako sa kanya at kumain na kaming dalawa. She had this disappointed look on her face pano kasi, akala nya kanya lang ang lahat ng niluto ko sa kanya. Nakakatawa nga sya eh. hindi ko alam na favorite nya pala yung bacon and eggs with matching fried rice.   
  
The rest of day, nagikot lang kami sa farm ulit dahil pinakita ko sa kanya yung iba pang mga flowers na hindi ko pa napapakita sa kanya. Tuwang tuwa sya, parang bata. Pati yung mga trabahador eh natuwa din sa kanya. Tinanong ko nga sya kung gusto nyang mamasyal sa ibang lugar pero ayaw nya. Dito na lang daw kami sa farm. Actually, nagpaturo pa syang magtanim. Grabe, I couldn’t believe that this is Iris now. Very far from the Iris I knew before. Sana nga, lagi na lang ganito… yung magkasundo kami at hindi nagaaway. :) :)   
  
Naisip ko nga, kung sakaling bumalik na ang alaala nya, magiiba kaya ang tingin nya sakin? ??? :-\   
  
Ano ba tong nararamdaman ko.. nung una, abot hanggang langit ang galit ko sa kanya, pero ngayon, hindi ko halos maisip na saktan sya. Si Tricia nga, unti-unti ko ng nakakalimutan :-\.. hindi ko alam kung tama ba tong nararamdaman ko. Tama nga ba na kalimutan ko ang unang babaeng minahal ko para sa babaeng hindi ko naman alam kung mahal ko na? ??? ???   
  
“whew! That was tiring! but super fun! :D” sabi nya nung nakaupo na sya sa tabi ko. at inabutan ko naman sya ng towel para magpunas sya ng pawis. Pawis na pawis kasi sya… “thanks.” She replied.   
  
Nagstay lang kami dun hanggang sa lumubog ang araw. Nakaalis na nga silang lahat eh, nandun parin kaming dalawa. When it was already dark, I checked the time, late na pala. Hindi pa kami naghahapunan. Kaya tumayo na ko.   
  
“come on, let’s go inside.” I took her hand when she stood up. “anong gusto mong kainin?” tinanong ko sya habang naglalakad kami pabalik sa cottage.   
  
“hmmm…” nagisip pa sya habang hinihimas nya yung tyan nya. “how about… kare-kare? :D” sinabi naman nya nung nakapasok na kami sa loob.   
  
kare-kare? Do we even have the ingredients for it in the fridge? Kaya tinignan kung meron nga. Well. Merong meat, may konting gulay..at tsaka may peanut butter naman dun sa cabinet.. pwede na siguro to. “ok.. sige.”   
  
Mabilis ko lang naluto yung request nya, siempre, konti lang yung available na ingredients eh.. ;D kaya nakakain na rin kami kagad. She sure had fun eating kare-kare. At muka namang nagustohan nya yung luto ko, kahit na napakalayo ng lasa sa luto ni mommy. Nag-enjoy pa sya lalo nung nilagyan ko ng bagoong yung plato nya… at wag kayo, nasasabi na nya yung word na bagoong! ;D ;D   
  
Natagalan lang kami dahil sa nagpumilit pa syang maghugas ng pinggan. Pinagbigyan ko na, konti lang naman ang huhugasan nya. Kaso, napakonti na nga lang ng huhugasan nya, inabot pa sya ng syam syam. Halatang hindi marunong…. Halos isang oras yata syang naghugas. ::) ::)   
  
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“ano pang ginagawa mo dyan? ???” nagulat ako, kaya tumingin ako sa likod ko. Si Jeremy, nasa may living room at nakaupo sya sa couch. hindi ko namalayan na wala na pala sya sa tabi ko.. kanina kasi, he was just watching me while I was washing the dishes and telling me to make it fast. “come here..” he added, while pointing at the empty spot right next to him.   
  
“why?” I asked.   
  
“we’re going to watch a movie.” I looked at the time and it was almost 1 am. Hindi pa ba sya inaantok?? ??? ???   
  
“it’s late.. I think we should sleep.” I told him, but he just looked at me like I said something out of the ordinary. What? Eh totoo namang late na eh..   
  
“hindi naman natin kailangang gumising ng maaga bukas eh.. and plus, I really like this movie, and I think you should see it too 8)..”   
  
Look at this guy, kakagaling lang sa sakit tapos magpupuyat.. I walked over to his side tapos tinignan ko yung hawak nyang dvd. “ano bang movie yan?”   
  
He stood up to walk towards the dvd player so he could play the movie. “basta. Just watch it with me.. please? ::)” sus, maypa twinkle twinkle eyes pang nalalaman!   
  
“oh my gosh, dude.. stop doing that! ;D” I laughed. Eh pano naman kasi, hindi kaya bagay yung ginagawa nya.. para syang bakla.. hahah. ;D ;D ;D   
  
Nung nalagay na nya yung dvd, bumalik na sya sa couch and as soon as he sat down, he pulled me to sit down as well. Naman. Thanks for the gentleness!!! ::) ::)   
  
Anyway, the movie started already. It was a tagalog movie… tagalog scary movie!! At first, I thought it wouldn’t be as scary as the American horror movies I’ve seen. BUT I WAS WRONG! It was even scarier :o :o! Hindi ko na nga kayang makita so I was watching it while my hands were almost covering my eyes. At itong si Jeremy naman, ayun.. parang hindi naman sya natatakot sa pinapanood nya.   
  
“ano ka ba? What are you doing? ???” he said while he moved his body and pulled my hands off my eyes. “panoorin mo kaya! Hindi yung nakasiksik ka dyan sa kili kili ko! ::)”   
  
“ayoko!! Huhuhu… hindi ko kaya! I’m scared!! :'( :'(” sinabi ko naman tapos nagtago ako ulit sa may armpit nya.   
  
“Iris!! >:(” nagmove ulit sya. “wag ka dyan!”   
  
“noooooo!!! :'( :'(” balik naman ako ulit.   
  
“bahala ka.. hindi pa ko naliligo!”   
  
“I don’t care..”   
  
“but I do!” he was getting annoyed because I further moved my head. “IRIS!” again, he tried to keep me away from him. “hindi ako makapagconcentrate sa pinapanood ko!”   
  
“how about we just turn on the lights?”   
  
He looked at me for a split second then looked at the TV again. Hindi ako pinansin >:(!! Kaya ayun, sumiksik ako lalo sa kanya. ;D ;D   
  
So that’s pretty much what we did during the whole movie. He would tell me to get off his armpit, and I would just ignore him. Bahala sya noh! Care ko ba kung hindi pa sya naliligo, eh mabango parin naman sya… ::) ::)   
  
He took a shower after the movie, and the whole time he was in the bathroom, I couldn’t stop thinking about it.. may iba kasi akong nakitang scary parts na hindi ko talaga makalimutan.. So I kept knocking at the door para bilisan nya. Sino ba naman kasi ang nakaisip ng movie na to! Ngayon lang ako nakakita ng mga weirdong mumu. As in. huhuhuh. Pano na ko matutulog mamaya?   
  
Nakakainis talaga sya.. I can’t believe the first movie we’ve actually seen together would be this scary movie. Na-imagine ko naman kasi na yung first movie namin together would be a romantic comedy, or kahit anong nakakainlove na movie.. you know, where I would be so kilig after… or I would be crying on his shoulders and he would comfort me… the usual first movie… BUT NO! He had to choose to scare the hell out me!! >:( :'(   
  
After his night rituals --- by that I mean.. magliligpit sya, magbibihis sya, he would go to the kitchen and check if the stove is off then to the door to check if it’s locked -- eh pumunta na kami sa room ko to put me in bed. The whole time kasi, I was just following him with my arm linked to his. Naasar na nga sya eh. ::)   
  
“Jeremy?” I said as he was leaving my room. Tumingin sya, as soon as he heard me calling his name.   
  
“yea? ???” he said.   
  
I looked at him.. “pwede bang dito ka muna? ??? :-[” I shyly asked. Natatakot kasi ako eh.. pano naman kasi itong lalaking to. He forced me to see that stupid scary movie kaya ayan. Miracle na lang talaga kung makakatulog pa ko. “I mean, until I fall asleep lang. after nun, you can leave. :-[”   
  
He just stared at me for maybe 20 seconds at least before he generated an answer. “natatakot ka no? ;D ;D” then he busted a big laugh. “ano ka ba! Movie lang yun! Para kang bata! ;D ;D” sunod sunod nyang sinabi.   
  
Eh ano naman ngayon kung movie lang yun? “ehhh.. sige na!” I gave him this pleading look to make him stay. “sige na.. please! hanggang sa makatulog lang ako!”   
  
“hooo!! Kunyari ka pa eh.. gusto mo lang ata ako katabi… 8)” hay nako! Here we go again. ::) “nabitin ka kagabi no!”   
  
“hoy hindi no!” napasigaw tuloy ako ng wala sa oras. Pero, oo.. tama sya. Gusto ko sya katabi.. sshhh.. secret lang yun ha! :P :P Hhihihi.. “natatakot ako eh.. sige ka, pag hindi ako nakatulog kakatok ako sa room mo at gugulohin kita!”   
  
“eh di ilolock ko! ;D”   
  
“ehhh babe!! Please!!! :'( :'(” I was desperate. Nakooo kung nandito lang si Ella or kung sino man, hindi na kita kailangan noh!   
  
“sige na.. sige na.. wag ka ng maingay dyan. Baka marinig ka ba nila Manang eh, baka akalain kung ano pang ginagawa ko sayo ::).”   
  
I just remembered, magkatabi lang pala yung cottage namin, and the walls aren’t really that thick to seal the noise we’re making right now. “say yes na kasi! So I can shut up already!”   
  
“oo na nga eh! ::)” then he walked back to my bed tapos tinaas ko yung kumot so he could get in. after nun, he made himself comfortable then he pointed his chest. “oh, dito ka.” Tinignan ko pa sya nun, not sure if he really wants me to put my head on his chest. “sige na! nahiya ka pa eh! ::) ;D” he laughed again. Nakakaasar to. Ang yabang! >:( ::)“sige na…” he said again.   
  
I looked at him and smiled a little, and then I rested my head on his chest. I closed my eyes while he ran his fingers through my hair. Hindi ako nagsalita. Eh pano naman kasi.. I feel awkward. My heart was beating fast as I was hearing his beating fast too.. and I don’t know why.. but I like this feeling.. gusto ko to. It makes me feel that he really cares about me. kahit na minsan feeling ko napipilitan lang sya.   
  
Hay.. I love this guy. I really, really do. And I have these overwhelming emotions right now. Hindi ko alam kung tama ba tong sasabihin ko sa kanya, knowing that he probably doesn’t feel the same way about me.. but what the heck.. gusto kong sabihin sa kanya na mahal na mahal ko sya.. :) :)   
  
After a few moments of silence, I looked at him and his eyes were already closed. Tulog na sya? Ano bayan, naunahan pa nya ko, samantalang ako nga ito yung natatakot.. although sleeping with him made me feel less scared and more secured and cared for. ::)   
  
I suddenly had this courageous feeling that it would be the best moment to tell him what my heart wants me to say…   
  
I took a deep breath first, and another one before I was able to say…..   
  
“I love you..” then I closed my eyes again. There. I finally said it out loud. That made me feel and breathe a lot better. Okay lang kahit hindi nya narinig. Actually ayoko naman na marinig nya, kasi nahihiya pa ko.   
  
Oh ano, heart? Okay ka na ba? ??? ???   
  
But I was alarmed when he put his arms around me :o :o. OMG. Baka narinig nya? Hala.. anong gagawin ko? Do I pretend that I was sleep-talking? Ano? Do I start snoring now?   
  
I laid still, trying to figure out what to do.   
  
He suddenly kissed my forehead, with matching yakap na mahigpit, and said…   
  
  
  
“I love you too, Iris..” O-M-G. I think my heart stopped beating. I didn't know what to do, or say.. I think I just did something really embarrassing.   
  
  
But it didn't end there, because he said something else...   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
“Let's make this real..”   
  
  
  
  
  
  
THE END.